

Road Transport Forum NZ Submission to:

Let's Get Wellington Moving

on:

Thorndon Quay and Hutt Road

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Road Transport Forum (RTF) submission on Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) proposals to Thorndon Quay and Hutt Road

1. Representation

- 1.1 Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF) is made up of several RTF members include Road Transport Association NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is some 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in commercial road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.
- 1.2 The road freight transport industry is 3.0% of New Zealand's gross domestic product (GDP) and it carries 93% of the nation's freight. We employ around 26,000 people and vocational education is of growing importance in our industry due to a shortage of drivers and other workers.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The RTF provides sector leadership and believes we all need to operate in an environment where the following must be managed and co-exist:
 - 2.1.1 The safety and wellbeing of our drivers and other road users. Our drivers are our most valuable asset.
 - 2.1.2 The impacts of transport on our environment.
 - 2.1.3 The transport of goods by road is economically feasible and viable and it contributes the best way it can to benefit our economy.
- 2.2 The RTF has been proactively participating in LGWM's conversations since the latter started in 2016 and our most recent formal feedback was in July 2020 on the Golden Mile Improvements.
- 2.3 The RTF is also mindful that its earlier feedback, such as the lack of city planning and the lack of consideration of the impacts on commercial traffic, does not appear to have been captured in the various LGWM summaries to date. Given our earlier view that LGWM is not thoroughly considering the risks, trade-offs and opportunity costs we question the authenticity of the consultation. We urge LGWM to take these matters into due consideration before forging ahead regardless.

- 2.4 The lens and scope of our submission covers the impacts and risks related to commercial (road freight) traffic and the economy that traffic serves.
- 2.5 To supplement this submission the regional trucking associations for which the RTF provides unified national representation will, at their discretion, provide explicit submissions on changes in their respective locations.

3. Clarifications and presumptions

- 3.1 Much of the information on the proposed corridor changes provided by LGWM [Have your say: Thorndon Quay & Hutt Road » Let's Get Wellington Moving \(lgwm.nz\)](#) is still at a conceptual stage and the current level of development is inadequate to gain a good understanding of all the impacts.
- 3.2 Development of this submission has been particularly challenging because there is a plethora of information on the LGWM website however, there is a lack of clear guidance and direction in terms of overall structure and connectedness of that information. Given this issue and 3.1 above we urge LGWM to acknowledge that there is considerable risk in consulting at this time.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding 3.1 and 3.2 above, we were grateful to host a joint delegation from LGWM and Wellington City Council on 2 June 2021 to gain further clarification on their intent and design. That clarification provided presumptions important to underpinning our submission and they include:
 - 3.3.1 The proposed changes to Hutt Road include:
 - 3.3.1.1 The proposed median will likely have yet to be determined gaps to enable light vehicles to undertake U-turns.
 - 3.3.1.2 In both directions, the lanes closest to the road centreline and currently used by all vehicles will in essence be retained.
 - 3.3.1.3 The left lanes in both directions will at specified times be Special Vehicle Lanes (SVL).
 - 3.3.1.4 Buses and trucks will be allowed in the (SVL).
 - 3.3.1.5 Parking in off peak times will be allowed in the southbound direction.

- 3.3.1.6 There will be increased use of the U-turn facility on Centennial Highway between Jarden Mile and Melvern Road.
- 3.3.2 The proposed roundabout on Aotea Quay will:
 - 3.3.2.1 Enable southbound traffic heading to the Interislander Ferry Terminal (Ferry Terminal) to travel on State Highway 1 and take the Aotea off-ramp instead of using Hutt Road.
 - 3.3.2.2 Enable northbound traffic departing the Ferry Terminal to join State Highway 1 at the Aotea on-ramp instead of using Hutt Road.
 - 3.3.2.3 Likely be biased to the current lane alignment so that southbound traffic remains able to pass straight through.
 - 3.3.2.4 Be supported by smart signs giving motorists warning in the case of hidden queues etc.
- 3.3.3 The proposed changes to Thorndon Quay include:
 - 3.3.3.1 Changes to parking and introducing a bi-directional cycle lane.
 - 3.3.3.2 Currently there is one lane in each direction for general traffic and capacity will increase because in addition to the current lanes, a peak time bus lane will be added.

