



11 August 2021

Greetings.

There has been a long gap since our May newsletter. This should be no surprise after we had notified you of the rebuff from **Let's Get Wellington Moving** to our presentation on Suspension Rail (SR) – one option for Wellington's transport woes.

To recap, at our presentation LGWM could not fault our proposal and acknowledged its positive features. Yet they refused to consider it further, believing that SR would not pass Resource Management Act (RMA) and regulatory processes. This setback was not entirely unexpected.

Following our presentation:

- We asked why LGWM believed SR would not pass RMA and regulatory processes, yet the considerably less safe *ground-based* MRT would pass.
- After reviewing our correspondence with LGWM the Ombudsman has advised we need to issue a formal complaint letter to LGWM before they will review our complaint.
- We remain disappointed and angry.

If you feel the same way, please think about how you might help get this situation back on the rails...

Meanwhile, here are some updates about recent evidence that LGWM has lost its direction.

1. **LOCAL PUBLIC MEETING:** At the Kilbirnie Residents' meeting about LGWM's proposed Cobham Drive pedestrian crossing, it was pointed out that consultation feedback at the time said 70% of respondents won't use it. In response, LGWM representatives said:

- Consultation is not a vote, even though the Consultation was titled "*Have your say*".
- LGWM would not consider a bridge option; or relocating the crossing to be in a direct line between Miramar and Kilbirnie.
- They acknowledged that the location they chose for the crossing will inconvenience traffic and that a location in front of the airport runway would have held up the buses.
- LGWM's aim is to get pedestrians, cyclists and public transport moving, not vehicles.



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2. **TUNNEL VISION: PROPOSED “LONG TUNNEL” OFFERS NOTHING FOR MASS RAPID TRANSPORT**
 (“One option for getting Wellington moving: A 'long tunnel' between Kilbirnie and The Terrace”: [Stuff, Tues 3 Aug 2021](#)).



FASTR-Wellington response:

WHY? - It makes little sense for LGWM to group this long tunnel “option 4” amongst the three options it is considering regarding Mass Rapid Transport. It is simply a *bypass* for conventional road traffic, and is totally separate from any MRT proposal. It does not match the above-stated aim “to get pedestrians, cyclists and public transport moving, not vehicles”.

- The question arises, why has LGWM wasted funding on researching this vehicle-based option when (on the other hand) it decided *not* to investigate Suspension Rail which *is* a potential option favouring public transport as well as foot traffic.

COST: Moreover, Darren Ponter has stated clearly that (even though there are no costings for “option 4”), it is obvious that a long tunnel would be “*phenomenally expensive*”.

- Suspension Rail should have been investigated as an option, because it is equally obvious that SR would be cheaper than the other 3 MRT options. Why? Because it requires no tunnels at all.

SAFETY: No information has been provided regarding safety of this “option 4”. However, it is equally obvious that this bypass would improve safety (for *pedestrians, and cyclists*) far more than the other 3 options, and would not contribute to slowing of road traffic elsewhere. **WHY?** Because of separation from traffic elsewhere.

- Suspension Rail would be faster *and yet more than 100 times safer* than other forms of MRT, because it would be *100% separated* from all road traffic and pedestrians for its whole length.



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3. **COBHAM DRIVE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING:** Last week an impassioned response via a full-page advertisement from a group of Wellington businesses has given us fresh hope. **FASTR-Wellington** is looking at how it can contribute to this new initiative. LGWM seems to continue picking away at little projects, while apparently losing track of the elephant in the room which is **Mass Rapid Transport**. (“Off the Rails”: Stuff, [5 Aug 2021](#)).



FASTR-Wellington response:

How on earth does a light-controlled pedestrian crossing somewhere near the middle of Cobham Drive fit in with LGWM's elusive MRT plan?

SPEED: With a name like Let's Get Wellington *Moving*, it is ironic that this organisation is constantly focused on *removing, stopping, or reducing speed* of traffic.

- Speed is just *one* factor in accidents, and reducing speed in a city is not the most reliable or most effective solution. It adds the complication of aggravating impatience! Pedestrian versus bus accidents happen in the central city *despite* slower speeds, partly because the reduction in speed tempts pedestrians to take risks.
- On Cobham Drive, there will still be pedestrians taking risks, rather than walking a long distance out of their way to a crossing - only to have to wait for a traffic light.
- Clearly, LGWM are more focused on *disincentives* than incentives in promoting use of a (currently non-existent) MRT system. **It makes little sense to wield the stick before introducing the carrot.**
- Moreover, this focus on *speed disincentives* overlooks that these will adversely affect **service vehicles, the disabled, and those to one side of the catchment of the MRT system, who have little to gain from MRT.**
- LGWM ignores *history*, which shows that when MRT shares with other road users (thus limited by road speed limits), it contributes to *accidents* and to *the slowing down/disruption of all traffic*. [Edinburgh's](#) recently-introduced tram service takes 40 minutes to cover its 12km route, so it joins a list of such services best called “snail rail”. For other examples, see the [FASTR-Wellington website](#). Suspension Rail as an MRT option has a record of covering such distances (similar to the 10.5km for Wellington, from station to airport) in about 20 minutes, which really *would* get Wellington *moving*.



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SAFETY: A pedestrian/cyclist bridge over Cobham Drive makes far more sense than introducing a light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

- The crossing design requires pedestrians to wait in the Cobham Drive cycle lane which creates a collision risk for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- The most reliable and effective measure in reducing road accidents is SEPARATION (as opposed to SHARING the road), eliminating risk-takers.
- Separation is why the use of bridges and of suspension rail achieves **better than 100 times the level of safety** compared with other measures, while retaining the advantages of swift road and MRT transport. It vastly minimises the human factor.
- One commentator has suggested that pedestrians and cyclists will find a bridge too exposed to the wind and weather, and will cost more than a crossing without corresponding economic benefits. This ignores the next point, regarding INTEGRATION.

INTEGRATION: Whatever the solution for Cobham Drive, coordinated forward planning is needed.

- The proposed location appears unlikely to integrate well with traffic to the indoor sports Stadium (whether via walkways/cycleways or via MRT). Why not pick a location near to the roundabout and turnoff to Kilbirnie, close to wherever will be an MRT station, and favouring pedestrian/cyclist traffic from Miramar/Strathmore?
- Moreover, if the MRT solution were to be **Suspension Rail**, there would be clear advantages in spending a little more for a *covered* overhead walkway servicing an SR station as well as the Sports Centre. This *integrated* approach would have clear economic advantages.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If you are as angry as we are about the impending futile expenditure of major public funds, as well as an impending decade of worse traffic and congestion during construction, then please recruit friends and colleagues to join us in objecting to this biased and poorly-focused process.

Please forward a copy of this newsletter to others, inviting them to use [our Contact page](#), to send an email with the subject heading JOIN. We look forward to more voices joining us.

Stay Safe!

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for FASTR-Wellington.
www.fastr-wellington.com