

MIN-4253 LGWM Golden Mile and Thorndon Quay Hutt Road projects

11 July 2023

This note provides information on the Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) Golden Mile and Thorndon Quay Hutt Road projects ahead of your potential meeting with Wellington City Councillor, Diane Calvert.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency response:

Request from Councillor Calvert to meet with you

- On Monday 3 July 2023, Wellington City Councillor Diane Calvert raised her concerns around the Golden Mile and Thorndon Quay Hutt Road (TQHR) projects via email to the Waka Kotahi Board Chair, Dr Paul Reynolds.
- A copy of Cr Calvert's email was circulated to the Waka Kotahi board members ahead of the board making a decision on implementation funding for these projects.
- Cr Calvert subsequently forwarded her email to Dr Reynolds (as an attachment) onto your office and requested to meet with you.
- Should you wish to accept this meeting invitation from Cr Calvert, we recommend that you meet with Wellington City Mayor Tory Whanau and Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter first to provide further understanding of the background, progress and next steps for these projects.

Background to Councillor Calvert's meeting request

- Cr Calvert opposes both Golden Mile and TQHR projects and has often voted against the progress of the Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) programme.
- She is one of the six Wellington City Council (WCC) signatories of the recent Notice of Motion calling WCC to withdraw from the LGWM Relationship and Funding Agreement.
- On 29 June 2023 at a WCC meeting, the Notice of Motion was considered and then defeated by majority vote. Subsequently, a majority of WCC councillors voted to:
 - Approve the Golden Mile design and proposed traffic resolutions
 - Approve the local government share (approx. 49%) of the funding for the implementation of the GM and TQHR projects
- On 6 July 2023, the Waka Kotahi Board approved the central government share (approx. 51%) of the funding for the implementation of the Golden Mile and TQHR projects.

Response to Cr Calvert's concerns

- Responses to each of Cr Calvert's concerns are appended to this note.
- The programme team have addressed most of these questions directly with Cr Calvert and/or other WCC councillors via in-person briefings and email responses.

Appendix

- ***The benefit cost ratios based on Waka Kotahi's funding criteria which are over egged ie - pedestrian amenity uplift is the main (\$357 million, 51% of the total) justification put forward by the LGWM consultants' for their \$140 million plan for the Golden Mile. Of the \$357 million, \$313 million (88%) is due to pedestrians enjoying having fewer cars on the 2.4km route. In large part the justification of the project is based on this single assumption. The local pedestrian advocacy group, Living Streets Aotearoa has asked for a pause on the Golden Mile project as the design is not good enough.***

Cr Calvert and several other councillors attended an hour-long briefing on the detailed calculations behind the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), presented by LGWM experts. Furthermore, a number of written technical responses on the BCR have been provided to WCC councillors, including to Cr Calvert.

Pedestrian realm benefits are valued in accordance with the Waka Kotahi Impact on Urban Amenity in Pedestrian Environments (March 2020) technical paper (which was based on international and local research). When preparing this benefit assessment, the consultant team worked with Waka Kotahi and the technical paper writers to make sure the guidance was applied appropriately.

The Golden Mile project includes a number of features that provide benefits to pedestrians. As per the Waka Kotahi guidance, these features include seating, street trees and planting and adjacent traffic volume reduction. Under the agreed methodology, a willingness to pay value was applied as a proportion of walking time and the features valued. Through the process, a number of pedestrian realm benefits were excluded including widened footpaths and reduced crowding. The project team consider that the monetised benefits may therefore under-represent the pedestrian realm benefits.

The current BCR for the Golden Mile revitalisation project is calculated with over \$700 million of net present benefits. In addition to pedestrian realm benefits, other benefits calculated included:

- public transport travel time and reliability benefits
- health benefits from mode shift
- pedestrian travel time savings
- crash reductions
- emission reduction benefits.

The assessment provides a very positive BCR of 5.2.

As Waka Kotahi requires, a number of sensitivity tests were done to stress test the BCR. In the worst-case scenario, the BCR would still be a healthy BCR of 2.3. LGWM specifically undertook a sensitivity test that excluded ALL pedestrian realm benefits in response to questions. Although this is an unrealistic scenario for the Golden Mile, the BCR result was still a healthy 2.6.

The BCR has been independently peer reviewed as part of the Single Stage Business Case, and more recently in 2023.

Living Streets has indicated they do not support some aspects of the design around the cycle path interface with the shared zones, and bus stop reductions.

- ***The need for other costs to be factored in ie productivity loses, increased emissions, economic impacts on businesses, opportunity cost, loss of council revenue***

The benefits and costs have been assessed in accordance with the Waka Kotahi Monetised Benefits and Costs Manual. This assessment has been independently peer reviewed.

- ***The benefits are considered in a balanced way. Of the approx. 5,000 cars that will cease travelling to the CBD, (20% or 1,000) are assumed to transfer to PT which is counted as a health benefit instead of a time disbenefit (given PT is significantly slower than driving). Also, the assumption that none of the other 4,000 cars do not travel to a more distant location to obtain the service they used to get from the CBD seems unreasonable.***

Of the 5,000 fewer cars, it is estimated that 20% of people will change to public transport. The other vehicles are expected to shift their behaviour in several ways that would have different economic impacts.

