

## MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

<b>Subject</b>	Northern Pathway Project Update
<b>Date</b>	18 February 2021
<b>Briefing number</b>	BRI-2107

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1 <sup>st</sup> contact
Brett Gliddon	General Manager, Transport Services	s9(2)(a)		✓

### Action taken by Office of the Minister

- Noted
- Seen by Minister
- Agreed
- Feedback provided
- Forwarded to
- Needs change [please specify]
- Withdrawn
- Overtaken by events

18 February 2021

**Minister of Transport**

**Minister of Finance**

## NORTHERN PATHWAY PROJECT UPDATE

### **Purpose**

1. This briefing provides you with an update on the Westhaven to Akoranga Drive section of the Northern Pathway, which is being delivered as part of the NZ Upgrade Programme.
2. It provides information on a number of alternative options (to the one set out in the Establishment Report) that are being explored to deliver a walking and cycling connection between Westhaven and Akoranga Drive, including a crossing over the Waitemata Harbour.
3. Also attached to this briefing is a copy of the proposed communications and engagement plan to update the community and stakeholders of the current situation involving the Northern Pathway. It seeks your approval to proceed with updating our key partners including Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, Panuku and Shanan Halbert, MP for Northcote before 26 February 2021.

### **Background**

4. The Government announced the NZ Upgrade Programme in January 2020, which included \$360m for the walking and cycling connection between Westhaven and Akoranga Drive.
5. The Northern Pathway Programme will provide a seamless dedicated walking and cycling link between Auckland's City Centre and the North Shore and will connect with existing local paths to extend the region's walking and cycling network. The Programme, as shown in Attachment 1, is being delivered in three sections:
  - Westhaven to Akoranga Drive (NZ Upgrade Programme funded)
  - Akoranga Drive to Constellation Drive
  - Constellation Drive to Albany.
6. As outlined in the Establishment Report, the preferred option for the Waitemata Harbour crossing was a five-metre-wide pathway, attached to the existing concrete piers on the eastern (southbound) side of the Auckland Harbour Bridge.
7. An Interim Project Alliance (IPA) was established in September 2020 to see the project progress from design through to consent lodgement.
8. The IPA received a specimen design for the bridge component of the Pathway, consistent with the scope outlined in the Establishment Report, to be used as the basis for the project.
9. The specimen design and cost estimate indicated that the project would require significantly more funding than was provided through the Upgrade Programme. As a result, the IPA then undertook a 'Cost Scope Challenge' to test the constructability of the design, investigate what

improvements could be made and consider alternative options to provide a walking and cycling crossing across the Waitemata Harbour.

### **Cost Scope Challenge**

10. The Cost Scope Challenge explored a range of design options, including additions to the existing bridge as well as independent structures. The IPA estimated the specimen design to cost significantly more than the previous estimate due to construction methodology, scope clarity, temporary land rental and preliminary and general cost differences.
11. New information made available through geotechnical investigations and wind tunnel assessments during design development found that the specimen design, bridge widening, and truss support options were deemed unfeasible due to the risk posed to the existing bridge.
12. The 17 September incident where a truck was blown into one of the bridge supports, rendering a number of lanes out of action and causing significant disruption and delays, further highlighted the significance and reliance on the bridge as part the Auckland transport network.
13. An independent structure is expected to cost less than the specimen design and that further benefits could be unlocked should the width, shape and form of the structure be explored.

### **Alternative Options**

14. A number of options were presented to the Waka Kotahi Board in late-2020, ranging from walking and cycling only options, to a new six-lane multi-modal bridge. The Board instructed officials to progress work with a walking and cycling only option, and to explore both structural and operational options.
15. Waka Kotahi held a Long List Workshop in January 2021 to identify a list of options to present to the Board in March 2021. A short list of options was identified, ranging from operational options, such as a ferry, gondola or bike bus, to structural options such as a separate structure to run alongside the existing bridge, including at different heights and alignment.
16. The SkyPath option has been determined to be technically unfeasible and is no longer being considered.
17. Waka Kotahi is progressing work on each of the shortlist options ahead of reporting back to the Board in March to seek endorsement of a preferred option.

### **Next Steps**

18. The landward portion of the Northern Pathway is currently being progressed from Sulphur Beach to Akoranga Drive. Consenting design is expected to be completed around mid-2021, which would then enable construction to commence before the end of the year.
19. Waka Kotahi is continuing to refine, design and prepare the short list options for the Waitemata Harbour crossing to be presented to the Board in March 2021. Once the Board has identified a preferred option, we will provide you with an update.
20. It is expected that the change in scope will vary from what was outlined in the Establishment Report and will therefore require joint Minister endorsement. This may include operational options to improve service in the short-term, as well as a longer-term structural option.

