



# The Campaign For Better Transport

Hon Gerry Brownlee  
Minister of Transport  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Cc: Hon Nikki Kaye, MP for Central Auckland  
Hon Paula Bennett, MP for Waitakere  
Rt Hon John Key

20-May-2013

Dear Minister

## **Re City Rail Link**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Campaign for Better Transport in regard to recent public comments you have made on Auckland's City Rail Link (CRL). Your comments indicate that you have been poorly advised of the main benefits of the project, and that you also misunderstand the costs associated with the CRL.

Specifically, on 30<sup>th</sup> April on Campbell Live, you stated:

- That the CRL is "a short little loop"
- That the CRL will cost \$3 billion dollars
- That "we" (implying the central Government) are currently funding \$1.6 billion dollars to expand the rail network in Auckland.
- That "we" are spending \$790m in the next three years on public transport in Auckland.

I would like to take the opportunity to correct and clarify each of these points. As the Minister of Transport it is vital you have an accurate understanding of Auckland transport issues.



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## The CRL is a not a short little loop

The CRL is a 3.5km rail tunnel forming a direct link between the Western Line near Mt Eden and Britomart, bypassing the current dog-leg via Newmarket as shown on the map below.



While the CRL is relatively short at 3.5km, in practice it will never function as a loop. Instead the most likely operating pattern will be for Western Line trains to proceed directly to Britomart via the tunnel, continuing on either the Southern or Eastern Lines. Similarly trains from the South and East will continue through Britomart station to the west.

Western line commuters will enjoy considerable travel time savings on journeys to Britomart and beyond due to the CRL. For instance the trip from Henderson to Britomart currently takes about 45 minutes because of the dog-leg via Newmarket; via the CRL this trip is expected to take around 35 minutes – a saving of 10 minutes. Travel time savings of this magnitude will no doubt attract even more rail passengers from the west than there are currently. (From Auckland Transport's most recent survey, some 5,000 people a day board the train at stations within Paula Bennett's Waitakere electorate.)

In addition, three new stations will be built on the new CRL: Newton, K' Rd and Aotea. These stations will greatly increase the accessibility of the CBD region to all commuters on the rail network. For instance a trip from New Lynn to Aotea Station (near the Sky Tower) will take just 23 minutes at peak time – faster than a car journey and much faster than the current journey via public transport, which takes 45 minutes.



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However, the key reason to construct the CRL is to increase the capacity of the entire Auckland rail network. The rail network is the backbone of the public transport network, since it offers the highest peak time capacity for people of any transport mode.

Currently Britomart is a dead-end terminal station, with all trains having to exit via the same two tracks they arrived on. Consequently there is a relatively low limit (approximately 21 trains per hour inbound) to the number of trains the station can handle. As Britomart station is by far the most popular station on the network, a bottleneck is created which limits the number of trains that can operate on the entire network.

The CRL opens up the capacity of the entire network by turning the Britomart cul-de-sac into a 'through route', ensuring we get value for money from the rail network and significantly enhancing the capacity of Auckland's public transport network. The City Rail Link creates a second rail entrance to the city centre (from Mt Eden), doubling the number of trains that can enter the city centre at any one time. Capacity is further increased through the reduction of conflicting movements on the rail network as trains do not have to 'turn around' and return the way they came – they can simply keep on going.

The CRL is a necessary prerequisite to any future expansion of the rail network in Auckland.

## **The CRL will not cost \$3 billion**

The 2011 business case review confirmed a cost estimate of \$2.4 billion; however note that this also includes other network upgrades such as double tracking the Onehunga Line and the cost of additional trains.

More recent estimates expect the cost of land purchases, constructing the tunnel itself, the three new stations and track works to be under \$2 billion.

## **Central Government is not funding \$1.6 billion to expand the rail network in Auckland**

We assume that the \$1.6 billion figure quoted is comprised of:

- \$600 million for Project DART
- \$500 million for the electrification infrastructure
- \$500 million for the new electric trains

Project Dart has been completed now and included double tracking of the Western Line, station upgrades including Newmarket Station and New Lyn Station, reinstating the Onehunga line and the new Manukau spur line. This was funded from the 2006 budget which precedes National forming a Government.

Funding for electrification infrastructure was initiated in the 2007 budget, with an appropriation for both Wellington and Auckland track upgrades. When National came to power, the regional fuel tax funding mechanism was stopped and the electrification project was put on hold. Eventually this went ahead and was paid for, as I understand it, from nationwide fuel taxes.

Auckland's new electric trains are being funded by way of a loan which is repayable by Auckland at commercial rates of interest. It is noted that National contributed a crown grant of \$90m to procure more electric trains than originally specified. NZTA are also



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contributing to the loan repayments in the same way they provide money for PT operating costs.

At the same time, Auckland Transport track access fees to KiwiRail were increased to in excess of \$20 million annually.

In summary, the claim that the Government is funding \$1.6 billion to expand the rail network is patently an exaggerated and misleading claim. The current budget includes little in the way of future funding for Auckland's rail network.

## **Central Government is not spending \$790m in the next three years on public transport in Auckland**

Prompted by an earlier claim in the media from your office that \$890m has been budgeted for public transport in Auckland over three years, I wrote to your office seeking clarification on where this figure came from.

As you will be aware, you directed my enquiry to the NZTA, who responded with the following:

*For clarification, the \$890 million is the combined committed expenditure from the National Land Transport Fund (administered by the NZTA) and funding from Auckland Council for Auckland public transport services and infrastructure, between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2015.*

*The NZTA's share of the \$890 million is \$488 million. This is made up of \$449 million for public transport services and \$39 million for public transport infrastructure.*

Almost half of the quoted figure comes from Auckland Council ratepayers, not from central Government. Without diminishing the fact that \$488m over three years is a substantial commitment from the NLTF, it is misleading to be implying \$790 or \$890 million is being spent by central Government, when clearly it is not.

In summary, I hope you have found this information helpful in understanding more about the City Rail Link, and that we now have a common understanding of the project objectives and costs.

You will be aware that we have previously sought to meet with you, and again we would welcome a meeting with you to discuss Auckland transport issues in more detail in the near future. Please advise if this is possible.

Regards

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