



## Working for more comfortable and viable cycling on Waiheke Island

### PRESENTATION TO THE WAIHEKE LOCAL BOARD PUBLIC FORUM

**DATE: 21 June 2012**

Cycle Action Waiheke (CAW) wish to submit the following written report in support of their presentation at the Waiheke Local Board (WLB) public forum on the above date.

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#### **Introduction**

The options put forward by AT's recent report on the Esplanade's future are a significant decision for our community to consider. Waiheke has not had the opportunity to consider the ramifications of these three different options before. It is noted that Auckland Transport's preferred option is for the esplanade to be opened to two way traffic shared with walkers and cyclists. In other words, after a spend up of approximately 2 million dollars we may well have a similar situation with the inherent safety problems that we had before the road was closed.

The Board needs to act in accordance with *the Special Consultative Procedure of the Local Government Act*. Two years ago a majority of people on Waiheke voted for the Esplanade be closed to motor vehicles other than in emergencies. The *Local Board 2011 plan* has as its key objectives "the creation of the Waiheke Great Walk and the support of Waiheke's National Cycleway bid". AT's recommendation is at odds with these objectives because the recreational and safety aspects will be diminished considerably on this section of the route. The *Essentially Waiheke* and *Recreation Waiheke* documents also must be considered before any decision is made.

Recently Auckland Transport's Walking and Cycling team produced a comprehensive *draft NZ Cycleway Route Inspection Report for Waiheke Island* with recommendations. CAW included the esplanade in this NZCT route because of its flat, safe, picturesque nature. The difference for cycle tourists not having to dodge vehicles or a substantial drop off is considerable. Waiheke's NZCT proposal and the closure of the esplanade had the full backing of the previous Community Board because they listened to the people. They could also see the positive ramifications for Waiheke's economy given that Waiheke is 90 minutes from the main international airport and 35 minutes from one third of NZ's population. The numbers of cyclists coming to Waiheke on the weekends particularly is increasing at a regular rate. At present there are approximately 10 Great Rides completed or near completed in NZ. The economic benefits reaped by local communities that have NZCT branding are considerable. Domestic cycle tourists spend \$105 per day (for average 3.6 days) while international tourists

\$97 per day (for average \$45.1 days) –Source NZ Cycleway- Market Research Report, Sept 2009.

Currently the Esplanade is open to walkers, runners, mothers pushing strollers, kids, cyclists, families, mobility scooters, students riding or walking to school, horses, fishermen, cycling commuters and motor vehicles in an emergency, etc. It's quiet, flat, safe, route from Oneroa and Blackpool to get to Surfdale in a relatively short time. The numbers of students from Te Huruhi School and Waiheke High School has increased substantially since the Esplanade was closed to motorised traffic. Six months ago the numbers using bikes at Waiheke High had increased by over 50%. Parents feel ok having their children using the current car free route.

The case for keeping the Esplanade open for vehicles to use in an emergency has some merit. Appropriate seawall construction to prevent further erosion as AT states we fully support. *However the issue of the stabilizing of the cliffs above the road appears not to be addressed in AT's report.*

We ask the WLB to consider the justification of the spending of \$2 million plus on the Esplanade when there maybe cheaper alternatives in an emergency situation.