- 21. An alliance has been established and is ready to progress with the consenting design of the Westhaven to Akoranga section as soon as a preferred option has been endorsed.
- 22. The costs for the Northern Pathway are expected to be significantly greater than the funding allocated through the NZ Upgrade Programme. Current cost indications for a suitable solution range between \$520m-\$675m.
- 23. Waka Kotahi will be reporting back to the Board, followed by joint Ministers, in March 2021 on the Programme Baseline and will include further detail about the costs for the Northern Pathway.

**It is recommended that you:**

- 1. **Note** the contents of this briefing Noted
  
- 2. **Approve** the attached communications and engagement plan, enabling Waka Kotahi to begin updating key stakeholders and the local MP before 26 February 2021. Approve



.....  
**Brett Gliddon**

General Manager, Transport Services

Date: 18 February 2021

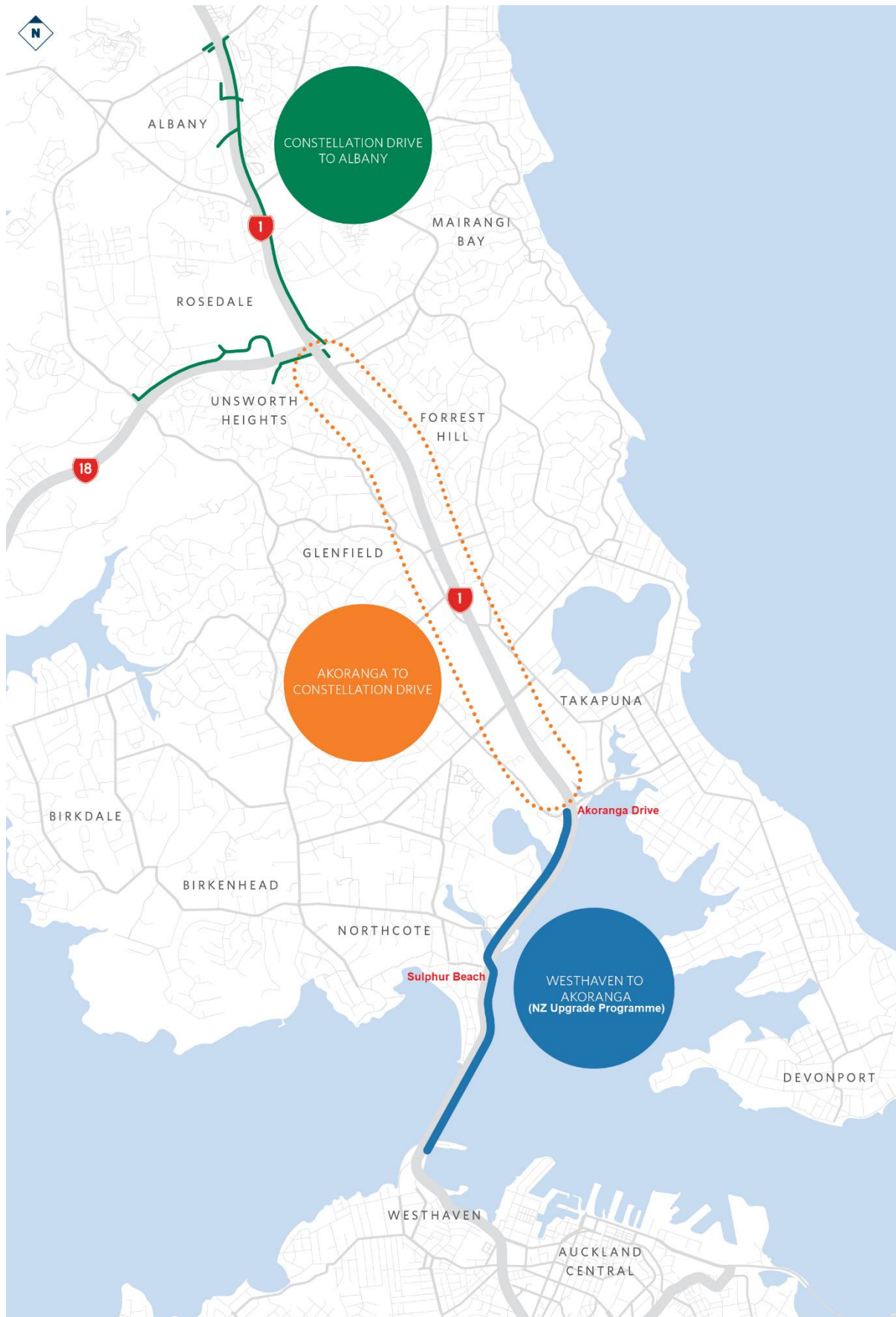
.....  
**Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport**

