

**Ministerial Briefing**

*COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE*

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| To   | Hon. Michael Wood, Minister of Transport   | 21 October 2021 |
| CC   | Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance<br>Hon Dr David Clark, Minister for State Owned Enterprises<br>Sue McCormack, Acting KiwiRail Chair |                 |
| From | Greg Miller, KiwiRail Group Chief Executive  |                 |

**AUCKLAND METRO RAIL WORK PROGRAMME**

**PURPOSE**

1. This briefing responds to your request for an overview of the work needed on the Auckland metro rail network over the next five years, both ahead of the start of City Rail Link operation and following it, and the associated communications plan.
2. This forms part of our response to your letter following the 17 August 2021 meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Auckland metro rail network is in a state of transformation to enable a substantial uplift in public transport patronage by 2030. The City Rail Link (CRL) is an essential component to increase service options from 2025 onward, but this is dependent on other improvements to the network that KiwiRail is delivering. Planned disruption will continue to be a reality for rail commuters while the work is undertaken.
4. The increase in service frequency and patronage growth in Auckland commuter rail over the last decade was not matched with funding for ongoing network maintenance. Consequently, there is a significant amount of catch-up renewal work now being delivered across the 100km network to raise it to a resilient and reliable state. Raising the standard of the network is crucial to realise the increased service frequency and passenger growth benefits that will come with CRL. This work is known as the Rail Network Growth Impact Management (RNGIM) programme.
5. In addition to this upgrade work, routine maintenance on the network must also continue, including a substantial amount of rail grinding.

6. KiwiRail is also assisting in the construction activities within the City Rail Link and delivering works for City Rail Link Limited (CRL) at Mt Eden, Newmarket and Britomart as part of the CRL Project.
7. At the same time, KiwiRail is undertaking three New Zealand Upgrade Programme (NZUP) projects to further improve and enlarge the metro network – Wiri to Quay Park (Third Main Line), Pukekohe to Papakura Electrification (P2P) and the Drury Stations projects.
8. Finally, in the years ahead work could also potentially begin on other capital projects identified – but not currently funded – through ATAP. This includes an additional traction power-feed, the development of Henderson Station, progressive fencing of the rail corridor, and signalling improvements to increase network capacity.
9. The combined work through these programmes is substantial and it must be carried out while commuter and freight services continue operating at a credible level – a challenge that will require compromises and cooperation to safely complete the work in good time.

## **JOINT PLANNING WITH AUCKLAND TRANSPORT**

10. Late last month, KiwiRail senior managers met with their equivalents at Auckland Transport (AT) and put forward an initial schedule of works over the next five years.
11. As shown in **Appendix 1**, while substantial blocks of time are needed on the Southern Line for NZUP – particularly the P2P electrification, which includes building the platforms for the Drury Stations – the broader RNGIM project touches all parts of the network and has the greatest cumulative impact.
12. Getting enough access to the network to complete RNGIM, essentially the equivalent of rebuilding a third of the Auckland network, was a key issue raised with AT. While KiwiRail's current access arrangement makes use of nights, weekends and public holiday periods for much of our work, it will be insufficient to complete RNGIM in a reasonable timeframe. Essentially, there are about 1,060 work days on the network needed to complete RNGIM. We calculate that under the current access arrangement it could take to 2041 for RNGIM to be completed. **Appendix 2** illustrates the increase in access needed.
13. With a lot more planned access and moving progressively around the network, KiwiRail is confident that RNGIM could be completed in 2026, without the need for a full network shutdown. The initial focus would be to prioritise upgrades to the core network which are critical to CRL before it begins operation, then move onto the outer parts of the network. **Appendix 3** illustrates how work could be structured to move progressively around the network in the 5-year timeframe.
14. It is important to note that the three appendices are indicative only and are designed to illustrate the amount of work required on the network.

15. The scale of the work is immense and KiwiRail has ensured this is well understood by AT, who now recognise the work is necessary and acknowledge the need to do it in good time.
16. As a result of recent meetings, by mid-November KiwiRail and AT expect to have established a new governance group of senior executives to endorse a schedule of access and resulting disruption, including potential line closures, and the related communication strategy. This is a very complex piece of work, as we balance timeliness, and service continuity over the next 5 years.
17. The approach could include a combination of:
  - a. AT's initial idea to close lines or sections of line, possibly for months at a time, to allow RINGM and any relevant NZUP work to be completed outright. This would require commuter services to be replaced by buses but would avoid longer lasting disruption and operational changes for commuters. Once reopened, the lines would be up to standard and without speed restrictions, which currently impact AT's timetables.
  - b. Closing lines during the day between peaks to carry out work. This would also presumably require bus replacement and is not as efficient as complete closures, given the time needed for staff to set up and decamp. This could result in works taking a lot longer.
  - c. There is potential on parts of the double-tracked network to close one line for sections, diverting trains onto the other line. This single line running is similar to Stop/Go on the road network and allows one side of the track to be closed for construction or maintenance work while diverting traffic to the other side to keep the network open. This would support the continuation of metro services in some parts of the network, albeit with likely timetable changes. This is the approach taken with crossovers being installed between Papakura-Pukekohe over Christmas, which will allow freight services to continue operating while P2P and Drury Stations work is carried out over the next few years. As part of the existing programmes, additional infrastructure is being installed at strategic locations on the network to allow for more single line running operations.
18. In the first quarter 2022 we expect to have finalised the work schedule with AT. By the start of the next financial year (July 2022) the new access arrangement will need to be in place, so that RINGM and NZUP can proceed at pace – in order to meet project deadlines. We will work with AT to ensure you are across this arrangement when it is completed.