### Auckland Transport Report Deficiencies

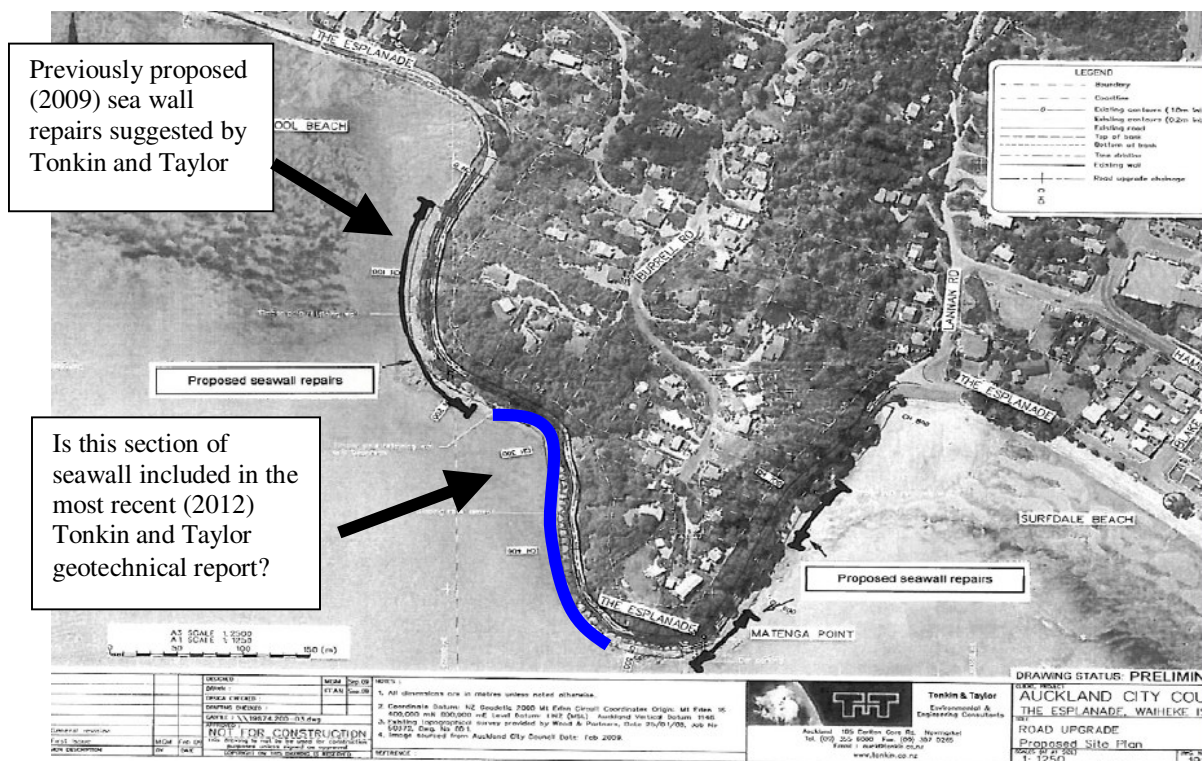
CAW has highlighted the following deficiencies in the AT report named “The Esplanade-Future Use Options” and dated 21/June 2012. CAW asks the WLB to provide us with resolutions for these concerns:

#### Auckland Transport Report Deficiency 1.- Option Costings

AT Assumption: Seawall works will cover the vast majority of costs for road widening for motor vehicle access. CAW challenge this assumption and believe that AT have failed to show evidence of it.

The following photograph shows the 2009 Tonkin and Taylor advice to Council on the need for sea wall repairs on The Esplanade.

Source : The Esplanade Seawall Works, Waiheke Island. -Report from John Richards Auckland City Council to the Waiheke Community Board on 11/11/ 2009.



This shows that the primary areas of slip concern, as identified by Tonkin and Taylor in 2009 were far away from the area that needs to be widened to accommodate two way car traffic. They are located way below the road height and will not provide additional benefits to road widths. The area requiring widening to accommodate two way car traffic has a concrete seawall and along the majority of its length is rock armored. One section of this wall still needs armoring, however CAW believe the cost of this, if the current road width is maintained, will be significantly reduced.

CAW strongly question the AT statement that *“the cost of this option is similar to that of some other options, which provide for fully reopening The Esplanade to vehicular traffic”*

In short CAW do not believe AT have fairly priced the “Do minimum” option.

CAW do not believe the costs for Option C have been fairly priced either. We believe that the WLB can not make an informed decision until they receive:

- a detailed cost breakdown of the \$200,000 suggested to allow two way motor vehicle access.
- a guarantee from AT that there will be no other substantial cost overruns in providing two way traffic access.

#### Auckland Transport Report Deficiency 2.-Use Surveys

AT Assumption: That current use is only *“77 pedestrians and 37 cyclists per day “*.

CAW question the data for this assumption and believe this to be an inaccurate figure when you consider the use throughout the year. It is critical to note that the surveys were carried out only during **March, June, and October**, ie winter/autumn.

CAW believe that this is not representative of use. AT failed to record any use during the warmer, busier, summer months, in particular the Christmas holidays. Given the significant influence on recreation and tourism on Waiheke at this time of the year, CAW believe this is a serious omission, CAW believe visitor use would be significantly higher during summer months. CAW ask the WLB to request AT to carry out summertime surveys of use.