Date:

.....  
**Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance**

Date:

Attachment 1: Northern Pathway Programme Map



## **Attachment 2: Communications and Engagement Plan**

### **Northern Pathway – change of design, proposed communications approach**

**17 February 2020**

#### **Current stakeholder, and community context**

There is sustained and increasing pressure from stakeholders such as Bike Auckland, which has advocated for the pathway and have partnered with us to build support as we have investigated options.

They have recently issued a press release calling for a public update. Media are now submitting OIA requests for documents relating to public speculation that there is a significant change in the direction of the work.

An OIA is due to be released to The New Zealand Herald on 25 February.

We also have pressure from the impacted property owners for an update. We require seven private properties to construct the pathway in Northcote and now have unconditional agreements to purchase four of those properties.

Our current public messaging says that we are progressing with the design to attach a structure to the bridge and that construction will start in early 2021. We now know that there is a significant change in the approach as we move back to the options phase and do not have start date for physical works.

We are however making progress on the land portion of the project (formally known as SeaPath).

#### **Suggested way forward**

In order to maintain good ongoing relationships with stakeholders that are also important for other regional projects Waka Kotahi believes it's important to update them prior to the information becoming public via the media which will happen immediately after the release of the OIA to The New Zealand Herald on 25 February.

Our suggested key messages are below for consideration.

#### **Suggested timeframes**

Prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of February we propose informing our key partners including Auckland Council, Auckland Transport and Panuku as well as Shanan Halbert MP for Northcote. We also propose meeting with the impacted landowners.

#### **Key messages (February to March 2021) for consideration**

- The Northern Pathway Westhaven to Akoranga project has \$360 million of funding as part of the New Zealand Upgrade Programme. A walking and cycling connection over the Waitematā Harbour remains a priority for the Government and Waka Kotahi as we work hard to build Auckland's walking and cycling network, giving people choice in the way they get around and experience Auckland.
- The New Zealand Upgrade Programme funding covers the Auckland Harbour Bridge section of the pathway as well as the connection between Northcote and Akoranga.
- Last September, Waka Kotahi appointed an alliance to deliver the project and it has been reviewing the proposed design to ensure it is fit-for-purpose to meet current and future users' needs.
- The pathway design that was consulted on last year for the bridge section was a shared path attached to the Auckland Harbour Bridge. Further investigation by the Alliance has shown that this

is not right solution for the bridge section of the pathway. The review which included wind and geotechnical testing found that it would be extremely difficult to build a structure attached to the bridge and it would impact the overall structural integrity of the bridge.

- As such we are now looking at alternative options for how to provide a connection over the Waitematā Harbour.
- We will need to adjust our delivery timeframe for this section of the Northern Pathway.
- The Alliance is investigating several short-term and long-term solutions and on different alignments for this section of the Northern Pathway including building a separate pathway structure next to the bridge rather than having it attached to the existing bridge.
- Delivering a fit-for-purpose walking and cycling connection across the Waitematā Harbour is a once in a generation opportunity and while we appreciate that delays are frustrating, it's essential that we get the solution right.
- The next stage for this section will be to finalise the scope, develop design, and prepare for consenting and construction.
- We will be able to share our revised consent lodgement and construction start dates once we have finished the investigations and Waka Kotahi Board approvals have been given.
- A concept design for a walking and cycling pathway across the harbour was created by the SkyPath Trust and consented in 2015. This design was also attached to the Auckland Harbour Bridge via the clip-on and would therefore also impact the overall structural integrity of the bridge as well as the bridge's capacity for future traffic.
- In the meantime, work is progressing well on the section of pathway that connects from the northern end of the Auckland Harbour Bridge to Akoranga. We are working with partners including Mana Whenua on the design as we work towards lodging for consent and then construction.
- When complete the Northern Pathway will provide a fully separated pathway between Westhaven and Albany with local entry and exit points. The Akoranga to Constellation Drive section is in the Detailed Business Case phase and the Constellation Drive to Albany section is under construction as part of the Northern Corridor Improvements project.