

Notes on Hearing Panel presentation

16.2.2023

Tēnā Koutou, hello everyone,

1. My name is Lawrence Collingbourne. I am the President of the Onslow Residents Community Association, affectionately known as ORCA. ORCA covers the suburbs of Broadmeadows, Khandallah and Kaiwharawhara.
2. You will have seen the paper that Julie Ward, Tony Randle and I presented to the Council last year regarding the ability of the Johnsonville Railway Line to function as a rapid transit service and its ability to support the growth in the District Plan. It simply doesn't cut it for either, so if we rely on it doing so, we have a problem, Houston.
3. I want to stress that we are not against progress and densification. We just want it to be proportionate to need and to respect the amenity and character that the multi-generational families of our suburbs have created.
4. My story is that I know what it means when you cannot afford to buy a property as I couldn't when I was young. That I have embraced the 30% growth in my backyard since I moved in. That I'm a cyclist and I know Wellington is not as safe as the UK, but it's also steeper and windier. That I believe it is possible to achieve the objectives of the NPS-UD by using evidence-based, common-sense wisdom without destroying what we value.
5. I want to start by drawing your attention to some important points within the reports you have on the Johnsonville Railway Line, which I will call "The Line".
6. Firstly, the capacity reports from last year, both ours and Andrew Wharton's, have been superseded by the additional growth created by the introduction of the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS). The substantial additional capacity required to meet this growth is addressed in Tim Helm's evidence.
7. Secondly, Andrew Wharton's original calculations used average capacity and post-Covid travel volumes, something we addressed in our report. They do not consider the impact of peak capacity limitations when travel returns to normal. These are going to be reached much sooner and will impair mode shift to the Line. This is also addressed by Tim Helm.
8. Thirdly, the time comparisons in the Section 42A report, used to determine whether the Line is fast, are not based on the actual the journey time of the different modes. Instead, an imaginary race between the train and a car from one station to the destination station is presented. The door-to-door train time is much longer due to wait times and walking catchments at both ends of the Line. The larger the catchments, the less rapid the transport. Tim Helm has also addressed this.
9. Fourthly, the GWRC Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) relied entirely on the draft One Network Framework (ONF), as do other submissions you have received. It was not based on metrics required to meet the Proposed District Plan, unlike the Auckland Transport Rapid Transit Baseline criteria. The published ONF now classifies the Line as PT4, not PT1 and Waka Kotahi says* it is not suitable for assessing a rapid transit service under the NPS-UD.

10. Finally, GWRC has published criteria for a car-replacement service along the growth corridors of the region in its Wellington Rail Programme Business Case**. The Line is not defined as a growth corridor and nor can it ever achieve their projected frequency over its single-track. \$7b of expenditure is required to achieve a truly rapid service to Kapiti and the Hutt, and not a penny of it will spent on improving the rapidity of our heritage railway.
11. I am next going to review three common-sense observations about why the Line does not work for us in Onslow as a rapid transit system.
12. Firstly, a single-track railway can never be a rapid transit service, let alone one perched on the side of a precipice, that squeals its way slowly up and down steep gradients, around tight corners, and through many narrow tunnels. It's because the up service is not separated from the down service, as required by the NPS-UD definition. But we still need the Line!
13. Secondly, more than half of the people who could travel on the Line currently do not. So, if the Line becomes more crowded and arrives even later as its capacity is eaten up, then surely proportionately even fewer will use it. The excess growth then goes into other transport modes, probably private vehicles. Why would you push for that to happen when elsewhere rapid transit services can take the growth?
14. Thirdly, the Line does not go to where we who choose to live in the North often want to go – northwards. A significant minority of us love it for school, or work, or the odd special event, and MDRS will fill up its capacity, but at other times we must have and use a car.
15. The final point I want to make is equally simple: according to Andrew and Tim, additional high-rise density along the Line will create no more affordable housing in the city. All that will happen is that less will be built elsewhere. So, high-rise along the Line literally doesn't alter the price of fish. Why would you trash amenity with high-rises to achieve nothing?
16. Not nothing exactly, what high rises will bring is a large increase in carbon emissions. Too much densification in our area prevents mode shift because the transit system does not have the capacity. So an important objective of the NPS-UD in a climate crisis would be made worse.
17. The correct NPS-UD Policy to apply is 3 (d), “building heights and densities of urban form commensurate with the level of commercial activity and community services”. I will leave arguments about what ‘commensurate’ means to the Centres and Residential streams.

Thank you

Lawrence Collingbourne
President ORCA
22 February 2023

* Email from Andrew McKillop, Waka Kotahi to Tony Randle 11 November 2022

** https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Documents/2022/08/rpt_wellington_rail_pbc_final_220725_Redacted.pdf