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Phased tunnels for second Harbour crossing

**RT HON CHRIS HIPKINS(/MINISTER/RT-HON-CHRIS-HIPKINS)****HON DAVID PARKER(/MINISTER/HON-DAVID-PARKER)**

Prime Minister (/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/prime-minister)

Transport (/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/transport)

- Two new three lane road tunnels (one in each direction) for vehicles between the central Auckland motorway junction and Akoranga on the North Shore. These are similar in concept to the Waterview tunnel.
- The road tunnels will be each 5 to 6 km long. By way of comparison the twin 3-lane Waterview Tunnels are each 2.5km long.
- 6.3km of new separated bus lanes on the Northern Busway between Akoranga and the city centre.
- Reallocation of space on the existing Auckland Harbour Bridge for the northern busway.
- Walking and cycling paths from Westhaven to Constellation including the re-allocation of one of the lanes on the Auckland Harbour Bridge to cycling, with further advice sought on an elevated walking platform above the cycle lanes.
- Under any phasing option the number of lanes available to cars, trucks, public transport, walking and cycling all increase above the status quo.
- The raising of State Highway 1 between the existing harbour bridge and Akoranga to protect against increasing flooding and rising sea levels, potentially using tunnelled material.
- Securing the land for the interconnection points south of the bridge, including to maximise use of the City Rail Link and the much needed North Western busway.
- A separate new 21km light rail tunnel that links to the existing Auckland Light Rail corridor, and goes from Wynyard (east of the existing Auckland Harbour Bridge) to Albany, with stations at Belmont, Takapuna, Smales Farm, Glenfield, North Harbour and Albany West. This would be a

separate project from the road tunnels, and would be built in stages (as the Auckland to Waikato Expressway has been).

P Two new three lane road tunnels under the Waitemata Harbour, one going in each direction, and a separate light rail tunnel that will link to the existing Auckland Light Rail corridor is the proposed plan for a second Auckland harbour crossing, Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and Transport Minister David Parker announced today.

The twin road tunnels would not be contingent on the light rail tunnels, with phasing options for the road tunnels to be considered by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, including whether to build both tunnels at once or separately. In either case, additional busway, driving and cycling and walking capacity will be created at each stage.

Separately, a future light rail tunnel is proposed from the Wynyard Quarter, under the harbour east of the Auckland Harbour Bridge, and on to six new stations on the North Shore. This too would be phased. Construction would not be expected to begin until after at least the first of the two road tunnels is completed.

“This is a bold plan for Auckland’s future that delivers a modern transport network that will connect all parts of the city,” Chris Hipkins said.

“Reducing congestion requires improvements to both roading and public transport, giving the public choice.

“Under this proposal the network will become joined up, allowing Aucklanders to travel from the north to the south, east and west on public transport - freeing up room on the existing Harbour Bridge and in the new road tunnel for those who want to drive.

“A second harbour crossing is needed as soon as possible, and construction is planned to start by the end of this decade and why we are proposing a phased approach, ensuring additional capacity is achieved after each stage.

Q “The recent wind-related bridge closures of the Harbour Bridge, and the increasing frequency of flooding on the approaches north of the bridge, illustrate the city’s vulnerability to interruptions. These new tunnels future-proof the city’s transport network by reducing reliance on the Harbour Bridge while creating fast new options for getting in and out of the city.

“A project such as this must be delivered in stages, like the Waikato Expressway was, so that the cost and roll-out of each element can be managed carefully and responsibly. The Government has asked the New Zealand Transport Agency - Waka Kotahi to accelerate work on essential first steps towards realising a transport plan of this scale.

“We could afford the Harbour Bridge in 1959, when Auckland’s population was only 430,000, so we can afford a second crossing that will modernise transport for the city’s residents and the millions of people who visit every year,” Chris Hipkins said.

David Parker welcomed another key element of the preferred option, extending the Northern Busway across the bridge into the city centre.

“The Northern Busway is among New Zealand’s most successful public transport projects – it has vastly improved the daily commute made by thousands of North Shore residents into the city centre each day. Without it the northern motorway and the bridge would already be completely clogged at peak times.

“The twin-tunnel connection would allow the busway to be extended across dedicated lanes on the Harbour Bridge into the CBD. This is essential to maximising the value of other important investments such as City Rail Link currently under construction.

David Parker said the Government is instructing Waka Kotahi to speed up work to protect the route and acquire land along the emerging preferred option corridors.

"The Waka Kotahi recommended option also includes raising State Highway One north of the Harbour Bridge to protect it from flooding caused by storm surges and sea level rise.

“In my opinion, one of the problems in Auckland transport planning has been too much uncertainty. All harbour crossing options land in the same area south of the bridge, near to Victoria Park. This is the anchor point for everything.

“It is clear to me that the critical connections between the new tunnels, the Auckland Harbour Bridge, SH1 (south and north), SH16 (to the port and to the west), the City Rail Link, the Northern Busway, the much needed North Western busway, and any light rail options should be secured now.

“Much of the land is already owned by the Crown. Securing remaining land is important for all future options. The draft Government Policy Statement of Transport to be released in the coming weeks will prioritise and fund this.

“Waka Kotahi will also report back to Cabinet next year with a detailed plan for how the elements of the cross harbour plans can be phased and funded.

“With a project of this scale we will need to keep an open mind to funding options. We are seeking advice from Waka Kotahi on this,” David Parker said.

