



The Campaign For Better Transport

Mr. David Bennett
Member of Parliament
c/- Parliament Buildings
Wellington

27th October 2009

Dear Mr. Bennett,

Your letter to those persons who sent you postcards supporting the Hamilton to Auckland Rail service is inadequate because it focuses on the alleged problems of such a service and ignores all the benefits gained.

First, you claim the railcars will be environmentally worse than cars. Wrong! They will put out emissions equivalent to six to ten cars and yet remove between 70 and 90 cars from the roads per trip. Those cars would have to become many times cleaner and more efficient to even equal a railcar's energy and emissions performance, but even this is ignoring the fact that a railcar can be upgraded to a more fuel efficient and cleaner engine too.

Secondly, you express concern about the demand on funds that rail would require and its effect on the Waikato Expressway. The main effect will be to obviate the necessity to widen the expressway as the initial one reaches full capacity, saving another \$0.8 to \$1.0 billion to add additional lanes. One lane of motorway has the capacity on average of 2,400 commuters per hour while one rail track can at peak have the capacity of ten times that if needed, a tremendous saving on taxpayer money.

Most countries with a comparative connection between a city of Auckland's size and density and a satellite city such as Hamilton have both modes. They do not, and New Zealand must not put all its eggs in one transport-mode basket as you naively suggest. (See website below)

Present indications are that a trial service would cost the average ratepayer about \$9 to \$12 per annum compared with \$417 for roading. Perhaps with some adjustment it could even be absorbed into the roading budget.

The railway track and railcars are there ready to be used for a trial run with little further cost involved compared with the \$1.9 billion being spent on the Expressway. The Palmerston North to Wellington Capital Connection rail service now requires no subsidy and the proposed Waikato service is likely to achieve this too given the opportunity.

Thirdly, you express concern about Britomart's capacity. There is an interim remedy being considered by ARTA to somewhat increase the capacity of the existing tunnel leading to Britomart by the use of 'bi-directional signalling', which would allow a train to leave on the same track that it entered - and which would free it from having to cross over other tracks which may not be safely clear of other trains thus avoiding delaying exit. Also when the Waikato train proves itself increased services will arrive at off peak when Britomart capacity is not a problem.

There is the alternative of terminating the railcar at Newmarket to let passengers walk across platform to board a Britomart bound train. This is much more convenient than parking a car at



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Pukekohe and having to walk a considerable distance to catch a Britomart-bound train. (see below).

Fourthly you advocate driving from Hamilton to Pukekohe, Papakura or Manurewa and then park and ride to Britomart. There is a problem here because each parking area and the surrounding streets are filled with cars from early in the morning. The advent of suburban trains upgraded from four cars to six cars and an increased frequency from twenty minutes to ten minutes will attract more commuters and exacerbate the problem. There will be no room for Waikato commuter cars any where near South Auckland rail stations and any remote parking finally found will have a parking meter that has to be fed.

You overlook the availability of the train's on board refreshment and toilet facilities that eliminate stops that car commuters inevitably make.

You fail to grasp that trains permit business commuters to start and finish their working day while commuting, saving up to four working hours otherwise lost. Each seat has a power point available.

Not everyone has a car. There are the non-drivers including the old and the invalided. You may suggest a bus with no toilet, refreshments and computer facilities that gets stuck in the Auckland congestion will suffice for them, but this would be unwise.

You do not take into account that while cars can manage a legal top speed of 100 kph, the present railcars with a top speed of 120 kph can easily manage 100 kph for much more of the journey if that is required, due to fewer speed restrictions, less congestion and gentler gradients.

You seem to have ignored any vision for the future. There is a report due soon which examines electrification of rail from Hamilton to Papakura. Electrification has a substantial initial cost, but with tremendous subsequent benefits such as higher acceleration allowing higher speed to be maintained between stations and higher energy efficiency. Over time electrification becomes more cost efficient.

New equipment and upgraded track will allow a top speed of 160 kph like Brisbane is achieving on the same narrow gauge. Road traffic can never aspire to this speed. However our narrow gauge can still be developed in the future to higher speeds again, say 200 to 250 kph if you like.

With the predicted shortage and escalating price of oil this line would become independent of fossil fuels for both passenger and freight. See

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10588388

Why would an MP serving an electorate NOT be promoting something his community expressly wants? (Polls show 85% of the electorate in favour of rail. A potential market of 900 passengers per day has been identified once the service has proved itself). The community has not been as strongly focused on wanting an expressway, which will cost the taxpayers dearly! You are the servant of those you represent and you should not impose your minority view on the people.

This letter pending your reply will be widely circulated.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Palmer, BE. Mech. Eng.

Committee Member,

Campaign for Better Transport.



Appendix

Queensland Narrow Gauge High Speed Rail

System Operator: Queensland Rail

Opening date: 1998-2001

Route length: (Brisbane-Rockhampton) 639km electrified. Compare (Auckland to Hamilton) 106 km. (Auckland to Wellington) 492 km

Route length; (Rockhampton-Cairns) non-electrified 1,042km Compare (Picton to Invercargill) 693 km

Maximum line speed: 160km/h..

Gauge: 1,067mm (3ft 6in)

Voltage: 25kV.

Total Capital Cost: 1,681 km for \$590 million

Population: Brisbane Metropolitan 1.5 million. Compare Auckland 1.4 million

Population: Queensland 4,279,400. Compare New Zealand 4,332,631