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Auckland harbour tunnel business case delayed

Stephen Forbes 09:21, Nov 21 2019

The NZ Transport Agency's (NZTA) business case for a harbour tunnel from Auckland's North Shore to the city has now been delayed until mid-2020.

The NZTA said last month it expected the business case for the Additional Waitematā Harbour Connection (AWHC) to be completed by late 2019, or early next year. But according to the agency it now won't be completed until mid-2020.

The NZTA has been working with Auckland Council and AT on the business case and building on previous work to reassess the timing and form of a new harbour crossing.

But exactly what type of harbour crossing it will be, how much it will cost and when work on it will start haven't been decided. Previous NZTA reports have focused on the construction of a tunnel for vehicles and/or light rail.

"Significant work has already been completed to look at the alignment and form of an additional harbour connection," NZTA spokesman Andy Knackstedt said.

"The business case will determine the need for route protection (i.e. the process of identifying and protecting required land for a future infrastructure project). Community engagement will be undertaken as part of future stages of investigation and detailed project work.

"Following completion of this business case, the NZ Transport Agency and AT will be in a position to provide more clarity about the need for, timing,

transport modal mix, alignment, operation and form of any additional connections, and will continue further planning work."

Knackstedt said public consultation will then take place at a later date once the case has been completed

2.

An [NZTA briefing paper](#) from September last year to Transport Minister Phil Twyford and Associate Transport Minister Julie Anne Genter said the approaches to the Auckland Harbour Bridge were already at full capacity during peak times. The report said restrictions on heavy vehicles using the bridge would have to be considered.

The paper gave the Government two main options for a new harbour crossing: build a new harbour crossing with light rail and road access, or build a harbour crossing for light rail only.

An [Auckland Transport \(AT\)](#) report from 2016 said the Northern Busway would reach its capacity in 2030s which would impact on the Harbour Bridge and city centre's public transport infrastructure. It said a higher capacity public transport system would be required from the North Shore to the city in the next 25 years.

Transport blogger Matt Lowrie wasn't surprised to hear the second harbour crossing proposal has been delayed. Lowrie said the best option is to upgrade the Northern Busway to light rail and build a tunnel for public transport only.

Lowrie claims the reason the business case has been delayed is because the NZTA is trying to find a way to justify building a tunnel for light rail and road access. But according to Lowrie building more access for cars can't be justified and it would only add to more gridlock in the city.

In 2010 the NZTA estimated a tunnel would cost around \$4 billion and could be built some time between 2030 and 2050.