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21 September 2021

s 9(2)(a)
s 9(2)(a)
NZ Taxpayers' Union
s 9(2)(a)

REF: OIA-8713

Dear s 9(2)(a)

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 24 August 2021 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Please provide us copies of the survey responses when they close at the end of the month.

Please also tell us who (just the job titles is fine) drafted and approved these questions. One is totally misleading – suggesting that light rail reduces carbon emissions when under the ETS that is untrue. We want to know who in NZTA does not understand the ETS (or is lying/greenwashing about climate impacts) and publicly call them out. If it was an external contractor, please tell us the company so that we may approach them for comment.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is responding to this request as the agency subject to the Act, while the Auckland Light Rail Establishment Unit resides within Waka Kotahi and operates independently.

I will respond to each part of your request in turn.

Copies of survey responses

The Establishment Unit has received over 2,800 responses to the survey about the Auckland Light Rail project. In responding to your request, Waka Kotahi considered whether to release the individual responses; however, this would require reviewing and assessing the content of each submission for public release, with consideration of possible redactions required in order to protect the privacy of the submitters as well as the commercial positions of the businesses and other organisations which submitted responses.

This work would constitute substantial collation and research and impact on the operations of both the Establishment Unit and Waka Kotahi. Therefore, we have decided to release a summary of the information which is currently being prepared.

The Establishment Unit is currently aggregating and analysing the raw data. Once completed, the summary will be published on the Auckland Light Rail website (lightrail.co.nz). We expect to publicly release the summary by early December 2021. Therefore, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information requested will soon be made publicly available.

Carbon emissions impacts

The project team is aware of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and its nature. The work to complete the business case is still underway and there is not yet a recommended mode or route at this stage, so the estimated emissions impacts are still to be quantified.

However, we do know that there are practical measures which reduce pollution and carbon emissions in real-world environments, rather than at a system level that involves the ETS. These include:

- enabling more local travel within Auckland by making shorter trips more viable via public transport, walking, and cycling
- reducing the pressure for increased housing sprawl and the longer distance trips this can create
- reducing emissions from the transport system by giving Aucklanders the opportunity to leave their car at home for local trips.

In relation to your specific query about who authorised the public messaging for the recent public engagement campaign, this was approved by the Project Director and the Communications and Engagement Manager for the Auckland Light Rail Establishment Unit.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse some information in relation to your request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact our Ministerial Services team by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard May". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard May

Chief of Staff – Office of the Chief Executive (on behalf of the Establishment Unit)