

EWL hearing submission

The Otahuhu Historical Society (OHS) opposes in full the proposal to build a highway from SH20 to SH1 and requests that the Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) not approve the East West Link (EWL) proposal.



The OHS objects to the EWL proposal for the following reasons.

1. It will increase traffic congestion on SH1 and surrounding areas.

2. It will impact the ecology of the Manukau harbour especially for migrant and resident shorebirds.

3. OHS objects to the development of Ann's Creek which has historical significance for the people of Otahuhu.




Reason 1. It will further increase traffic congestion on SH1 and surrounding areas.

Prior to the recent opening of the Waterview tunnel the traffic congestion on SH1 was legendary. Local people organised their day around SH1 traffic conditions.


On weekdays from 6am the northbound traffic backed up for 20 km all the way south to Papakura.

Onramp queues at Princes Street, Otahuhu and Sylvia Park often backed up and joined each other.



The EWL proposes that adding another on ramp to SH1 between Princes St Otahuhu and Sylvia Park will ease traffic congestion between SH1 and SH20. We disagree that this will happen.

Currently peak hour traffic conditions on and between SH1 and SH20 are better than they have been for a very long time. We don't need the EWL.



Public Transport options should be investigated. This proposal does not include bus options to use the East West Link.

There are currently no frequent regular bus services in the area and many services have been withdrawn.


Building new roads is not the way to the future of a sustainable Auckland.

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Reason 2. It will impact the shorebirds of Manukau Harbour


The unique geographic location of the township of Otahuhu on the isthmus between the Tamaki river and the Manukau Harbour meant that the godwit migration played a big part in the lives and the memories of the people of Otahuhu. All who lived in Otahuhu prior to the 1970's were witness to the clouds of godwits arriving from their northern breeding grounds in September.




Godwits were such a common sight for the early settlers that one area was named Curlew Bay for the huge numbers of godwits that roosted and foraged there. Godwits were called curlews by the early settlers. Reports of the huge numbers of godwits feeding at the headwaters of the Tamaki estuary are common in the newspapers of the time. However after the SH1 motorway went through Otahuhu in 1966, the ecology of the river changed and the mangroves began to spread. The areas for feeding slowly diminished and the godwit sightings in the upper Tamaki river stopped around 2003.

Curlew Bay Otahuhu





The Manukau Harbour then is Auckland's most significant refuge remaining for the godwits and other shorebirds and the Mangere Inlet makes up an important part of this habitat. However this habitat is also under threat of encroaching mangroves as on the Tamaki river at Otahuhu.



The next two slides show the changes that have taken place in the Mangere Inlet over the last 25 years. The first photo taken in 1992 shows the last stage of the inaugural Portage crossing re-enactment where the paddlers put their waka into the Manukau harbour at the Mangere inlet after conveying them from Otahuhu. Note the shoreline, there are no mangroves.


Mangere inlet 1992

Dropping canoes in harbour



Mangere Inlet today





For the annual portage crossing to take place a swathe of mangroves has to be cut down each year to allow the paddlers to launch their waka. The growth of the cut mangroves has taken place since February this year. The rate of mangrove encroachment in the Mangere inlet will increase if this project goes ahead resulting in further losses to feeding grounds for shorebirds.



3.The proposal threatens an area of cultural significance.

- Ann's Creek is a designated Special Ecological Area being the last remnant of pre European vegetation on the Auckland isthmus. It has significant heritage value for the people of Otahuhu. This is the second time the OHS has made submissions to protect Ann's Creek from development.



Summary

The OHS feels that this project will deliver no transport benefits to the people of Otahuhu. One benefit of this proposal, however, is that it has brought to light the precarious state of the Mangere inlet ecosystem and the threats to it if the project is approved. Do we want a future where visitors ask “Well, where are the birds?”

Manukau-“the place of many birds”



photo

J. Geux