#### Auckland Transport Report Deficiency 3.-Lack of Specialist Reports

The AT report does not provide any evidence of consideration of any other significant factors around options for The Esplanade. CAW believes that the following specialists in Auckland Council, AT and independent organisations should be consulted. These organisations should be invited to provide comments for the consideration of the WLB and public:

- Archaeology, Heritage Team, Auckland Council- damage to historic 1930s heritage seawall (constructed by “New Deal” labour in the depression)
- Parks Team, Auckland Council- effects on events, round island walkway and arboriculture- historic and protected mature pohutakawa trees.
- The Travelwise working party- effects on independent children and parents with children travelling to school.
- Community Transport AT- effects on the NZ Cycleway bid and viability for commuter and utilitarian cycling.
- The NZ Cycleway advisory panel- effects on the CAW/Fullers NZ Cycleway Extensions bid.
- Marine/Coastal protection specialists- effects on the marine environment/coastal policy.
- Island horse/pony clubs- effects on the activities of the Waiheke Pony Club which is based in nearby Blackpool

- Forest and Bird- effects on trees and wildlife.
- Cycle Advocates Network- CAA and CAW- effects on cycling viability.
- Urban Design Department, Auckland Council- effects on makeup of liveable communities or “place making”
- Waiheke and Auckland Tourism- effects on Tourism.
- Piritahi Marie and Iwi. - seabed and foreshore issues.
- Local Residents.

Auckland Transport Report Deficiency 4 -lack of strategic thinking or planning

CAW strongly disagrees that The Esplanade’s future is solely an “*operational*” matter. We fear that such a significant cost item will potentially reduce funding to other transport priorities on the island. Why should other high cost transport items in the Council Long Term Plan (Ocean View Rd- Owhanake to Mataitai upgrade) or the WLB plan be pushed down the list by AT's independent powers?

CAW believes that the Waiheke people should be able to prioritise what they see as the islands most important big-ticket items. The WLB plan allows for this in setting the target for the preparation of the "Waiheke Accessible Transport Plan". CAW believe that, unless they are already highlighted under the LTP, a consultation process needs to be undertaken before any significant money is invested in big ticket (+\$1000000) roading upgrades.

CAW believes AT should be funding this strategic planning process rather than keeping their own priorities to themselves.

### **Recommendations- What can the WLB do now?**

1. WLB can ask AT to provide advice and reports on the viability of any cheaper alternative routes between Moa Ave and Goodwin Ave for Waiheke in an emergency.

The only time that the emergency route through the Esplanade is needed is if there is road closure between Goodwin Ave and Moa Ave. We note that in the last 30 plus years there has been from memory only one motor accident that blocked access in this area. A possible alternative route in an emergency situation is to have a bypass built below this stretch of road adjacent to Little Oneroa toilets. When there is no emergency this single lane bypass could be used as a walkway/cycleway. Additionally the uphill bank on Oceanview Road in this area could be retained to eliminate any risks from a slip.

2. WLB to ask AT to make available detailed information such as drawings and accurate costings so that informed decision can be made including:
  - All geotechnical reports from specialists.
  - A breakdown of the 1.8 million costing for seawall repairs showing specific locations and proposed treatments and the costs for each section.
  - A breakdown of where costs will be increased during seawall repairs due to providing extra road width for Option C.
  - A breakdown of any costings separate from any seawall repairs associated with allowing motor vehicles to access The Esplanade for Option C.
  - All data/methodologies from the AT user surveys
  - New data from further use surveys to be undertaken during the summer of 2012
  - Specialist reports/comments identified above from Council, AT and independent organisations
3. Allow Waihekeans the opportunity to have their say by having a survey that outlines all options.
4. Have the AT report peer reviewed by an independent cycle engineering firm.
5. Have statistically valid counts of the present users over the summer period.

We remind the Board that all candidates in the recent Local Board by-election were asked about their views on opening the Esplanade to vehicles. An overwhelming majority of Waihekeans voted for the candidate that stated he opposed any change to the status quo unless the *Local Board empowers the community to make that decision*. This candidate won in a landslide. The people have spoken and now the board must listen and act accordingly given that another election is less than 18 months away.

CAW formally asks that the WLB to postpone any decision on the AT Esplanade report until the above CAW recommendations have been considered and the public notified.

Tony King-Turner and Tom Ransom  
On behalf of the Cycle Action Waiheke committee