

Stage 3 Q&A

Why didn't you take this approach (less disruptive) for Stages 1 and 2?

Minimising disruption for commuters is important but our approach for Stage 3 was not practical for the earlier stages.

Our aim is to complete all the RNR work before the City Rail Link (CRL) is completed – which was expected by the end of 2024, when RNR was announced (October 2022).

Working only at nights, on some weekends, and allowing single line running would have significantly delayed the completion of Stage 1 and 2 and pushed the completion date for the whole RNR project well beyond the end of 2024.

CRL is now expected to be complete in late 2025, allowing more time and flexibility for RNR work.

While RNR work could be done more efficiently if the Western Line was fully closed for a period of time, as we did in previous stages, it would have a major impact on commuters.

For example, unlike Stage 1 and 2 (part of the Southern Line and the Eastern Line respectively), there is no ability to divert trains down alternative lines and Western Line commuters would have much longer journeys on rail replacement bus services.

Isn't it dangerous to be working next to live overhead wires for single line running on the Western Line between March and mid-May?

Having overheads on one (of the two) tracks turned on at a time will require us to take a different approach to what we have done for previous stages.

We are undertaking the most invasive work – digging down to remove and then replace old formation – during the usual Christmas/New Year network wide closure, when no commuter services are running and the overhead wires can be completely turned off. Replacing formation on one track can destabilise the track beside it, so commuter trains cannot run when formation work is being carried out.

Between March and May 2024, when one of the two tracks at a time on the Western Line will be open for commuter services, the focus will be on drainage improvement work on the other track. This will be done on the far side of the track (away from where commuter trains will be running) and we are introducing different ways of working to ensure safety. We will also be working at night when trains aren't running.

If you're working on the Western Line at night between March and May 2024 – why can't you have both tracks open for commuter trains during the day?

There is a lot of work to do and reopening both tracks would require us to completely mobilise and de-mobilise where we are working every day - which means it would take significantly longer to complete the upgrade work. This would create a longer period of disruption for commuters and it would also be more expensive.

Both Western Line tracks need formation and drainage work, including the original single track which dates back to the 1880s.

Why are you not completing upgrade work on the entire Western Line?

We have had to make pragmatic decisions to get the best value from the \$75 million we have been given by Waka Kotahi to continue the Rail Network Rebuild.

By focusing on the Western Line (Newmarket – New Lynn) in Stage 3, once complete we will have upgraded most of the inner Auckland metro network (Southern Line Newmarket – Otahuhu, Eastern Line Britomart – Otahuhu, and Western Line Newmarket – New Lynn). This is important, as the inner part of the network has the highest passenger patronage.

As part of Stage 3, KiwiRail is undertaking more minor, drainage improvement works on the Southern Line south of Puhinui. In this part of Auckland more of rail line tends to be lower than the surrounding area, so improving drainage is crucial for its resilience (in comparison, more of the Western Line tends to be elevated) and minimising weather event impacts - which disrupt both commuter and freight trains. Secondly, the line between Papakura and Pukekohe is current closed to commuter traffic so the work can be done efficiently and without creating more passenger disruption. We will need to come back and replace the formation on this part of the Southern Line.

KiwiRail and AT want to upgrade the entire Auckland metro network and we are committed to upgrading the outer sections – including coming back to replace formation on the Southern Line (Pukekohe to Puhinui) and fully upgrading the rest of the Western Line (Swanson - New Lynn). We will be having discussions with Waka Kotahi and Central Government Ministers about further funding required to complete RNR. KiwiRail is still developing an exact understanding of those costs and information regarding timing is not available at this time. Our goal is to complete as much RNR work as possible before the City Rail Link begins operating, likely in 2026.

Why is the Rail Network Rebuild costing more than the \$330 million originally announced (in October 2022)?

The funding pressure is due to more civil work (as part of replacing aging track foundations) being required.

The amount of civil work needed to be undertaken was always subject to confirmation once physical works commenced and the below-ground condition could be fully determined. The outcome of work in the areas so far (Stage 1 and 2) have resulted in more significant formation replacement than previously thought.

To enable more frequent trains, this foundation replacement work needs to be done. We have received \$75m additional funding from Waka Kotahi, which will allow Stage 3 to be completed.

We will be having discussions with the Government and Waka Kotahi about further funding to complete RNR in Auckland.