



21 March 2019

Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Planning and Environment & Community Committees of Auckland Council, and Waitemata Local Board

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Dear Councillors Chris Darby, Penny Hulse, Pippa Coom, Richard Hills, and Alf Filipaina

### **Black Carbon Levels – Queen St**

Thank you for your correspondence on 17 December in relation to carbon levels on Queen Street. Like you, AT is concerned at the high concentration of Elevated Black Carbon on Queen Street and is considering a number of initiatives to reduce these.

Recently, the AT Board of Directors reviewed our Sustainability Programme and also considered the issue of sustainability through the Statement of Intent.

The clear message from our Board to management is to be more ambitious in this space.

AT is committed to delivering on Auckland's Climate Change targets and working together to make tangible progress. Climate change and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are one of the greatest challenges that AT has sought to address in the recently developed Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP). The RLTP was consulted on, prior to being approved the AT Board, and we received 18,000 submissions from across the region. There was overwhelming agreement on these challenges and the program of interventions to address them.

A key initiative is the (draft) Low Emissions Bus Roadmap ("Roadmap") endorsed by the AT Board which sets out our plan to undertake trials of zero emission vehicles to meet the aspirations of Auckland Council. We appreciate your general support of our key milestones and acknowledge the desire to advance the timelines of the Roadmap. This tactical roadmap will be further developed and regularly reviewed as more information becomes available from the market, incorporating technology updates and learnings from these trials and learnings from further afield in New Zealand and across the globe.

AT had considered the immediate steps articulated in your letter. Some investigations are already under way to assess feasibility and financial implications:

#### **1. Reduce diesel buses - transition to E-buses faster**

Currently, the large number of buses on Queen Street is partly due to construction of the CRL which is limiting traffic access to Albert Street. As a result, some services will need to run on Queen Street until the CRL project is completed around 2023/4. There are, unfortunately, no practical alternatives to this.

The fleet used under current bus contracts includes 30% of older, diesel-powered models (Euro III to Euro IV). However, some of that fleet is being replaced with Euro VI buses, and from March 2019 the proportion of lower emission diesel buses will increase.

Throughout this year we will be reviewing our contracts with bus operators and we will negotiate contract variations to prescribe fleet type by route and Euro standard to minimise the number of Euro III and IV buses on routes using Queen Street and Downtown.



AT is participating in a forum led by the New Zealand Transport Agency (“NZTA”) to review Requirements for Urban Buses (“RUB”) and Vehicle Quality Standards (VQS) and make appropriate changes that may support and enable changes to bus operators fleets.

AT is also assessing the compatibility of the current fleet with technology to enable the suggested automatic stop/start function, and the potential implications on performance of the bus fleet in service. Key concerns include the impact on air-conditioning and quality of air in the cabin due to current fleet’s reliance on engine running for the air-conditioning to work and, the impact on maintenance costs due to more frequent component replacements that may affect operating costs.

We are also investigating the option of facilitating the use of renewable diesel by bus operators to further reduce emissions from Euro V and Euro VI diesel buses during transition to zero emission fleet. There are over 900 such buses in the fleet and they will be operating until they are replaced by a zero-emission fleet.

AT is planning to prescribe battery electric buses for City Link service to commence in November 2020 at the commencement of new contract. Further acceleration of transition to e-buses will be assessed and updated in the next iteration of the Roadmap.

## **2. Disincentivise private vehicles on Queen Street**

Private vehicles are expected to be removed from Queen Street following the introduction of light rail from the mid-2020s and the major pedestrian transformation (“A4E”) of Queen Street. All general traffic would be expected to be removed with restricted access for servicing and loading of businesses being permitted. The increased amenity for pedestrians will contribute to the fulfilment of the Mayor’s C40 declaration ensuring a major area of the city centre is zero emission by 2030.

We are currently working with the Auckland Design Office to design trials for early implementation of elements of this future pedestrianisation of Queen Street.

In addition, our Travel Demand team are working with businesses, commuters and students to reduce single occupant vehicles coming into the city. This includes behavioural change programmes and campaigns highlighting alternatives to the car.

While the primary focus of our Speed Limit Bylaw proposal currently subject to consultation is improving survivability for vulnerable road users in the city centre we anticipate that the indirect consequences of this will be to create broader health benefits for pedestrians.

## **3. Reduce rat running in and around Queen Street**

As part of working with Auckland Council on A4E trials, AT will consider the proposal to use right-hand turn bans to restrict unnecessary traffic access to Queen Street. Bus services have been prioritised along Queen Street with the introduction of bus lanes and pedestrians are prioritised at the crossing locations. As noted above the trials for Queen Street are being investigated and seek to increase the people space for sections of the road corridor.

## **4. Reallocation of road space from parking**

Following the introduction of LRT and removal of all private vehicles from Queen Street, and with completion of other Long-Term Plan (LTP) funded projects and conversion of traffic lanes to public transport, more space will be available for pedestrians and cyclists.

In the meantime, a servicing and delivery plan is currently in development for the city centre to manage the business and residential needs. This considers the changing nature of the city centre and reduction in parking areas. In addition, Auckland Transport’s Parking Strategy sets out ways of managing the utilisation of parking to optimise availability. As you may be aware, just this week we increased on-street parking charges.



Within months we are hoping to trial an e-bike “hub” for courier companies at the Strand. In effect this will be a deliver depot for pick-up of parcels which will reduce the number of courier vehicles circulating in the CBD.

Finally, we are following up on a suggestion from Cr Darby that will see (in a trial) 15 minute parking spaces on Queen St reallocated for other uses- most likely for e-scooter or bike-hire parking.

Further to the suggested steps and quick wins, AT will continue to investigate other options to bring notable improvement in air quality in Queen Street. The timeline of completion number of transport and building projects will also reduce construction truck movements and machinery that contribute to the lower air quality in Downtown Auckland.

Again, AT is committed to working together to make tangible progress in the long term and implement some of the quick wins in the short-term to reduce the risk of respiratory related illnesses, and to create more sustainable environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Ellison', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Shane Ellison  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER