



5. **ROADS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE THE COUNCIL POSITION ON REVISED WESTERN CORRIDOR PROPOSAL**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to consider a range of changes proposed by New Zealand Transport Authority (NZTA) to the Western Corridor Road of National Significance (RON), (particularly the section between Sawyers Arms Road and Yaldhurst Road). These changes were outlined to the Council in a bus tour conducted by NZTA staff on 20 April 2012. This field trip included Councillors, Community Board members and technical staff from both the Council and NZTA.
2. This report does not address all the resolutions passed by the Council in November 2011 in respect of the government's wider RON programme in Christchurch. These continue to be worked through by staff through a variety of forums, and will be reported back to the Council as appropriate.
3. The position now put forward by NZTA in respect of the Western Corridor RON is summarised in **Attachment 1**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council concerns with the Western Corridor RON

4. At its November 2011 meeting the Council expressed its concerns with the Western RON as proposed by NZTA. These are outlined in the resolutions passed and attached as **Attachment 2**.

In summary the main concerns expressed, by the Council, the Board, and a variety of other parties can be listed as follows.

- Conversion of Russley Road, incrementally, to a motorway, severing the airport and McLeans Island area from the city.
 - The loss of access from the city particularly the Wairakei business park, to the airport business area.
 - The shifting of current Russley Road traffic on to local roads, notably Roydvale, Woolridge Road.
 - Loss of safe cycle access from the Harewood area to the McLeans Island Cycleway.
 - Loss of access to the business area surrounding the airport (notably Dakota Park).
 - The apparent rejection by NZTA of any provision for a Western Airport bypass to accommodate traffic seeking to connect between the northern and southern State Highway approach to the city.
 - The proposed design modifications to the iconic bridge structure proposed for the Memorial/Russley intersection.
5. Each of the matters were canvassed by NZTA staff during the bus trip, and a range of modifications and improvements were listed by NZTA staff. These are addressed in detail below. In a number of instances the commitments raised remain early proposals, which have not been fully tested, or costed, and there remains work to be done by both the Council and NZTA staff to ensure that suitable solutions are reached. However the direction of the commitments given suggest that a suitable outcome can be achieved and if this is not so it will be open for the Council to again raise its concern with NZTA.

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Summary of Proposed Changes

6. The key changes proposed are canvassed in Mr Harland's letter to the Chief Executive, (**Attachment 1**). They are further examined below.

7. Speed

It has been confirmed that the speed limit will be reduced from 100 kilometres per hour, to 80 kilometres per hour from the Groynes to Avonhead Road, recognising the local nature of the road. This will effectively retain the existing speed restrictions.

8. Western Airport Bypass

NZTA have not committed to a new State Highway/Western Airport Bypass. They have however now acknowledged the possibility of such a route in the future, and proposed (along with CIAL and the Council) a series of roading improvements to enable bypass traffic to more easily use the route. The key changes proposed are improvements for the Barters Road/Pound Rd/State Highway 1 intersection near Templeton, and improved connection back to State Highway 1 via McLeans Island Road and Broughs Road, near Sawyers Arms Road. Separately CIAL are also to pursue the realignment of part of Pound Road.

9. These changes are designed to improve flow, and driver choice, and continue to allow a long term Western Airport bypass to be considered as a longer term solution to traffic circulating on the Western side of the city.

10. Wairakei Road (and Avonhead Road) Severances

A key element in the NZTA design is the building of the intersection at Memorial Russley. The proposed solution requires the closure of both Avonhead Road and Wairakei Road at Russley Road, due to the bridge approach slopes. One of the Council's and the Community Board key concerns was the effect of this on severing access for the Wairakei business park from the airport, and the consequential re-routing of traffic on to local roads. In response NZTA have proposed a modification to their design to allow a slip lane of traffic alongside the State Highway that effectively connects southbound traffic from Wairakei Road to the State highway and to the airport, via the Memorial Avenue intersection.

11. Northbound traffic would access the business park entry via Roydvale Road, or by a slightly circuitous route utilising the enhanced roundabout at Harewood Road, and coming back south along the State Highway. In addition NZTA have committed to a number of local road improvements, where changes in traffic behaviour and demand have been modelled. (Notably Woolridge Road/Harewood Road). While this outcome remains a compromise for local vehicular uses, the changes do improve access between Wairakei to the airport over that initially proposed by NZTA.

