



**Submission to  
New Zealand Transport Agency  
Inner City Transport Network  
Wellington Employers' Chamber of Commerce  
August 2011**

**Introduction**

The Wellington Employers' Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) has membership of 1,600 businesses in Wellington City. It works closely with other chambers in the region and is part of the Employers' Chamber of Commerce (Central)<sup>1</sup>. While most of our members are in the small to medium enterprise category we also have as members 15 of the largest 20 companies in New Zealand.

The Chamber advocates policies that reflect the interests of the region's business community and the development of the Wellington economy as a whole. We welcome the opportunity to make this submission on the Inner City Transport Network – Cobham Drive to Buckle Street.

**Submission**

The Chamber is a strong supporter of the Road of National Significance (RoNS) between Levin and Wellington Airport.

The Cobham Drive to Buckle Street stretch is a particularly important section of this road. It connects the lower North Island to the airport and hospital and accommodates the increasing economic activity and population growth of the eastern suburbs.

We fully support the need to improve this stretch of road including the construction of a second Mt Victoria Tunnel. Not only is the road at full capacity but projected population and economic growth means increased congestion is likely in the future. We fully support investment in passenger transport and the upgrading of walking and cycling lanes to relieve this congestion but even with the greater usage of these alternative modes,

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<sup>1</sup> The Employers' Chamber of Commerce Central was created out of the merger between the Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Employers and Manufacturers Association (Central) on 1 July 2010.

increased road capacity will be needed too accommodate the projected population growth.

As well as economic benefits through increased transport efficiency, the investment will have environmental benefits including from diverting cars out of the central city.

While we are satisfied that the total benefits of this project will outweigh the costs, we are surprised that detailed cost benefit information has not been made available to inform consideration of each of the proposals. Not even cost ranges are provided in the consultation material let alone a quantification of benefits. We think that disclosure of the cost benefit analysis of various options is essential if consultation is to be meaningful.

In making the final decisions, attention will need to be given to ensuring that cost benefit analysis stacks up and that the project is executed as cost effectively as possible.

### **Buckle Street and around the Basin Reserve**

The Basin Reserve is a major congestion point and this section of State Highway One should be a priority in the development of the Wellington RoNS. We agree the separation of the north-south traffic from the east west flows around the Basin Reserve is necessary.

The Chamber and its infrastructure committee have long urged the government to consider the underground option for the Basin Reserve and Buckle Street sections. We are disappointed that these options have not been included as part of NZTA's consultation.

It is reported in the consultation material that tunnels under the Basin and under Memorial Park were considered but rejected because of the expense. While we place great importance on the need for cost constraint, we think: the public should have been given more information on this – including quantification of the corresponding benefits - so that proper comparisons could be made.

While a tunnel or trench may cost more than the above ground options it is likely to be the best solution in the longer term. The decision not to trench the Karo Drive Bypass, for example, is one that road users and pedestrians are already regretting due to ongoing traffic delays and environmental costs.

The tunnel option would have environmental as well as economic benefits and would reduce the visual impact which is important given the special status of the Memorial Park / War Memorial area and the Basin Reserve. It would also be the quickest and easiest in terms of consent as it would impact on fewer people.

While not stated in the document, we understand that the tunnel option for the Basin Reserve would have been twice as expensive as the proposed bridge options due to the swampy ground etc.

As for the Buckle Street section, (which does not suffer from swampy ground) we note that NZTA will retain land ownership adjacent to Buckle Street so it has the option of upgrading the bypass and relocating Buckle Street in the future. It would seem that now is the time to make such decisions rather than build twice. The trench option (presumably cheaper than a tunnel) is not mentioned in the material and does not seem to have been costed.

Of the two bridge options proposed in the consultation document we prefer option A which is the more efficient of the two and the least obtrusive as well as being the cheapest. But, as mentioned above, we urge the government to put the tunnel options into the public arena, including the full cost benefit analysis, so an informed consultation can occur.

### **A Second Mt Victoria Tunnel**

We have long advocated the need for a second Mt Victoria Tunnel and we fully support the proposal as set out in the consultation material. A second tunnel has strong support in business community. A poll we carried out amongst our members in 2008, when the idea was proposed, found 84% support.

### **Ruahine Street and Wellington Road**

We have long advocated the widening and double laning of Ruahine Street and Wellington Road as a necessary component of the Cobham Drive to Buckle Street improvements. We fully support the proposals as set out in the consultative material but note they are more extensive than initially envisaged. We support the proposed investigations into whether with the number of additional lanes can be reduced while maintaining efficiency. Any savings here could go towards other parts of the project.