

Development of outcomes for the City Centre to Māngere Light Rail project

Background

The requirement to confirm outcomes for the City Centre to Māngere (CC2M) light rail project, and the approach to be taken, was signed off by Minister Twyford on 27 April 2019 via a written briefing. The approach included the need to work with partner agencies.

The ATAP Governance Group¹ was asked to provide feedback on the approach at its 15 May 2019 meeting and to note that the Ministry would work with key staff in their organisations to develop the outcomes and supporting framework.

The June 2019 Cabinet paper “Progressing our plans to deliver light rail in Auckland” noted the importance of clarifying light rail outcomes for Auckland and reported ATAP Governance Group feedback that “all parties should be clear on the objectives for light rail (including the balance between transport and urban development outcomes, and the extent to which a fast travel time vs urban regeneration is desirable, or if it is possible to achieve both)”. Cabinet was asked to note that officials were undertaking work that would be brought for Ministerial endorsement in due course.

In the early stages, Ministry staff engaged with the Auckland Light Rail Steering Group.² This group (no longer in existence) provided its support through a series of meetings and through making available staff in their respective organisations.

Starting point for CC2M light rail outcomes development

It was recognised that a body of work already existed that should be built upon in the development of outcomes for the CC2M light rail. This included both ATAP work and NZTA indicative business case thinking.

ATAP 2018 described the expectations of the CC2M light rail in terms of alleviating bus capacity constraints in the city centre, improving access to employment, unlocking growth potential along the corridor, and providing a reliable ‘one seat journey’ between the city centre and airport. However, these expectations were not prioritised nor were potential trade-offs worked through.

NZTA took the ATAP expectations as a starting point and identified the following priority objectives which are outlined in its 2018 indicative business case:

- Capacity and access improvements along the corridor and to the city centre and Auckland Airport precinct and
- Unlocking growth along the corridor especially for housing around Māngere, Onehunga and Mt Roskill.

The business case was not finalised nor was it approved by the NZTA Board.

NZ Infra’s early documentation on the project placed an emphasis on journey time which comes largely as a result of speed.

¹ ATAP Governance Group members: Peter Mersi, Ministry of Transport; Stephen Town, Auckland Council; Mark Ratcliffe, NZ Transport Agency; Shane Ellison, Auckland Transport; Jon Grayson, The Treasury; Lewis Holden, State Services Commission; Todd Moyle, KiwiRail; David Wood, Auckland Council.

² Auckland Light Rail Steering Group members (defunct): [REDACTED]

Given the thinking on desired outcomes was developed through different processes, it was considered essential to reach an agreed Government position and to develop a well articulated story about the role CC2M will play in Auckland's rapid transit network. It was intended that these outcomes would provide clear direction to the design, delivery and implementation of light rail.

Development and engagement process

Development of the outcomes took place through a collaborative process which afforded senior staff and technical experts in ATAP partner agencies multiple opportunities to input, participate in discussions, and provide feedback on both draft content and the final outcomes framework recommended to the Auckland Light Rail Advisory Group.

The process involved many one-to-one meetings with ATAP partner agencies, in particular Auckland Transport, Auckland Council, MHUD and HLC. Meetings were also held and feedback sought from MfE and Treasury at various stages in the development process. A 13-page audit trail records feedback and action taken. All feedback was considered and incorporated where appropriate and a response explaining the decision was provided.

Technical experts³ within ATAP partner agencies were invited to attend an initial workshop on 20 May 2019. Feedback from the workshop was summarised into seven key themes: access, urban development, economic prosperity, connectivity and integration, safety, environment, and health. These themes were shaped into four initial objectives:

- (i) Build on Auckland's Rapid Transit Network to deliver an efficient service integrating with the current and future transport network in Auckland
- (ii) Provide access to labour markets, jobs and education opportunities
- (iii) Provide a high quality, reliable, frequent and safe service
- (iv) Unlock quality urban intensification.

Consultation and feedback

Key feedback from the ALR Steering Group on the initial objectives was the need to reflect the transformational nature of the project in terms of urban outcomes and the importance of the environment. This resulted in a change in emphasis for the urban objective and the development of a new objective focusing on the environment. Subsequent feedback resulted in the combination of the access and integration objectives given integration is fundamental to good access.

Subsequent meetings of the ALR Steering Group canvassed questions about whether the objectives should be weighted, options for an integrated or separate environmental objective, and key trade-offs that the Government would need to consider in making decisions.

The newly-formed ALR Advisory Group⁴ met for the first time on 21 June 2019. Agenda papers included the draft objectives framework with recommendations to endorse the framework for recommendation to the Ministerial Oversight Group and to note further work to be carried out to finalise the evaluation criteria and measures. There was limited discussion on the objectives due to

³ Workshop attendees: [REDACTED]

⁴ ALR Advisory Group members: Peter Mersi, Ministry of Transport; Stephen Town, Auckland Council; Andrew Crisp, MHUD; Shane Ellison, Auckland Transport; Greg Miller, KiwiRail; Vicky Robertson, MfE; Lewis Holden, SSC; Jon Grayson, Treasury; Richard Leverington, NZ Transport Agency; Bryn Gandy, Ministry of Transport.

other agenda items. However, Treasury provided written feedback to Ministry staff prior to the meeting. This included concerns that there was no 'value for money' objective.

While at this time the Response Requirements Document was in the early stages of its development, our view was that 'value for money' would form part of the overall consideration and evaluation framework rather than act as an additional outcome.

The second meeting of the ALR Advisory Group (18 July 2019) considered a revised objectives framework. There were two main pieces of feedback:

- (i) the objectives should be renamed outcomes
- (ii) there should be weighting attached to each outcome.

This feedback was actioned shortly thereafter. It included an urgent exercise carried out by senior staff⁵ in ATAP partner agencies to weight the outcomes.

Endorsement of outcomes

The Auckland Light Rail Ministerial Oversight Group met for the first time on 23 July 2019. Endorsement was sought of the following four outcomes and associated weightings:

1.	Access and Integration	Improved access to opportunities through enhancing Auckland's Rapid Transit Network and integrating with the current and future network.	40%
2.	Environment	Optimised environmental quality and embedded sustainable practices.	15%
3.	Urban and Community	Enabling of quality integrated urban communities, especially around Māngere, Onehunga and Mt Roskill.	30%
4.	Customer Experience	A high quality, attractive and highly patronised service.	15%

A follow up note was sent on 24 July by Minister Twyford to the Ministerial Oversight Group seeking their feedback and agreement on the outcomes. Feedback was received by Minister Genter on three key areas all under the Access and Integration outcome:

- (i) Measure referencing impact on number of jobs accessible by private vehicle could undermine mode shift. Action: this measure was removed as it was not required.
- (ii) Measure on change in time spent in congested conditions appears to apply to private vehicles only. Action: this measure was removed as it was not required.
- (iii) Importance of improving rather than just maintaining conditions for active users along the CC2M corridor. Action: some minor changes to the wording in the rationale.

⁵ Attendees at weighting session: [REDACTED]