## **DISRUPTION COMMUNICATION**

19. Whatever the final work schedule, it is clear to both parties that it will involve disruption to commuters. This medium-term disruption is necessary to unlock long-term improvements for commuters.

20. There is a need to communicate clearly and there needs to be a single, unified story for rail users to know what is happening and why. The focus needs to be on the benefits to come with CRL and a resilient metro network – with the disruption seen as an inconvenient but necessary step to deliver those benefits.
21. A well-coordinated marketing programme involving all parties is vital to complement and support existing stakeholder engagement and communications activities to drive this awareness. This includes regular updates on CRL benefits, for example Auckland Transport announcing new train frequency post-CRL.
22. KiwiRail is exploring options for strengthening existing collaboration through the establishment of a Strategic Communications Steering Group, responsible for planning and executing effective and coordinated communication to all stakeholders impacted by the work on the Auckland metro network. The Steering Group membership will need to include senior representation from AT, the new Metro Operator, CRL and KiwiRail.
23. The communications approach and materials will be finalised in tandem with the work schedule. Getting public stakeholder support, such as from yourself, Auckland's Mayor and councillors, and the like, is an important part of the communications strategy.
24. Though yet to be finalised, our joint public messaging is likely to say:

#### Auckland Rail

- A lot is expected of Auckland's rail network. Aucklanders rely on it to travel around the city and the entire country relies on it for the movement of critical imports and exports
- Using rail means fewer cars and trucks on busy city roads, making for safer journeys
- Rail supports climate change goals by reducing emissions
- There is a massive programme of work underway to develop a world-class rail service for Aucklanders – and expanding the network as Auckland grows
- The opening of the CRL will change the way passenger services are delivered, allowing for shorter, faster journeys and more frequent services on a better-connected network
- Work is needed across the wider network to support this – just as work was done across the wider Auckland motorway system ahead of the opening of the Waterview tunnel

#### Work that needs to be done

- The Government is investing more than \$1.5 billion to upgrade and extend Auckland's wider rail network (to realise the benefits of CRL)
- KiwiRail is working across Auckland to make changes that will mean faster, more frequent and more reliable train services
- There will be less congestion through the busiest parts of the network, allowing for more services and smoother passenger and freight operations
- Passengers will be able to stay on the same trains to travel between Pukekohe and the city and there will be more stations in that fast-growing part of the city
- Old sections of track that slow trains down will be replaced, and equipment modernised, to ensure services are reliable

- Doing all this work at once on a network that operates 24/7, 365 days a year is a complex undertaking
- We are building a world class rail network that will benefit all of us, but there will be growing pains along the way
- The scale of the work to be done means KiwiRail will need more time on the tracks in addition to usual weekend, overnight and public holiday closures
- With much of the work only done safely when no trains are running, this will mean changes to your usual train services
- We're all working together to plan works in a way that minimises overall disruption and will give you plenty of notice of the changes that will need to happen
- We ask you to bear with us. When all of this work is finished in the next few years and CRL begins operating, Auckland will have a world class railway that will carry you quickly and easily around the city

## IMPACT ON TE HUIA

25. As noted previously, KiwiRail is working with the Waikato councils on getting Te Huia into The Strand during weekdays. Our preference is to begin these services next year, after the Christmas/New Year 3-week block of line. This includes a "wheel's free" block of line between Papakura and Pukekohe, that will allow KiwiRail to install a number of crossovers, which ensure freight services will continue to run over the next few years as the P2P and Drury Stations projects progress. These cross overs will also support getting Te Huia through this section of line.
26. Beyond this Christmas period, the work between Papakura-Pukekohe and any closures of line on its route to The Strand will create disruption to Te Huia over the next two to three years. This will be considered as part of our planning with AT and will be shared with the Waikato councils once finalised.
27. We appreciate that limiting Te Huia services in the months following it reaching The Strand is not ideal, and that this will result in the need for clear engagement with the Waikato Regional Council and other stakeholders. However, it has always been KiwiRail's view that the necessary work on the Auckland network to enable CRL has to take precedence. We must keep our focus on the optimal operation of the network in the long-term.
28. KiwiRail has also proposed to AT that their Papakura-Pukekohe diesel shuttle service be stopped and replaced by buses between Q3 2022 to about Q1 2025, to allow the bulk of the electrification, platform and RNGIM work on that section of line to be completed. We understand the proposal has now been accepted by AT's Board, subject to details around bus replacement and the scheduling of RNGIM works in this sector. [REDACTED]

## RECOMMENDATION

29. We request that you:

***Note** the contents of this briefing*