

CBD Rail Link

Project Outline

The proposed Auckland CBD Rail Link connects the Britomart Station with the Western Rail Line in the vicinity of the Mt Eden Rail Station.

The purpose is to:

- revitalise the Auckland CBD
- support economic development of the CBD and wider Auckland region
- relieve the train service capacity constraint at Britomart
- bring passenger rail into the central and southern areas of the CBD

Project Status

A joint ONTRACK/ARTA study is currently underway to enable protection of the route and station locations. Key deliverables are the Notice of Requirement documentation and the project Business Case.

The 15 month study is expected to be completed in December 2010. It includes route and station options and opportunities, engineering feasibility, potential costs and the business case. Phase 1 is aimed at selecting the preferred route and identifying the station locations and is to be completed in December 2009. Auckland City Council is undertaking a parallel investigation into appropriate station locations to assist the Phase 1 investigations.

The draft RLTS proposes that construction of the CBD Rail Tunnel completed by 2021. Construction is expected to take 4 – 5 years.

Indicative Costs and Benefits

Without construction of the link the passenger rail network's ability to cater for increased passenger demands will be limited by the configuration of the Britomart station as a terminus rather than through station. Construction of the link will improve the operational efficiency of the current passenger rail system and will provide direct rail access to parts of the Auckland CBD not currently served by rail.

Road access to the Auckland CBD is at capacity. The ability to provide additional bus services to the CBD is limited by the amount of road space within the CBD that can be made available to buses. Passenger rail is the primary means by which the accessibility of the CBD can be maintained and enhanced as the CBD continues to grow towards a projected 200,000 employees by 2050.

Patronage modelling undertaken for the Rail Development Plan 2006 indicated that the current rail infrastructure and rolling stock upgrade planned for completion in 2013 or 2014 including 10-minute

headways would provide the capacity to deliver 23m passenger trips a year by 2030. However, with the CBD rail tunnel in place patronage would increase to in excess of 22m passenger trips a year in 2020 and to 30m passenger trips a year in 2030. The estimated user and decongestion benefits of the rail tunnel were \$1.54b calculated over a 40 year period and using a 7% discount rate. The calculations gave an indicative benefit cost ratio of 1.031¹.

An estimate was made of the wider economic benefits that might be generated by the proposed rail tunnel, including the benefits of agglomeration (potential impacts of changes in CBD accessibility on employment density and the level of economic activity). Using an estimated multiplier effect of 0.23 to 0.6, gave additional wider economic benefits of \$350m to \$924m and produced an indicative benefit cost ratio of between 1.27 and 1.64.

These calculations emphasise the importance of include a comprehensive and rigorous consideration of such benefits in a future economic evaluation of the CBD Rail Tunnel. They will be refined and updated as part as the current CBD Rail Link Study which will include a revised construction cost estimate of the total project including stations.

Issues

1. The immediate need is to finalise the alignment and associated station locations and to protect the route.
2. Once route protection is in place, issues relating to funding will need to be resolved.

¹ The NPV of the tunnel costs was \$1.49b and included the NPV of the capital costs of \$1.28b plus the NPV of the operating subsidies.