

5th September 2017

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATION BY Tatjana Buklijas (EPA Ref: 126210)

This is a summary of my representation to the Board of Inquiry in opposition of the applications made by the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) in relation to the East West Link roading proposal in Auckland under the RMA.

Dr Tatjana Buklijas

Liggins Institute, 85 Park Road, Grafton, Auckland 1023

I have a medical degree from Croatia and a PhD in history and philosophy of science, University of Cambridge, Britain. I lived and worked in Zagreb (Croatia), Vienna (Austria) and Cambridge (UK) before moving to New Zealand in 2008 to join my New Zealand partner. Also in 2008 we bought a house in Victoria Street Onehunga, where we have lived since. I became New Zealand citizen in 2015. We have two children, aged 7 and 4, who attend the Onehunga Primary and a local daycare.

Since my move to Auckland, I've been employed as a researcher at the Liggins Institute, University of Auckland, working on projects concerning the conceptual basis of epigenetics (a science studying how environmental influences change gene expression) and the understanding of human evolution and health. I also teach in the medical school. One day a week I work with the Prime Minister's Science Advisor Sir Peter Gluckman's office in science policy.

My interest in EWL is informed by my experience of growing up and working in European cities; of living in Onehunga and witnessing as well as enjoying many positive developments such as the reestablishment of Onehunga train line and the regeneration of Taumanu; and finally by my professional interest and experience in the areas of human health and in the uses of scientific evidence in policy.

My submission focused on two main points:

- 1) The unfairness of the consultation process
- 2) The disjunction of the perception of Onehunga, between the NZTA application and the views of the future of Onehunga by the Auckland Council as well as by Onehunga residents

So my presentation at the Board of Inquiry will focus on these points.

Consultation process

My family spent the period between September 2015 and July 2016 in Europe, where I had a visiting fellowship. It was upon our return to New Zealand, in late July 2016, that we first learnt about the plans to build a motorway.

Many of the statements by the NZTA that I read state that the project has been discussed and planned for several years. But although we have always kept very well informed about the developments in our community, we first heard about it in July 2016. None of our extensive network of friends and acquaintances in Onehunga had known about it.

NZTA's own documents show that at least until mid-2015 these plans were poorly defined and without a firm schedule. It appears that the plan was to build the full version East West Link—in some form--sometime around 2035 (**Addendum 1**).¹

The NZTA submission to EPA mentions multiple times that the EWL was planned in the Auckland 2012 Plan. However if you look closely to the maps in the plan again only sketch an indication of a connection and plan it for "2012-2042" (**Map/Addendum 2**). The map also sketches many other transport projects: e.g. rail to the airport, rail from Onehunga to New Lynn. None of these has been fast-tracked in the same way that the Benefits to the trucking industry aside, it is not clear to me, and to many Onehunga residents, why EWL merited fast-tracking and other parts of this plan did not.²

NZTA's own website indicates the beginning of public discussion around the link between SH20 and SH1 began in June 2015.³ Then from late 2015 through 2016 the project was fast-forwarded in spite of the strong community objections and estimated costs that kept on increasing.

The leaflets providing visualizations of the NZTA EWL plan were delivered to our mailboxes in December 2016, not much before Christmas holidays. Visualizations provided in the leaflets were not clear or helpful.

Throughout late 2016 and early 2017, the representatives of NZTA refused to consider plans that would impact less on the connection between the Onehunga community and the Manukau Harbour.

¹ Downloaded from <http://transportblog.co.nz/2016/06/13/east-west-an-ever-increasing-cost/>. Link under "May 2015" linking to NZTA Board Paper no 15/05/0924.

² <http://theplan.theaucklandplan.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Map-13.2-AucklandsPriorityTransportProjects-2012-2042-120709.pdf>

³ Based on NZTA website information, <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/east-west-link/media>.

Altogether, less than 6 months passed between the first news about the project and the opening of the submission. Much of the crucial information came last moment, during the summer. Throughout there was a feeling that we were rushed, inadequately informed, and that there was a lack of transparency to the process.

For example, a comparison between the so-called “Community” (or OBA) plan and the NZTA plan was published on the NZTA website on **9 March 2017**—13 days before the end of the public consultation process. At the time when I wrote my submission in March 2017 there was no publicly available business case.⁴ We did not know the benefit cost ratio. Compared to the amount of discussion and consultation that went into City Rail Link (more expensive, but similar order of magnitude) the project appears rushed and not at all well thought through. **The cost (monetary, environmental, health) is too high to rush into a major project.**

The short amount of time, lack of substantial information, lack of transparency, made it difficult for many of the concerned residents to prepare a submission. An example is Dr Janine Randerson who missed out on this opportunity. More time and better (and more timely) information would have allowed me to seek advice from experts, eg among my colleagues at the University of Auckland.