4. Direct impacts on heavy traffic

- 4.1 Based on the clarification and presumptions in section 3 above, the RTF understand that the impacts of the respective changes on heavy freight traffic to be:
 - 4.1.1 The Hutt Road change will likely result in:
 - 4.1.1.1 Relatively small improvement to traffic flows because whilst the lane capacity does not substantially change, freight traffic will be able to travel in the Special Purpose Lane as priority flow.
 - 4.1.1.2 Northbound vehicles leaving sites on the harbour side of Hutt Road will not be able to make right turns therefore, they will need to first travel southbound to the proposed Aotea roundabout then U-turn.
 - 4.1.1.3 Northbound vehicles accessing sites on the harbour side of Hutt Road will not be able to make right turns therefore, they will need to travel northbound to the existing U-turn facility near Glover St which will then enable them to become southbound.

- 4.1.2 The Aotea Quay roundabout will likely result in:
 - 4.1.2.1 Improved access to the Ferry Terminal because heavy vehicles may travel further on SH1 if approaching the Ferry Terminal or may access SH1 earlier if departing the Ferry Terminal.
 - 4.1.2.2 Negligible impact on heavy traffic south of Aotea Quay if the roundabout is offset and includes a straight through southbound lane.
 - 4.1.2.3 Increased congestion and delays for northbound traffic on Aotea Quay south of the roundabout because every vehicle in the northbound flow will need to slow on their approach to the roundabout.
- 4.1.3 The Thorndon Quay change will likely result in:
 - 4.1.3.1 Small improvements because buses will travel in a new bus lane thereby reducing their inherent impacts of congestion and disruption to traffic flow.
 - 4.1.3.2 Increased difficulty for vehicles serving the businesses and properties on Thorndon Quay given the greater separation between where they park and their place of work.

5. Generic comments on design and use

- 5.1 LGWM advises there is a desire for street beautification on Hutt Road and Thorndon Quay, however we were unable to find any information on the significance of that desire against other competing factors.
- 5.2 We disagree with the conceptual proposal to convert potential trafficable space to gardens because:
 - 5.2.1 It somewhat ironically reduces the width and safety of the bi-directional cycleway.
 - 5.2.2 The trees are inherent direct hazards and create second order risk to safety by adversely effecting visibility and sight lines.
 - 5.2.3 The gardens and trees will require maintenance which will in turn create unnecessary on-going cost and disruption.
- 5.3 As a consequence of the proposed median on Hutt Road we understand LGWM are suggesting that northbound vehicles wishing to access properties on the harbourside of Hutt Road will travel north to the U-turn facility of Centennial Drive then complete the U-turn and head south. We disagree with that suggestion because:

- 5.3.1 In the worst case, that necessitates additional travel of approximately 6 km and road users are unlikely to tolerate that inconvenience. We believe it is more likely that those road users will abandon their attempt to access those properties.
- 5.3.2 From a safety perspective the U-turn facility on Centennial Drive (Photo 1 below) is poorly designed and heavy vehicle combinations would be required to stop in the live right hand northbound passing lane prior to making the U-turn. On safety considerations alone, we do not believe LGWM's suggestion is a viable option.
- 5.3.3 In the event LGWM continue considering this U-turn facility as a plausible option for heavy vehicle combinations then we urge it to redesign the approach and stacking distance.

