

# Memo

May 29 2017

To: Planning Committee Members  
cc: Matt Lowrie, Greater Auckland  
From: Phil Haizelden – Team Leader Transport Strategy, Auckland Council  
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**Subject: Response to Greater Auckland’s Congestion Free Network Presentation**

## 1. Introduction

Greater Auckland presented to the Planning Committee’s May 2 meeting on their “Congestion Free Network 2” (CFN2) proposal for the development of Auckland’s public transport network. The Committee referred the matter to Auckland Transport and the Council’s Transport and Infrastructure Strategy Unit for a response.

Overall, CFN2 is a coherent and high-quality proposal that is mostly well aligned with current strategic plans for the development of Auckland’s public transport system. Importantly it is not an entire transport programme, which makes assessing the affordability of the proposal challenging.

This memo outlines where similarities and differences are between CFN2 and current plans, as well as providing a response to relevant recommendations outlined in the CFN2 document.

Council and Auckland Transport staff acknowledge the substantial effort and analysis Greater Auckland has put into developing CFN2.

## 2. Background

Greater Auckland released their “Congestion Free Network 2” (CFN2) proposal on April 10 and presented to the May 2 Planning Committee meeting. Greater Auckland is an advocacy group, formerly known as TransportBlog, which operates a popular and well regarded blog on transport and other urban issues. The CFN2 proposal can be read in more detail here:

<https://www.greeterauckland.org.nz/congestion-free-network-2/>

CFN2 proposes a substantial expansion of Auckland’s “rapid transit network” (the passenger rail network and the Northern Busway) through a combination of heavy rail, light-rail, busway and bus rapid transit improvements. The strategy behind this approach is to increasingly provide Aucklanders with a way to travel free from congestion – hence the network’s name.

Greater Auckland’s proposal is an updated version of their original “Congestion Free Network” proposal that was released in 2013. This version was presented to the Council’s Transport Committee in August 2013, which recommended the proposal to Auckland Transport for their consideration.

Since the first version of the Congestion Free Network was released in 2013, substantial progress has been made in the planning of Auckland’s future public transport network. Most recently the

Auckland Transport Alignment Project identified a blueprint for developing Auckland’s strategic public transport network. The CFN2 aligns with this in many ways.

### 3. Comparing CFN2 and Current Plans

#### 3.1 Similarities

Conceptually there is strong alignment between CFN2 and current strategic transport plans. The ATAP recommended strategic approach describes the function of the “strategic public transport network” as being essentially identical to what CFN2 sets out to achieve. ATAP’s description is outlined below:

- Backbone of the public transport network, providing for high volumes of travel to major employment centres, especially into the central area
- Frequent, high capacity services operating along corridors separated from private vehicles and unaffected by road congestion

The networks themselves are relatively similar, as illustrated below:

