



THE NEW ZEALAND
AUTOMOBILE
ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

Level 16
99 Albert Street
Auckland 1010

T. +64 9 966 8608
E. birvine@aa.co.nz

7 November 2019

City Centre Master Plan Refresh
Auckland Council
akhaveyoursay@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Submission from the NZ Automobile Association on the City Centre Master Plan Refresh

Introduction

The NZ Automobile Association (AA) is an incorporated society with 1.7 million Members, including approximately 335,000 personal Members who live in Auckland. Auckland AA Members are motorists, but many are also public transport users, cyclists and, of course, pedestrians. Consequently the collective views of AA Member reflect all modes of travel.

The AA's advocacy role in Auckland is focused on articulating our Members' views on transport matters and to ensure transport planning and decision making is in AA Members' best interests.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on Auckland Council's City Centre Master Plan Refresh and, in particular, the Access for Everyone (A4E) concept.

The AA is broadly supportive of A4E. In our view, it aligns well with the vision that AA members and most Aucklanders have for the future of their city. The challenge will be to deliver it in a way that is feasible and practical, and that minimises impact on other areas of the transport network.

This submission draws on the findings of a recent survey of approximately 800 Auckland AA Members.

Survey response

In October this year, we sought the views of Auckland AA Members on the idea of Queen Street being converted into a "transit street" further in the future – this change is central to the A4E concept, and is likely to be the aspect of A4E that resonates most closely with the public. The question we asked AA Members was part of a larger survey designed to recruit participants in the AA's Auckland Panel – a group of Auckland AA Members that responds to regular, short-form surveys on a range of transport issues.

The results of the survey question are set out below:

Auckland Council is considering plans to turn Queen Street (in Auckland’s CBD) into a “transit street” in the future. This would mean that from Mayoral Drive to Customs Street, most cars would be unable to use Queen Street.

Access would be maintained for emergency vehicles, public transport, and people walking and cycling. Service and delivery vehicles could be allowed at specific times of the day.

Auckland Council’s goal is to increase the overall number of people able to use Queen Street, improve air quality and provide a better-quality public space.

What do you think of these plans?

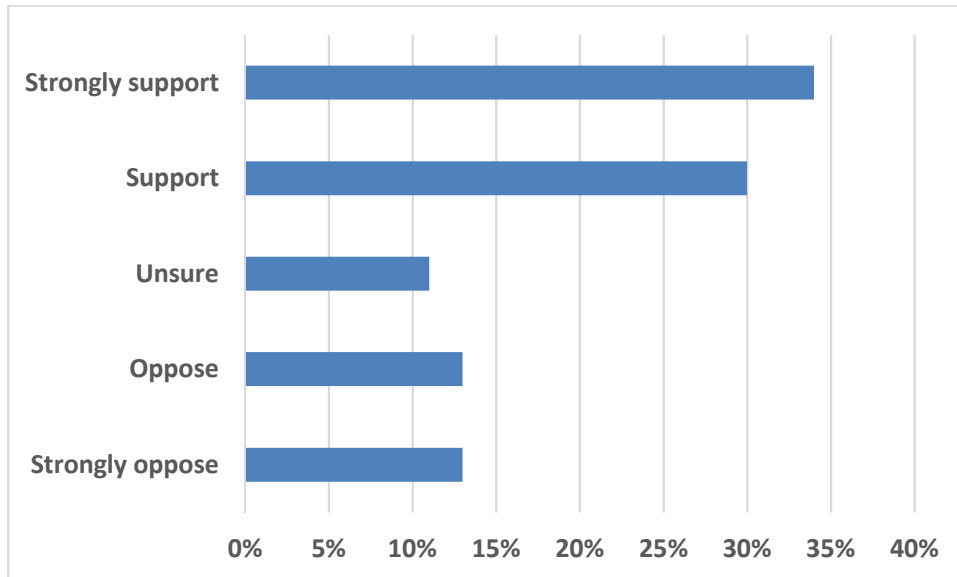


Figure 1 - Results from survey of 762 Auckland AA Members, October 2018

Though the question was only designed to explore the issue in a high-level way (no mention was made of trade-offs, for instance), the results are enough to suggest strong support for the transit street concept. This is consistent with the findings of previous AA surveys, which point to the fact that AA Members, like all Aucklanders, wish to live in a vibrant, dynamic city – one with a transport system and built environment that matches what they have experienced overseas and that they feel will help make Auckland a ‘world-class’ place to live and to visit.

Impact on the wider transport network

But AA members also want to live in a city that has an effective and efficient transport network, and this is where A4E raises concerns for the AA. A4E will inevitably result in a large volume of traffic being re-routed away from the CBD. In particular East-West traffic will be re-directed onto the motorway network to enter or bypass the CBD. Corridors like SH16 The Strand (which will also need to accommodate ever-increasing volumes of Port traffic) will come under very heavy strain, and we would be concerned about the ability of the network to cope.

We also understand that additional connection points between the motorway and the CBD (on- and off-ramps) may be considered within A4E, which would have major implications for the performance of the motorway network (in the core, and more widely).

Next steps on A4E must involve gaining a clear picture on the likely traffic impacts, and the eventual proposal must be supported by a robust plan to manage and mitigate those impacts. This will need to go hand-in-hand with more advanced plans to enable service and delivery vehicles to continue to operate efficiently in an access-constrained future.

The public transport programme

We understand that A4E would require a large-scale increase in public transport capacity (over and above what is already envisaged under the Auckland Transport Alignment Project), as switching to public transport becomes a necessity for a greater number of Aucklanders. As the thinking around A4E evolves, we would expect to see clear plans for funding and delivery of this PT capacity.

Further, the roll-out of A4E must be synchronised with the delivery of new public transport capacity. Attempting to make a start on the initiative before the City Rail Link and new rapid transit services are well and truly bedded in could seriously harm network performance.

Public engagement

Current levels of public support for A4E will inevitably soften as the project becomes real, and people are forced to make trade-offs. To keep Aucklanders on board as much as possible, we would urge the Council to be proactive, clear and consistent when it comes to communicating the why, how and when of A4E. The public needs to see that any frustration and inconvenience experienced in the near term will be outweighed by longer-term gains.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit. The AA would very much like to be part of the A4E discussion as it moves forward and, to that end, we are very happy to discuss the findings from our AA Member survey and the possibility of follow-up survey work further ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Barney Irvine
Principal Advisor – Infrastructure