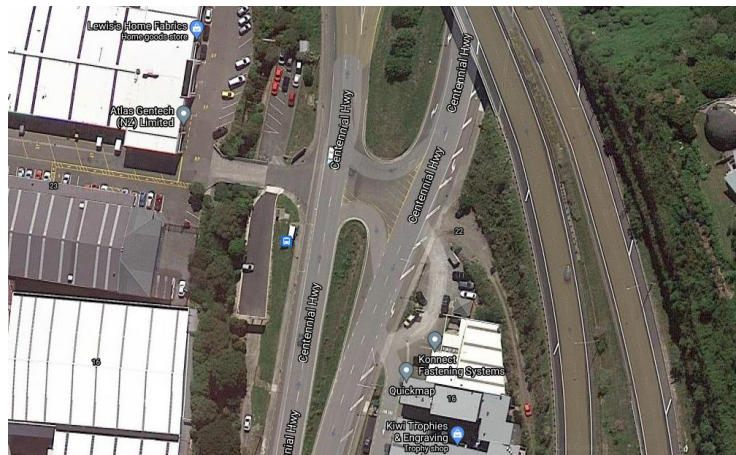
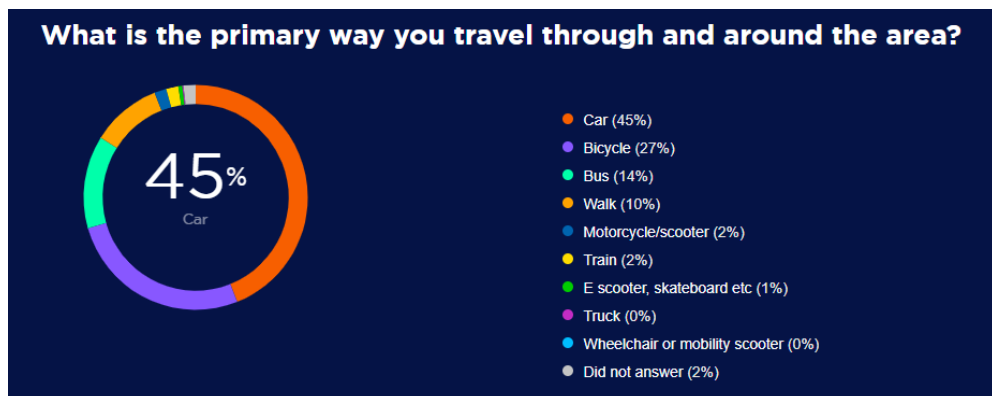


Photo 1: U-turn bay between Jarden Mile and Melvern Road

- 5.4 We acknowledge and agree that the proposed cycleway on Thorndon Quay will be beneficial, particularly in terms of promoting modal shift and improved safety. However, our concerns are:
- 5.4.1 Despite the provision of purpose-built facilities, a significant number of cyclists frequently insist on using the road, the current cycleways on Hutt Road and Petone to Ngauranga are two local examples. These cyclists are a significant hazard to, and invariably disrupt, the flow and speed of cars and trucks thereby reducing the benefit of the investment in cycleways.
- 5.4.2 We recommend LGWM consider why cyclists refrain from using existing cycleways and apply that insight to the new design.
- 5.4.3 We recommend LGWM give priority to changing the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004 so that a mandatory obligation is placed on cyclists to use cycleways and explicitly disallow them from cycling on the road when cycleways are present.

6. Comments on policy making process

- 6.1 We acknowledge the proposed changes will benefit cycling and bus travel which in turn, benefits societal issues such as health and wellbeing and managing the impact on climate change.
- 6.2 We also acknowledge that the lack of available free space and land presents a significant constraint to increasing the corridor to cope with increased traffic capacity. Therefore, shifting the modal split, particularly from car to public transport, should ultimately help mitigate the congestion and challenges that the increased freight movement will face. On that basis we support the high-level approach of the changes.
- 6.3 We are concerned that LGWMs approach lacks balance, context setting and rigour in decision making.
- 6.3.1 We believe LGWM communications infer majority support for the changes however, that feedback (refer LGWM graphic below) is not proportionately representative of the distribution of the corridor's users through which according to LGWM is: 230 walk (Thorndon) / 1300 bike (both routes)/ 6,000 bus (both routes)/ 42,000 vehicles (both routes). We suggest LGWM annotate its future communications to the effect there is no correlation between feedback support and the social and economic benefit to the nation.



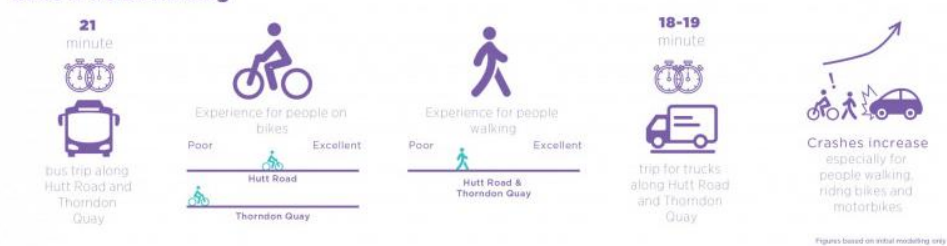
- 6.3.2 We are deeply concerned at LGWM predictions on the impact on freight travel. ([How we got here » Let's Get Wellington Moving \(lgwm.nz\)](#) graphics below). We cannot understand why LGWM can predict that in 2036 the travel time of buses will be 10-11 minutes however, its prediction on freight trucks is 11-19 minutes. We request LGWM provide us with its analysis on these travel time predictions.
- 6.3.3 The upper end prediction of freight travel time in 2036, 19 minutes is the same as the "If we do nothing" scenario. If that eventuated,

it would be a travesty that all the investment in these changes would in essence only benefit bus passengers and cyclists on Thorndon Quay.