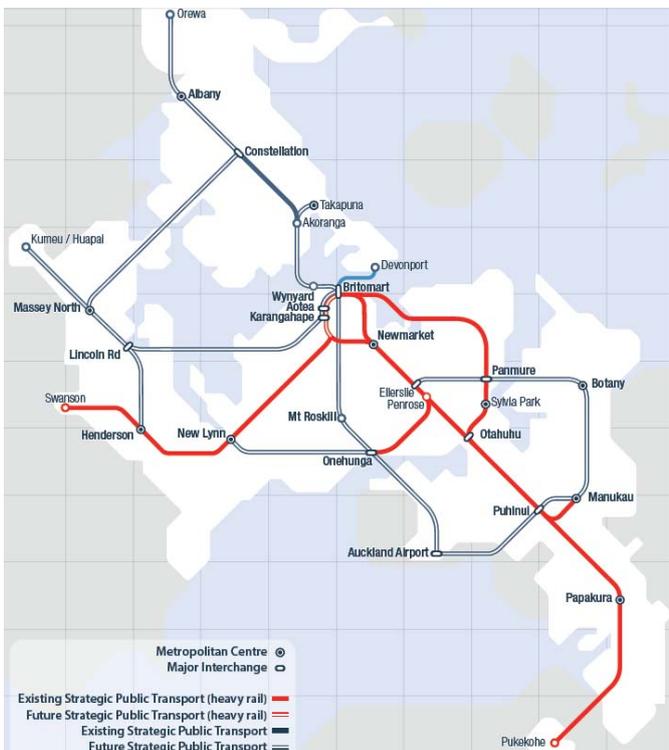


Figure 1: ATAP Strategic Public Transport Network

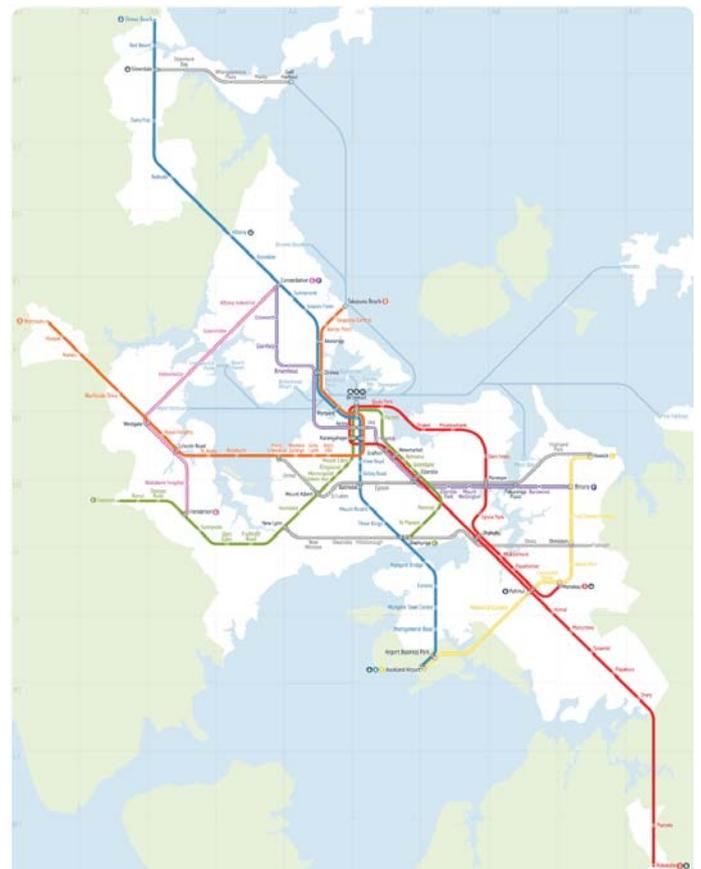


Figure 2: Greater Auckland's Congestion Free Network

Both include the following:

- The heavy rail network, including City Rail Link and extending electrification and frequent services to Pukekohe
- New strategic public transport corridors in southeast Auckland, between Westgate and the North Shore, across the southern isthmus between New Lynn and Onehunga and extending

the Northern Busway to Albany. These corridors are proposed as busway/bus rapid transit corridors in CFN2 and “future strategic public transport” in ATAP.

- New strategic public transport corridors alignments between the City Centre and Northwest Auckland, between Orewa and the City Centre, and between the City Centre to the Airport via the isthmus. These corridors are proposed as light-rail in CFN2 and “future strategic public transport” in ATAP.

### 3.2 *Network Differences*

The main network differences relate to the higher level of specificity in CFN2 along some corridors, especially in relation to modal choice (bus, light-rail etc.) The ATAP strategic public transport network is generally “mode neutral”; noting that more detailed business case analysis is required to inform these decisions. ATAP notes “mode choice for strategic network improvements should be driven by capacity requirements to meet forecast demand, integration with the wider network and achieving value for money”.

Corridors where these “mode differences” appear include:

- CFN2 identifies the Northwest corridor as light-rail and extends it to Waimauku. The CFN2 also suggests this line pass through the city centre to cross the harbour and connect to Takapuna.
- CFN2 identifies the Airport to City Centre corridor as light-rail and extends this line across the harbour to replace the Northern Busway up to Orewa.

Business case investigations are underway along all these corridors to determine the most appropriate mode, alignment and timing of investment. In some cases the most appropriate mode may end up being identified as light-rail (e.g. the Auckland Transport and NZTA Boards agreed earlier this year to develop a transition plan from bus to light-rail for the Airport to City corridor).

The other main network difference relates to some bus corridors proposed in CFN2:

- CFN2 identifies a ‘North-east’ BRT line that extends the planned AMETI Eastern Busway through the city centre to the western parts of the North Shore. Parts of this route are considered in current planning but not as a single corridor
- CFN2 extends the cross-town bus link from New Lynn to Onehunga (identified in ATAP) towards Flat Bush and another cross-town bus link from Point Chevalier to Howick via Balmoral, Panmure and Pakuranga.

For these bus corridors, the differences mainly relate to service routing options and some crossover between CFN2 and the “frequent public transport network” that sits just below the strategic public transport network in the hierarchy of different routes in current plans.

