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Auckland Metro Programme Newsletter

March 2026

Testing the City Rail Link

City Rail Link (CRL) is on track to open in the second half of the year. The launch of a transformed Auckland rail network means more frequent trains, and new direct connections – such as being able to travel from West to South Auckland direct for the first time.

KiwiRail is working with CRL Ltd and Auckland Transport to complete the brand-new underground 'link', which will feature new routes, more trains and key improvements across the network, as well as converting Waitematā Station into a two-way interchange.

The second round of full CRL timetable tests to ensure a reliable train service for CRL passengers from day one will

take place during the school holidays (13-15 April). This testing will again require the network to be closed to passengers while trains operate under test conditions. See: <https://www.kiwirail.co.nz/our-network/our-regions/amp/upcoming-work/> for scheduled 2026 closures.

Alongside timetable testing, Mega May sees four Saturdays of testing simulated emergencies involving hundreds of real people in the stations and tunnels. These will test the CRL's safety and emergency systems and procedures for evacuating passengers.

Importantly, the tests allow operational staff, as well as Fire and Emergency

NZ, Police and Hone Hato St John, to familiarise themselves with all systems so they know what to do if the unexpected happens.

We're in the final months of work to complete the CRL and prepare it for opening.



Scan this QR code to sign up to receive KiwiRail works and updates notifications.



Rail Network Rebuild programme complete

In late January 2026, KiwiRail marked the completion of the five-year Rail Network Rebuild, which renewed tracks, foundations, and drainage across priority areas of Auckland's network. See: <https://www.kiwirail.co.nz/our-network/our-regions/amp/rail-network-rebuild/> for more information.

We would like to thank our neighbours for their patience as we completed these critical works.

Watch this video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuruoyWUjW8I upgrades to learn what we achieved over our summer closure.

The completion of this large-scale pre-City Rail Link programme of works marks the end of the lengthy disruptive closures for rail upgrades in Auckland.

SINCE EARLY 2021, KIWIRAIL HAS:

Replaced more than 80 kms of rail across the 182 km Auckland network

Installed 70 kms of modern drainage

Replaced 30 kms of foundations

Replaced 55 kms of rail sleepers

Installed 218 turnouts (*turnouts allow trains to switch tracks*)



Proactive Auckland metro maintenance to reduce future closures

As its owner and maintainer, KiwiRail manages the rail network throughout New Zealand. In Auckland, that means looking after a range of assets, from the brand-new City Rail Link (CRL) tunnels, signals and radio systems to much older parts of the network such as the 110-year-old Parnell Tunnel.

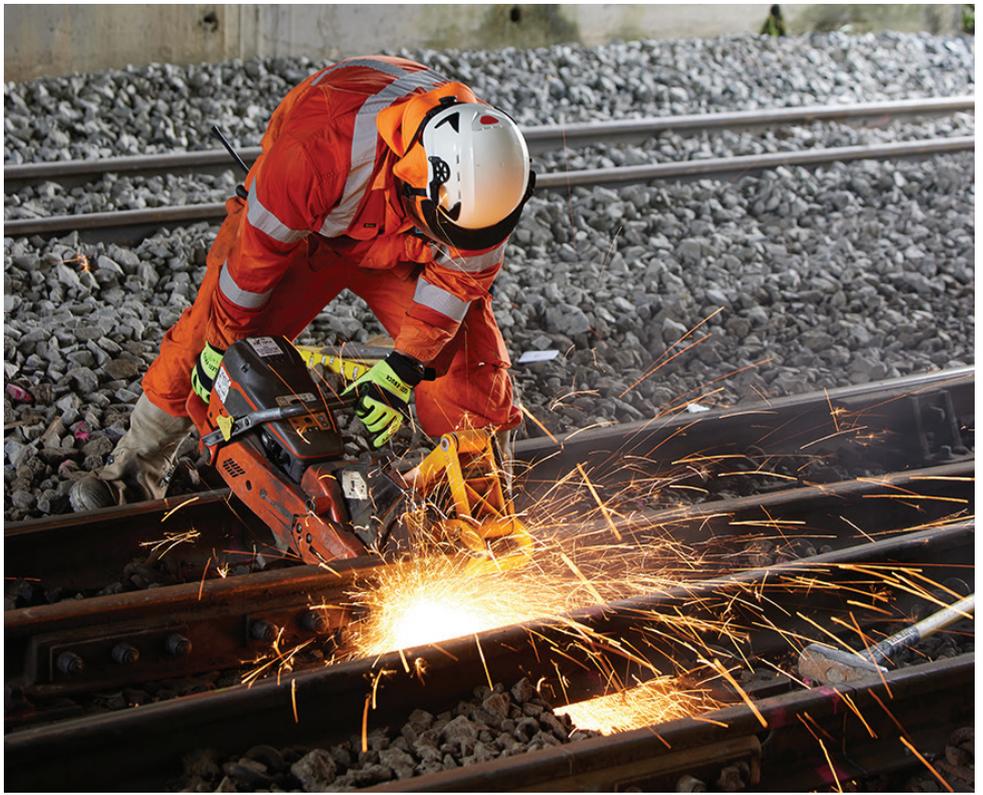
Maintaining the Auckland network is no easy feat with trains consistently running throughout the day and night. In order to get the job done, we currently use short night window periods for smaller maintenance tasks and have previously needed extended network shutdown periods to undertake larger works, including the recently completed Rail Network Rebuild.

