

# NZ Super Fund's bid to build light rail in Auckland under Government review

Todd Niall 19:07, Feb 14 2019

AUCKLAND TRANSPORT/SUPPLIED - AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION OF LIGHT RAIL ALONG AUCKLAND'S DOMINION ROAD.



A bid by the NZ Super Fund to part-fund and build light rail in Auckland will be studied by the Government.

The New Zealand Transport Agency said the Super Fund, and its Canadian partner CDPQ Infra, had presented an alternative to the business case the Government had been working on for 10 months.

In an email to stakeholders, its chief executive Mark Ratcliffe said "further market engagement" had been deferred temporarily.

The Government's business case for a state-owned light rail was due before Christmas but is now expected early this year.

The Super Fund's [April 2018](#) proposal was confirmed [10 months ago](#) by the Government, and an eight-paragraph statement from Ratcliffe on Thursday does not explain why a closer examination is being ordered now.

The Government had been running a procurement process open to everyone, and Ratcliffe noted "this parallel process creates uncertainty for partners and stakeholders".

"The Government has asked the Minister of Transport and Treasury to assess the potential for alternative funding, delivery and operating models, for the city centre to Mangere project," he wrote to stakeholders.

That advice is expected back before the Government next month.

The light rail network is estimated to cost \$6 billion, but only a portion of that has been committed by the Government so far.

The 10-year joint council-Government plan, ATAP, sets aside \$1.8b in seed funding for the network and leaves open the possibility of private funding.

The Government had promised two light rail lines, one from the CBD through Mt Roskill to Mangere and the airport, and the other to Westgate, and possibly Kumeu, in the north-west.

No mention is made of the north-west line in the latest email, and *Stuff* understands the Super Fund/Canadian partnership had been unconvinced about its viability.

Public Transport advocates [greateruckland.org.nz](http://greateruckland.org.nz) said it wasn't clear whether the announcement represented a delay in the project.

"It's better than nothing at all, even if it takes more time to investigate," said editor Matt Lowrie.

Mayor Phil Goff, who campaigned in favour of light rail, supported the move.

"Aucklanders are keen to get on with the construction of light rail to ease the congestion on Auckland's roads and to ensure that growth in transport infrastructure meets Auckland's transport needs," he said in a statement.

"However, before investing hundreds of millions of dollars it is important that the Government is confident that it has chosen the best and the most economic options available for meeting Auckland's rapid transit needs."

Minister of Transport Phil Twyford would not answer written questions from *Stuff* about when the Government had asked for an assessment of alternative ways of funding the project.

"We're taking the time to consider the best way of delivering the project to get Auckland moving," he said in a written statement.

"The business case is nearing completion - light rail to the northwest is part of the Auckland light rail project and subject to the procurement process."

NZTA's statement came a day after the National Party's Paul Goldsmith pointed out that the Government, in a reply to a Parliamentary question, was not going to deliver a 2017 election promise to build light rail within four years.