



10 November 2021

Greetings.

We remain disappointed and annoyed at the rebuff from **Let's Get Wellington Moving** to our presentation on Suspension Rail (SR) –ideal for retrofitting to an established city like Wellington with narrow streets, limited through-routes, and hills. LGWM seems oblivious to some important safety principles that are crucial to its success. It continues to forge on, offering multiple options for supposed “rapid” transport for Wellington, but these options amount to *rearranging the deck chairs*. Without a substantial upgrade of safety, none of its options can achieve swifter or surer mass transport. On Tuesday 9th November LGWM has presented its proposed 4 Options online via a webinar, and over the next few weeks LGWM is inviting feedback. Note, however, that they do not consider this any sort of vote from citizens.

If you feel like us, please think about how you might help get this situation back on the rails...
Meanwhile, here are some further thoughts.

The 4 options being publicised by LGWM have evolved somewhat since our last newsletter, and each is now clearly displayed and explained at this link:

<https://hello.lgwm.nz/explore/?option=04&view=detail>

This voluminous HELLO website features a lot of PR puff, and careful reading reveals pivotal wording such as:

1. LGWM offers “... *public transport... that can move more of us around Wellington more quickly and reliably...moving more people, more quickly and comfortably...Faster, more reliable commutes*”.
2. The TRAMS option (so-called Light Rail) does not lend itself to later extension to other suburbs.
3. “*2028 Construction begins! Depending on the final decision this will take 8-15 years*”. That’s right!

FASTR-Wellington response:

1. **SO, A FURTHER LONG WAIT:** Waiting until 2028 for construction to begin is no big surprise, but it is intolerable to wait another 8-15 years thereafter for an outcome! Suspension Rail in general would require only 2-3 years* because of needing no tunnels to be dug, and overhead tracks would be craned in at off peak times, with construction of pylons at wide spacing causing less disruption than digging up a whole street for Trams, to reposition underground pipes and lay rails.



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2. **COST:** Darren Ponter has stated clearly that a long tunnel would be “*phenomenally expensive*”. This seems largely because it would be shared by Trams (“light” rail) and other vehicles in separate lanes, though with no mention of isolation between the two.
 - Suspension Rail should have been investigated as an option. It is equally obvious that SR would be cheaper than the other MRT options, since it does not need such a tunnel.*

3. **ABOUT THAT OUTCOME:** The word missing from all this hype is **SAFETY**, which is pivotal. Although the LGWM plans mention “dedicated” lanes in certain areas for buses or trams, these lanes would still share intersections, where most accidents in a city occur. So (perhaps intentionally?) there is no claim of this improving safety. The claim of being “reliable” is thus overoptimistic.
 - a. Sharing of intersections, in particular, fails to eliminate traffic jams resulting from the inevitable occasional crashes and derailments. LGWM has failed to learn from recent experience in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, and Edinburgh.*
 - b. Even in areas with “dedicated” lanes, trams and buses will be obliged to comply with road speed limits, which LGWM seems determined to reduce to 30 km/hour in much of the city. So the claim of being “*quicker*” is also overoptimistic. Suspension Rail is not constrained thus, and can swiftly accelerate to 70 or 80 km/hour.*
 - c. In addition to a sprinkling of words like “quickly”, and “reliably” throughout LGWM publicity there are also claims of *time savings* (“12 minutes” or more). This bears comparison with retail “SALES” or advertising a product as “90% fat-free”. The question is – compared with what? LGWM does not risk claims about *actual likely journey times*, at peak or off-peak times, and careful researching of comparable cities shows Sydney struggling to achieve any better than 50 minutes,* and Edinburgh any better than 40 minutes* over a similar distance. Yet Suspension Rail can achieve around 20 minutes, regardless of peak hour traffic.* That is surely what Wellingtonians would expect for Mass Rapid Transport.

* see FASTR-Wellington website for references.



10 November 2021

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If you are as annoyed as we are about this level of misinformation and the impending futile expenditure of major public funds, as well as the threat of a decade or more of worse traffic and congestion during construction, then please -

- First and foremost, take action yourself. Go to the LGWM HELLO website (<https://lgwm.nz/all-projects/mass-rapid-transit/>), and post a comment in response to their invitation. We suggest you –
 - Say that **none** of the options are acceptable.
 - Comment about the lack of evidence of significant safety, speed, or reliability advantages for the proposed options for Mass Transport (Trams and Bendy buses).
 - point to the lack of explanation why Suspension Rail has not been considered.
- 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!

Stephen Moore & Peter Dodwell

for FASTR-Wellington.

www.fastr-wellington.com

PS: Watch for a possible further Letter to the Editor from us, in the Dominion Post.