Perceptions and assumptions concerning Onehunga

The NZTA submission to the EPA described the Onehunga-Penrose area as “an integral component of the Upper North Island Freight network” and “a regional hub for transport and distribution activity”.⁵ While that may be true, Onehunga is also one of **the two main historic settlements of Auckland, around one of the two historic Auckland harbours**. This is not to negate the industrial aspect of Onehunga but to stress that every project intervening into this community must take into account—and not in a perfunctory but in a thoughtful, engaged manner—all of its components: its industry, yes, but also its natural environment between the volcanic cone of Maungakiekie and the (fragile) coastal environment of Manukau Harbour; its rich human history; and its future potential.

The same Auckland 2012 plan that the NZTA submission references saw South Auckland as an “area of enormous promise” (section 2.2.4). Onehunga was singled out as the “priority growth area”. As late as November 2015, when the new foreshore revitalization project was finished, the city’s own

⁴ <http://thespinoff.co.nz/auckland/07-03-2017/why-does-government-want-to-push-a-new-expressway-through-auckland-without-proving-the-need/>

⁵ Appendix D. Views of NZTA, p. 2.

newsletter “Our Auckland” was talking about a “Wynyard Quarter-style development planned for Onehunga port” by the council-controlled organization Panuku Development Auckland, with high-quality apartments, recreational and public spaces. With the population of Auckland growing and the pressure for land to build high density housing located near public transport hubs, Onehunga, with its location allowing easy access to CBD (17 minutes on train) and airport & South Auckland (currently by bus, or connecting through Penrose on train, but with rail to airport planned) seems like an obvious place for a mix of high density housing and commercial as well as light industrial activity. This is what we’re already seeing with new housing projects exploiting the proximity to the rail. A good example is Fabric of Onehunga in Princes Street, a thoughtfully designed new apartment complex (‘pocket neighbourhood’) surrounded by a mix of light industrial and residential buildings.

In the NZTA submission to the EPA there is some acknowledgement but no deeper understanding of the historic or the diverse and changing character of Onehunga. The juxtaposition between the design effort and financial investment placed into the revitalization of industrial parts of the Waitemata harbor through building successful public spaces and high-quality housing, while allowing the continuation of industrial and commercial activity, expressed in the award-winning Wynyard Quarter and the way that the Manukau Harbour is treated in this plan is striking. It is often repeated that this area is degraded so “why not put a motorway there”. But its degradation is not due to a natural catastrophe. It is the result of many bad decisions through the twentieth century. Today we understand that environmental degradation ultimately impacts humans. We understand that seashores (especially in urban environments) are precious for their biodiversity. We also know that people like spending time close to the sea. The area around the Manukau Harbour has the potential for so much more than a thoroughfare.

The NZTA plan reduces the multifaceted problem to the question of (potential) benefit of reduced travel time, mainly for trucks. The submission states: “The proposal intends to significantly reduce travel time for trucks travelling from the Onehunga-Penrose industrial area to the State Highway 1 and 20 by between **4-17 minutes**, reduce travel time between MetroPort and East Tamaki by **up to 13 minutes** and reduces travel time for public transport including **buses by 5-6 minutes when travelling to Mangere Bridge to Onehunga Town Centre.**”

So while there is some time saved for trucks (provided the modelling is correct!), time saving for buses (for example) does not justify the monetary cost, or the environmental, social and potentially economic cost that incurs by lowering the quality of the connection with the Manukau Harbour. But the question that the NZTA submission does not address is: if 1.4-1.8 billion dollars is invested towards rail and rapid busways, would the extant roads be sufficient for trucks—while at the same

time future-proofing transport for higher density housing along the way, reducing greenhouse emissions and air pollution. Instead of rushing into building another motorway in a motorway-choked city with increasing levels of pollution, it would make much sense to consider the options that would allow **NOT** building it.

International experience has shown that building more roads does not lead to improvement in the traffic but rather leads to induced demand. Removal of urban motorways considered vital in cities much larger than Auckland (e.g. Seoul) did not result in gridlock and it brought many other benefits (improved environment, better quality of life in the city). Congestion charges and public transport have been shown to be much more effective in reducing traffic congestion.

The strict focus on the reduction of travel time for trucks furthermore ignores:

1. Reduced access to the foreshore and the noise.
2. Health costs caused by increased pollution
3. Increase in greenhouse gases through bringing more cars on the road, at the time when New Zealand should be focusing on reducing greenhouse emissions, reducing investments into roads and building train networks.

To conclude, in the rapidly growing Auckland, experiencing huge pressure for housing and, alongside urban intensification, likely to experience pressure for public space, Onehunga is an area that has enormous potential for accommodating many more people than it does today: historic and well established community, located centrally, with various commercial amenities, already fairly well connected through public transport as well as roads. And with more people we will need more public space. We are lucky to live right next to one of the two harbours in Auckland and to have the opportunity to do something really interesting that will be just as good, or even better than, Wynyard Quarter. But placing a motorway hard against the shoreline is going to take this opportunity away. Looking beyond New Zealand, placing motorways hard along coastlines is no longer an accepted practice. My native Croatia, which in the early 21st century built a modern system of motorways to support the access of European tourists to tourist hubs of the Adriatic coast, placed these motorways inland, far from shorelines, where they are likely to produce lesser impact. Yet in the much wealthier New Zealand, the first vista that the tourists arriving in Auckland see are motorways.