With the greater frequency of trains CRL will bring, KiwiRail will be undertaking more proactive maintenance to keep up with the increase in use.

A new maintenance regime is being developed which means that lengthy full network closures as seen in recent years will be a thing of the past.

The aim is to always have some lines available for trains to run at any given day in Auckland all year round.

To keep on top of maintenance needs,



KiwiRail is dividing the Auckland network into 36 self-contained zones. In future this will allow for maintenance in one or more zones while trains continue to run elsewhere – something which has not been possible before CRL.

Maintenance in smaller sections will occur under partial closures and single-line running (where trains use only one of the two tracks available) alongside night-access windows.

CRL opened the opportunity for KiwiRail to introduce smarter technology and automation to the network, so inspections are faster and trains can keep moving while many of the upgrades continue.

Chief Metro and Capital Programme Office Dave Gordon says “In future, we’ll be mostly closing just one small section at night, similar to a lane closure on a road where you have one-way traffic for a period,

“Trains can still run in one direction while we’re doing the maintenance.”

He says it would take around 18 months to transition to the new maintenance regime.

Maintenance will be proactively scheduled to move on a cyclical basis around the 36 zones.

KiwiRail has created additional cross-overs, enhanced bi-directional signalling, further sectioned overhead lines and created on-tracking points for our maintenance vehicles.

These improvements mean that the network can run trains at greater frequency. ” Auckland will soon join other modern international metros successfully operating to meet future customer demands.” See: https://www.kiwirail.co.nz/assets/How-KiwiRail-will-maintain-the-Auckland-metro-network_FAQs.pdf for more information.



Henderson Station upgrade enters final stages

KiwiRail is nearing the finish line on the Henderson Station upgrade project, which is readying the key West Auckland connection for the opening of the City Rail Link (CRL).

Only minor works remain on the new third platform, which will allow for the greater numbers of trains CRL will bring when it opens in the second half of 2026. Final tasks include fitting out the emergency exit bridge and completing work on the existing platform extension, which will be in service after CRL opens, and on staff facilities.

“The big new structures are in place, signalling and overhead lines are complete and an amazing new mural was finished in early March,” says Project Manager Kyle Yoizin.

All three platforms have been resurfaced to prevent future ponding, and stairwells and platforms have been repainted for improved accessibility. Works will continue day and night during Easter and Anzac network closures in April (though trains will run before 2pm on 25 April to enable people to get to morning services) with the project due to be completed a couple of months later.

You can see when and where we are working here: <https://www.kiwirail.co.nz/our-network/our-regions/amp/upcoming-work/>

KiwiRail is completing the Henderson upgrade project on behalf of partners Auckland Transport and City Rail Link Ltd.

Henderson Station will play a key role in Auckland’s wider public transport network when CRL opens. It will be

served by both the East West Line into the city and the new Onehunga West Line, allowing West Auckland passengers to travel by train direct to South Auckland for the first time. Read more about Auckland Transport’s new routes here: <https://at.govt.nz/projects-initiatives/city-centre-projects-and-initiatives/city-rail-link-auckland-s-new-network-in-2026/how-the-train-network-and-timetables-will-change-for-the-city-rail-link>



Auckland beautification project

While our teams were working hard over summer to maintain and upgrade Auckland's rail network, we've continued our focus on reducing graffiti in the rail corridor.

Our beautification pilot is based on shifting mindsets to accept that complete eradication of graffiti isn't achievable. Instead, we are investing in artwork by local artists to promote feelings of community ownership and deter tagging. As the pilot extends into its second year, we are excited to be placing more murals on the Auckland network. During December and January, seven new artworks were installed across the city – transforming previous graffiti hotspots into vibrant, community-focused art.

These murals were created by a diverse group of artists, including up and coming rangatahi, artists trying large-scale works for the first time, and muralists with decades of experience. You can spot these artworks

while traveling by train through Pukekohe, Wiri, Papatoetoe, Parnell, Maungawhau, and Henderson.

We're proud to support local artists and take a proactive approach to beautifying our rail network. We hope people enjoy these pockets of art throughout the network, with more

planned over the coming months.

Please remember, these artists were invited to paint in the rail corridor by KiwiRail, and measures were in place to keep them safe. Entering the rail corridor without permission and protection is both extremely unsafe and illegal.



Drury Rail Stations update

In January, our Drury Rail Stations caught a glimpse of the future as test trains stopped at each platform for the first time to check the clearances between the trains and the new infrastructure.

Both Drury and Paerātā Stations have come a long way over the summer months. At both sites, asphaltting has been completed for the car parks, along with the line marking, wheel stops, lamp posts, and bus shelter installations. The wetlands and landscaping have also been completed. Works in the forecourt areas have started, including installation of lights, speakers, emergency egress stairs, additional shelters, yellow tactile pavers, and wiring. Teams continue to chip away at the remaining carpentry and steel works across both stations.