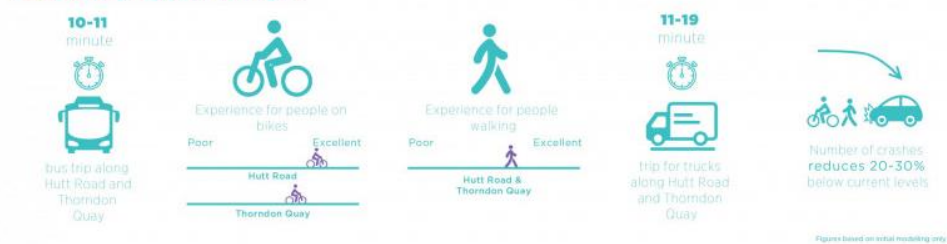
How it is now (2019)



2036 if we do nothing



2036 with proposed changes



6.3.4 We understand the intent of the changes is for the perceived greater good and in our view, there will be winners and losers as a consequence of these changes. We do not believe LGWM is doing justice to those that will be adversely affected by the changes, particularly the economic and operational impacts on businesses on Hutt Road and we urge LGWM to bring a more balanced and transparent approach when communicating the impacts of change.

6.3.5 In addition to the adverse impacts referred in 6.3.3 we also urge LGWM to give due consideration to:

6.3.5.1 Safety associated with more U-turns on Centennial Drive. We recommend LGWM consider whether a better option would be to re-engineer the signalised intersection at Centennial Highway and Jarden Mile and replace it with a roundabout supported by signals.

- 6.3.5.2 Delays to traffic on Aotea Quay associated with the roundabout.
- 6.3.5.3 Consideration of this design and network flows in the event the Ferry terminal location moves north to Hutt Road.
- 6.3.5.4 A staged build approach to mitigate the risk that the physical changes, such as the median and gardens, pose considerable regret cost.
- 6.3.5.5 Consideration and risk analysis of unintended consequences and transparency on these
- 6.3.6 To bring more quality debate and consideration to the changes we would like LGWM to share its predicted impacts on an outcome basis rather than just direct impacts. For example, the information provided to date refers to the respective impacts on: people using the bus; people riding; people walking; and people driving. However, the proposals did not appear to be supported by any information on outcomes achieved such as the modal shift and associated reduction in CO₂, or the economic and social impact costs. We believe quality information on these outcomes would give the public much greater understanding on the return on investment and enable better appreciation of the opportunity cost.

7. Concluding comments

- 7.1 We agree that change is required to manage the growth of our capital city and the way we move through it.
- 7.2 The level of development underpinning the TQHR proposals is still largely conceptual and therefore, there is considerable risk in LGWM seeking feedback at this time. As a consequence, our submission is conditional based on the presumptions referred to in section 3 above and in the event any of the presumptions change, it is highly likely that our views would materially change.
- 7.3 In the event LGWM do not agree with the presumptions made in section 3 above, we request they advise us at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.4 While not ideal, we believe that the strategy to shift the modal split from car to either active transport and/or public transport should help mitigate the predicted congestion that will eventuate if we do nothing. That trade-off should benefit and mitigate the risks faced with increased road freight movements.
- 7.5 We are deeply concerned at LGWM predictions on the impact on freight travel and the risk that it predicts freight travel times could be the

same as the “If we do nothing” scenario. If that eventuated, it would be a travesty that all the investment in these changes would in essence only benefit bus passengers and cyclists on Thorndon Quay.

- 7.6 We urge LGWM to develop and provide a more balanced case on the impacts of its proposals on all parties, and in particular provide quality data on the economic and social benefits and disbenefits. This would enable much more meaningful discussion on the return on investment, the opportunity costs, the winners and losers and the risks associated with the proposal. We believe LGWM has a fundamental responsibility to not only our members, but also the wider New Zealand public, to bring more transparency to these changes before forging ahead regardless.