The types of changes and impacts are listed below:

- Shifting to other modes: health benefits
- Travelling at other times of the day: travel time benefits (positive, because they would be travelling at less congested times of the day)
- Making fewer trips and being more efficient: travel time benefits and emissions benefits
- Travelling to local destinations: travel time benefits and emissions benefits
- Not making the trip at all: emissions benefits

There is unfortunately insufficient information or research to reliably estimate how that would split out.

- ***After some investigation of the issue, Cr Tony Randle has serious concerns that the proposed narrowed bus lanes may be inadequate for emergency service access and that in-depth consultation Fire and Emergency is yet to be done. Given the thousands who work along this corridor most days often in high office buildings, the lack of engagement with FENZ constitutes a significant design risk.***

This assertion is not correct. LGWM has engaged with emergency services during the course of the Golden Mile project and will continue to do so. We have provided Councillors with evidence of our engagement to date.

The Golden Mile project team has met with Fire and Emergency (FENZ) representatives three times and has included their feedback and requirements into the design as this has evolved. One of the first pieces of information the team sought from FENZ early in the project was specific access requirements for emergency vehicles. This information has been received and incorporated.

Emergency vehicle access has been central to the design planning and the team has endeavoured to meet any and all requests made by FENZ. We have specifically designed the Golden Mile to be compliant and consistent with the Firefighting Operations Emergency Vehicle Access Guide – F5-02GD. There is no equivalent guidance for either ambulance or police.

The detailed design for the Golden Mile project had also been changed to provide low-profile kerbs and optimal 4-metre areas along Golden Mile frontages where possible for emergency vehicle access. This is an example of how we have amended the design to reflect emergency service feedback.

- ***The lack of integration and impact assessment with adjacent LGWM projects e.g. Featherston St that are not yet designed or funded.***

The Golden Mile and TQHR projects were specified in the early delivery programme endorsed by WCC (note: Cr Calvert voted for this) alongside the programme business case in June 2019, and in the LGWM Relationship and Funding Agreement (approved by Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Waka Kotahi in December 2019). Those decisions prioritised the development of the Golden Mile and TQHR ahead of other projects in the programme. As a consequence, Featherston Street and other adjacent projects are at much earlier stages of development than Golden Mile and TQHR.

With a programme as large and complex as LGWM, it's simply not feasible or practical to plan and design all the projects at the same time before applying for implementation funding. WCC and GW councillors, along with the former Minister and the community, have already urged greater haste for delivery.

LGWM is mindful of how the two projects are likely to integrate with each other. The final Golden Mile designs will inform how the Featherston Street project and other adjacent projects will develop.

- ***The projects are in part “nice to have” not “must have” e.g Golden Mile is 2.4 km. – The Lambton Quay section is not a priority for many Wellingtonians yet is approximately 50% of the projected cost***

All three funding partners (including WCC) agreed in the LGWM Relationship and Funding Agreement that the Golden Mile and TQHR projects are early priorities for the programme.

The Golden Mile, including Lambton Quay, is the core of the public transport spine through central Wellington. Improved bus reliability, frequency of services and bus travel time savings of 1-2 minutes per journey along the Golden Mile will be felt across Wellington's entire bus network. This will make bus journeys to and through the central city a more attractive option from almost every starting point. Access along Lambton Quay for those with impairments will be significantly improved with wider footpaths, appropriate bus stop design, and seating and kerbs for ease of boarding.

Lambton Quay is the bus connection to the Golden Mile from Thorndon Quay & Hutt Road. Progressing bus improvements on Courtenay Place and TQHR without Lambton Quay wouldn't make sense, because bus congestion would continue to occur here undermining the benefits on other sections of the Golden Mile.

Integrating the Golden Mile and TQHR projects also helps provide a continuous cycleway linking the Hutt Valley into the heart of the city via Te Ara Tupua.

- ***The quality and depth of what little economic impact assessment on the city there has been***

LGWM has completed an economic assessment for the Golden Mile and Thorndon Quay & Hutt Road projects in accordance with the Waka Kotahi Monetised Benefits and Costs Manual. In addition, LGWM has completed a retail impact assessment which found that the project would have an overall positive impact on retailers with a midpoint value of positive \$11 million per year.

- ***Infrastructure funding for the central city should first be on prioritising infrastructure that directly enables more central and inner city housing that will in turn generate city revenue to assist funding large infrastructure projects such as transport. We do have more urgent priorities around our water infrastructure and ensuring the electricity network can support growth. More people living closer to the central city will have a much larger positive impact on emissions and creating revenue for the council. Property developers have told us that the***

focus on projects such as the Golden Mile is not directing resources to the right areas that will enable confidence in them or the means by which to invest.

The Golden Mile and Thorndon Quay & Hutt Road projects will help support the growing population in Wellington City, support higher pedestrian volumes, and make the central city a more attractive place to be, facilitating urban development investment. The projects will also facilitate the replacement and upgrade of water infrastructure through the central city.

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