## 4. **Timing and Funding**

In addition to CFN2 not being an entire transport programme when compared to ATAP, the most significant difference between the CFN2 and current plans relates to timing. CFN2 proposes delivery of the network “far quicker, [than current plans] ideally mostly done by 2030.”<sup>1</sup> Achieving this pace of delivery would require overcoming a number of challenges:

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<sup>1</sup> Page 14 of the CFN2 Document

- Funding constraints and approval processes
- Consenting processes
- Ensuring value for money and aligning with the timing of growth
- Industry capacity

Completion over a 20 year period appears more realistic from a consenting and deliverability perspective, but would still face funding constraints. While further analysis of CFN2’s costs may be necessary in some cases, overall it generally uses ATAP costings so can be compared in a consistent way.

CFN2 requires approximately \$5 billion of additional investment in the strategic public transport network over the next 20 years when compared to what the ATAP indicative package proposed to spend on the strategic public transport network over the same time period. This increase mainly relates to bringing forward projects ATAP placed in the third decade, such as North Shore rapid transit, later rail network upgrades and final stages of corridors serving the Airport and northwest.

Overall, delivering CFN2 over the next 20 years would require around 58% of what the ATAP indicative package allocated to new capital investment over the first two decades.

Given ATAP identified a minimum \$4 billion funding gap in the first decade and was based on population growth forecasts that have recently been substantially increased; funding CFN2 would either increase the funding gap or require substantial reprioritisation.

## 5. Responses to CFN2 Recommendations

Page 6 of the Congestion Free Network document outlines a series of recommendations for key agencies, including Auckland Council and Auckland Transport. These are outlined below:

### Government & NZTA

Creating a dedicated activity class in the Government Policy Statement (GPS) for progressing CFN2, with sufficient funding.

Identifying the NZ Transport Agency as having lead responsibility for delivering CFN lines A-G.

NZTA and Auckland Transport working together to protect routes for the whole CFN2 within the next five years.

### Auckland Council

Embedding CFN2 into the refreshed Auckland Plan as a core component of Auckland’s transport and growth strategy.

Working with Government to reach agreement on funding approaches for delivering CFN2.

### Auckland Transport

Clearly outlining a delivery path and funding requirements for CFN2 in the upcoming Regional Land Transport Plan.

Updating the Regional Public Transport Plan to incorporate CFN2.

Lead agency for planning and implementing the identified limited stops bus routes.

Working with NZTA to protect routes for the whole CFN2 within the next 5 years.

### 5.1 Recommendations for Auckland Council

The Auckland Plan refresh is underway and will include an Access and Connectivity section and Development Strategy with strong links to ATAP and therefore also CFN2. Greater Auckland have been identified as a key stakeholder to be involved in the development of the refreshed Plan. The refreshed Plan is required by legislation to undertake a number of tasks which relate strongly to the CFN2 proposal, including:

- Visually illustrate how Auckland may develop in the future, including how growth may be sequenced and how infrastructure may be provided
- Identify the existing and future location and mix of critical infrastructure, services, and investment within Auckland, including transport

ATAP highlighted that “funding arrangements would benefit from greater consistency, particularly across the strategic networks”<sup>2</sup> and recommended investment processes be reviewed to ensure they align with the strategic approach. This recommendation reflected inconsistent funding approaches to strategic public transport investments, with some being progressed and fully funded by NZTA (e.g. Northern Busway extension), some being progressed by Auckland Transport without a clear funding arrangement (e.g. Northwestern Busway) and some funded through individual arrangements (e.g. City Rail Link).

Some work is underway in this space, connected to discussions around the ATAP funding gap, but ongoing progress is required to address the funding arrangement issues identified in ATAP. Addressing ATAP’s recommendation on funding arrangements is likely to also address CFN2’s recommendation.

## *5.2 Recommendations for Auckland Transport*

Auckland Transport will continue to analyse service planning and required supporting infrastructure for high quality bus corridors. Development of the 2018 Regional Land Transport Plan is underway and will be guided by the strategic direction provided in ATAP and the Auckland Plan refresh. The ability for the RLTP to accelerate delivery of the strategic public transport network largely depends on funding decisions made by the Government and Auckland Council.

The Regional Public Transport Plan is also being updated to reflect ATAP and implementation of the new public transport network. CFN2 can be considered as part of this update. Auckland Transport will continue to engage with Greater Auckland and other key stakeholders on the relative benefits of the CFN2 elements (e.g. changes to cross-town bus routes) compared to current rapid and frequent corridors.

Route protection for much of the strategic public transport network identified in ATAP is being progressed already, in many cases in conjunction with NZTA (see below).

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<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 125 of the ATAP Recommended Strategic Approach.