Once physical works are complete, Auckland Transport will carry out final onboarding of station systems and operational readiness activities with Auckland One Rail, preparing to open both stations to the public and passenger services in mid-2026.

In December, we held a dawn karakia

(blessing) at the Ngākōroa Railway Station site with our mana whenua partners and NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA). The ceremony took place from the new station site through to State Highway 22, where an access road will connect to the station.

Just before Christmas we were joined by the Minister of Transport, Hon. Chris Bishop, and other key stakeholders for a sod-turning event marking the start of physical works.

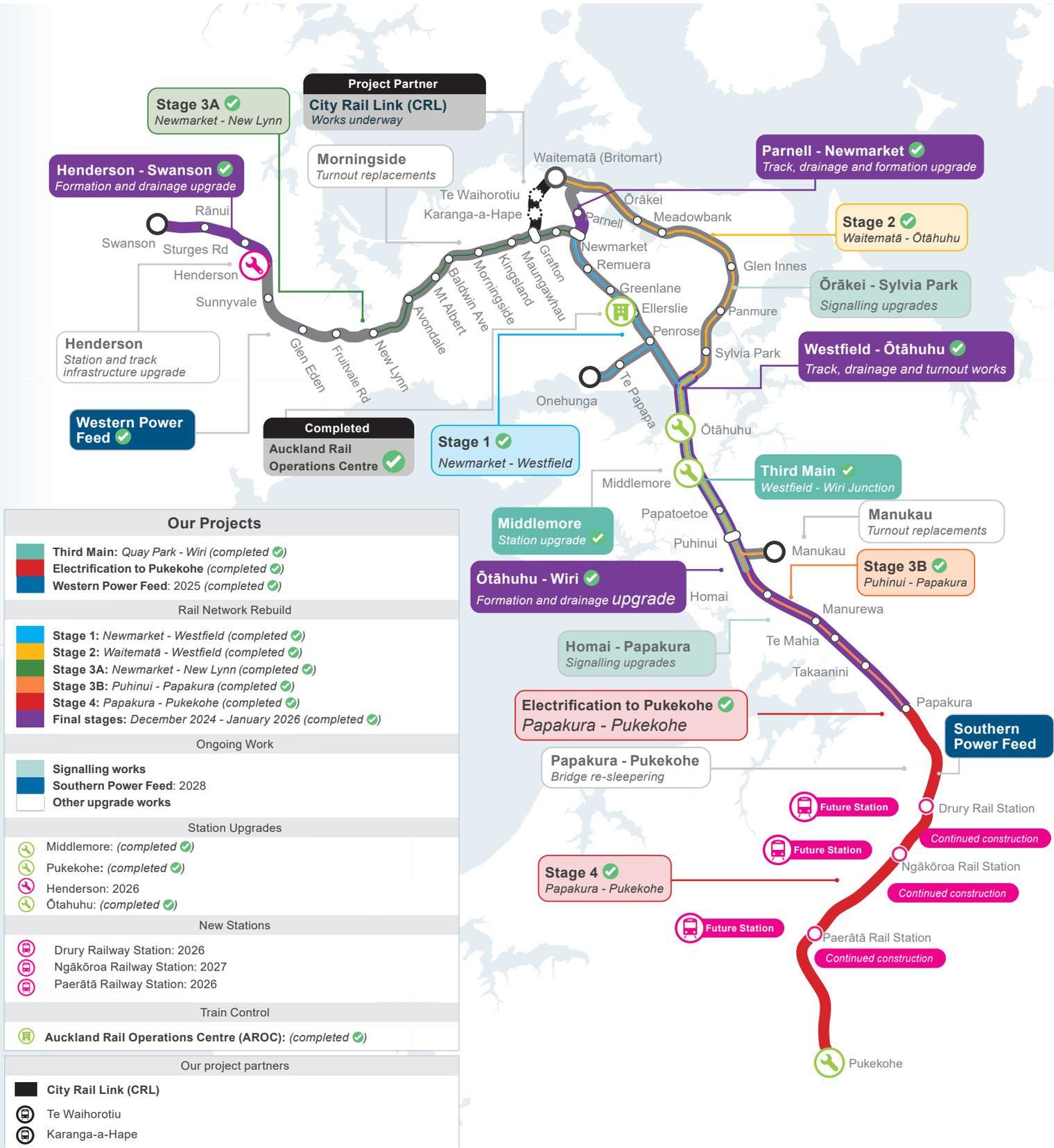
Our contractors are now established on site and have begun enabling works, with major works planned for the remainder of the year. The station is expected to be operational in 2027.

Thank you to the wider community for their ongoing patience as we work hard to improve public transport options for the region. We're now on the home stretch – so start planning your new train journeys from Drury and Paerātā Railway Stations for later this year.





KiwiRail Key Auckland Upgrade Projects



If you have queries please contact our Community Engagement team on 0800 801 070 ext 43042 or by email at contactus@kiwirail.co.nz. For public transport information, visit www.at.govt.nz or call 09 366 6400.

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