12. Access to Dakota Park

This issue has been one raised by CIAL for some time, and parallels the issues faced by the city at Wairakei Road. With the proposed closure of Avonhead Road, the airport was keen to retain access to its developing Dakota Park, and to reduce the concentration of access at Memorial Drive. The proposed solution is a north and south interchange for Dakota Park, the final design of which has yet to be agreed. One of the key elements the Council will wish to see captured in any final solution is a dedicated cycle access across the road, particularly a strong connection from Dakota Park to the Avonhead area. This provides a good opportunity to provide complementary cycle access for workers at the airport, the crossing of the state highway is the most significant barrier to achieving this.

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13. Cycle Access

In addition to the opportunity for improved cycle access at Dakota Park, the Council and the Community Board were justifiably concerned with the lack of attention to cycle access across the State Highway and in particular to the McLeans Island cycleway. This route is a significant recreational route, and with increasing employment on the Western side of the State Highway the ability for workers to cross the route safely is of significant importance. In response to these concerns NZTA have identified the possibility of constructing a grade separated cycle connection in the vicinity of the Harewood Road roundabout that would connect equally from the city side to the current cycle track. This is a significant step forward. While the detail of this still needs to be worked through, changes with secondary connections into the employment areas to the north of McLeans Island Road, this initiative is a significant step forward in improving access and safety.

14. Memorial Avenue Bridge

This bridge is a key element in addressing growing traffic congestion on Russley Road. Work was commenced between NZTA, the Council, and CIAL to consider a structure that would not only be functional, but which would present an iconic entrance point to the city from the airport gateway. In November NZTA announced it would meet the full cost of the preferred bridge design, but would value engineer it, to reduce the cost. The city was rightly concerned that in doing so NZTA would undermine the iconic nature of the design. During the trip NZTA staff outlined their proposal to add a centre pier to the bridge, to reduce the structural reliance on the arches that were a key feature of the bridge. They estimated the cost saving to be in the order of \$7 million. Once again this is a position which the Councillors indicated a willingness to accept. However it is important that the detailed designs reflect Mr Harland's assurances that the iconic look and feel of the bridge will not be compromised, and this should be addressed through ongoing dialogue with the Council.

SUMMARY

15. There has been a large measure of concern by the Council and Community Boards, and CIAL and others over the manner in which NZTA have endeavoured to deliver the government's RONs programme on the Western side of Christchurch city. Following the Council's strong stance in November 2011, NZTA staff have worked to propose a suite of changes to address, as best they can, these issues. The proposal outlined on the 20 April bus trip were welcomed by the Council as a commitment by NZTA to address the Council's concerns. It is accepted that the proposals were broad and that the detail of these had in many instances, still to be worked through. There does need to be a commitment by NZTA to continue to work with the Council, the Community Board, CIAL and other affected parties, in good faith, to deliver on the compromises offered.

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Confirm its acceptance of the proposed changes to the Western Corridor Roads of National Significance presented to them by New Zealand Transport Authority at its 20 April road trip, the confirmation letter received from Mr Jim Harland, the Regional Director, and as outlined in this report.
- (b) Confirm that on the basis of the proposal outlined, it affirms its support for the Western Corridor Roads of National Significance project by New Zealand Transport Authority.
- (c) Confirm its expectation that New Zealand Transport Authority and the Council staff will work closely and collaboratively on the detail of the changes proposed to ensure that final designs and solutions achieve the outcomes committed to by New Zealand Transport Authority.
- (d) Affirm that it reserves the right to withdraw its support for the Western Corridor Roads of National Significance programme, if New Zealand Transport Authority is unable to demonstrate that it can and will give effect to the commitments made at the 20 April bus trip, in a timely and appropriate manner.
- (e) Thanks New Zealand Transport Authority, for its willingness to consider modifications to its design proposal for the Western Corridor Roads of National Significance.
- (f) Confirms that in the light of the changes proposed it does not seek a meeting with the Minister of Transport on this issue, but confirms its desire to ensure that New Zealand Transport Authority, its Board, and Minister continue to dialogue regularly and in good faith with the Council on transport issues as they affect the future of the city.