

AT's failure to consult early costly

We write in response to the letter to the editor from Shane Ellison, CEO of Auckland Transport, (*Herald*, April 29) about various recent community consultations held by AT around the "safety improvements" they propose for St Heliers village.

Ellison was writing to correct a *Herald* editorial which gave the impression that AT had not met the various community organisations before releasing tis proposals.

On the face of it, Ellison's corrections are valid. However, apart from their meeting with the Ōrākei Local Board, these discussions took place at the request of the community, once forewarned by the local board. They were not proactively offered by AT.

Our main problem is that those discussions took place a long time after AT's proposals for St Heliers and other "problem" centres were finalised. AT took no account of negative community feedback at these initial meetings but proceeded with public release of unchanged proposals with the result that over 600 people turned up at a public meeting in St Heliers on April 15 to protest the proposals. Hundreds of residents have spent time writing submissions to AT.

It appears that AT had been working on these proposals for at least nine months, probably much longer, before giving them limited release to community organisations in February. AT had instructed the engineering consultancy AECOM to prepare the plans earlier in 2018 without any community input. AECOM's final report dated August 8, 2018 set out essentially the same proposals which were given limited release in February and public release at the end of March.

AT should have consulted in the planning stages. Much time and money has been wasted by many people, at AT and in the community, as a result of this failure by AT to consult early. The same applies at Mission Bay and other "problem" centres. Why does it have to be so difficult?

Mike Walsh, acting Chair, St Heliers/Glendowie Residents Association, Peter Jones, Chair, St Heliers Village Association, Kit Parkinson, Chair, Ōrākei Local Board, Desley Simpson, Councillor for Ōrākei Ward.