ACCESS FOR EVERYONE INVESTIGATIONS

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Auckland Transport (AT) has been investigating a new and fundamentally different way of managing transport within the city centre - Access for Everyone (A4E). This concept aims to improve public transport and active mode movements, whilst better managing other vehicular movements, with the aim of creating a Zero Emissions Area within the Queen St valley which only limited electric (mainly public transport) vehicles would enter (some night time access would be allowed for servicing, maintenance, etc.).

AT has been investigating legal and physical mechanisms to contain general traffic into 'zones' of the city centre but not between them, which would remove all through traffic and suppress discretionary vehicular traffic. The intent is that remaining non-discretionary traffic would experience better travel conditions, streets would be safer for active modes and more carriageway space could be freed up for cycleways, wider footpaths and new urban realm. There are also a range of supporting workstreams relating to access management, travel behaviour change, logistics (loading and servicing) and urban realm uplift.

This paper will outline the comprehensive investigations underway into the optimal implementation of A4E, including emerging findings on the preferred programme and phasing.

INTRODUCTION

Auckland Transport (AT) has been investigating a new and fundamentally different way of managing transport within the city centre - Access for Everyone (A4E).

This would involve legal and physical mechanisms to contain general traffic into 'zones' of the city centre but not between them, which would remove all through traffic and suppress discretionary vehicular traffic. Remaining non-discretionary traffic would experience better travel conditions, streets would be safer for active modes and more carriageway space could be freed up for cycleways, wider footpaths and new urban realm.

This paper will outline the comprehensive investigations underway into the optimal implementation of A4E, including emerging findings on the preferred programme and phasing.

TRANSPORT CONTEXT

Auckland city centre (broadly the area within the motorway ring) has been rapidly growing and Census figures show it is now home to 35,000 residents, has 110,000 jobs and is a powerhouse of GDP for the country. Although changes in growth trends are likely post-COVID-19, there remains an intensity and complexity of transport and land use activity.

This density of activity and growing mix of uses has created unique problems for AT to solve.

Although the city centre has the highest public transport mode share of the region (AT monitoring shows over 50% of people travelling by public transport) and significant volumes of walking and cycling (an estimated 500,000 walking trips per day), the residual traffic movements are causing increasing issues in terms of travel time and reliability, negative environmental effects (air quality and greenhouse gas emissions), congestion and adverse impacts on the experience people have of the city centre and its urban realm.

The city centre's business, tourism and entertainment activities are increasingly hampered by ever more movement requirements being placed on city centre streets. Additionally, residents, workers and visitors in the city centre increasingly expect a higher quality of urban realm within the street network, as the streets effectively act as their public open space (the 'backyard' of apartment-dwelling residents and places for visitors to enjoy), so new ways of managing transport are required.

Since March 2018, more people have travelled to the city centre in the morning peak (7-9am) by public transport than by private vehicle[1] and there has been a slow decline in the number of private vehicles entering the city centre. In March 2019, private vehicle mode share into the city centre in the morning peak was 43%, compared to 48% for public transport and 9% for active travel modes[2]. (Note: this data is pre COVID-19 and the impacts of COVID-19 on mode share are being closely monitored. The Figures 1 and 2 below show the significant changes in travel into the city centre across the various 'lockdown levels').

[1] *https://www.aucklandccmp.co.nz/outcomes/outcome-2-connected-city-centre/vision-for-connected-city-centre/*

[2] *https://www.nzherald.co.nz/transport/news/article.cfm?c_id=97&objectid=12224871*

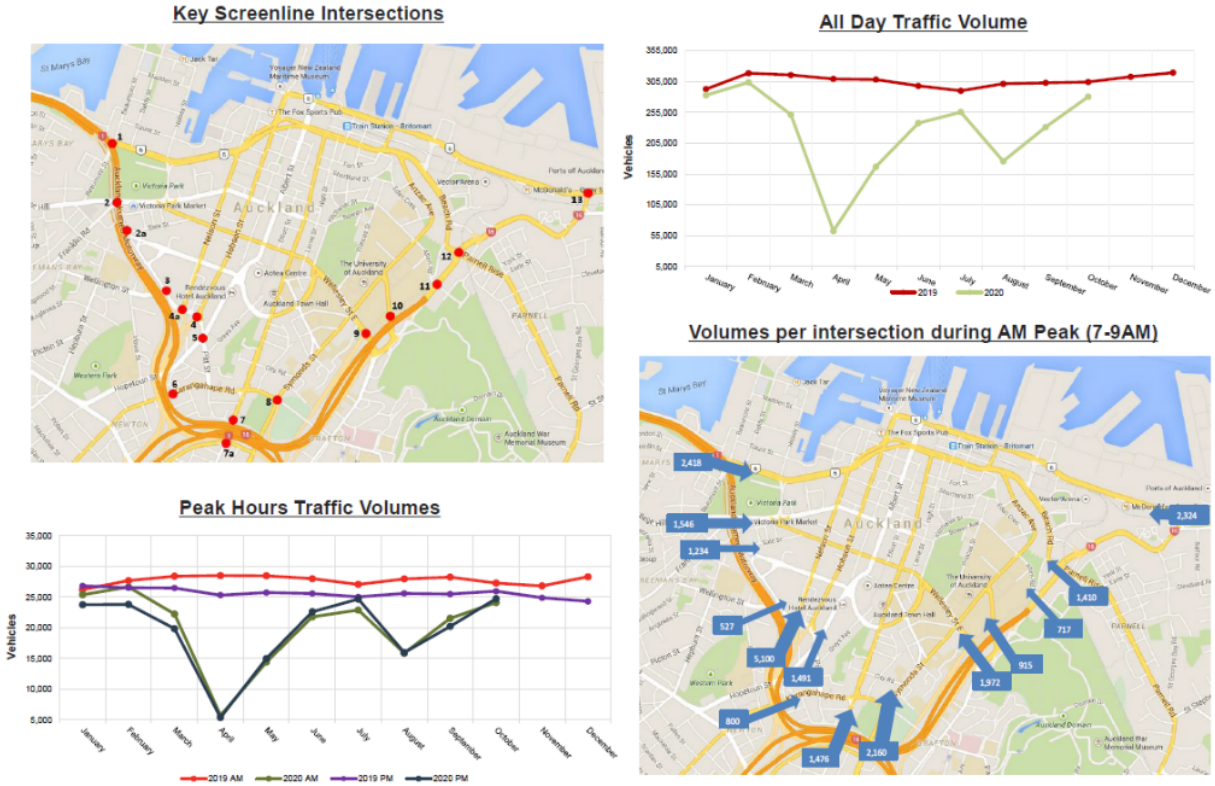

Figure 1: 2021 traffic volumes into city centre compared to previous years.

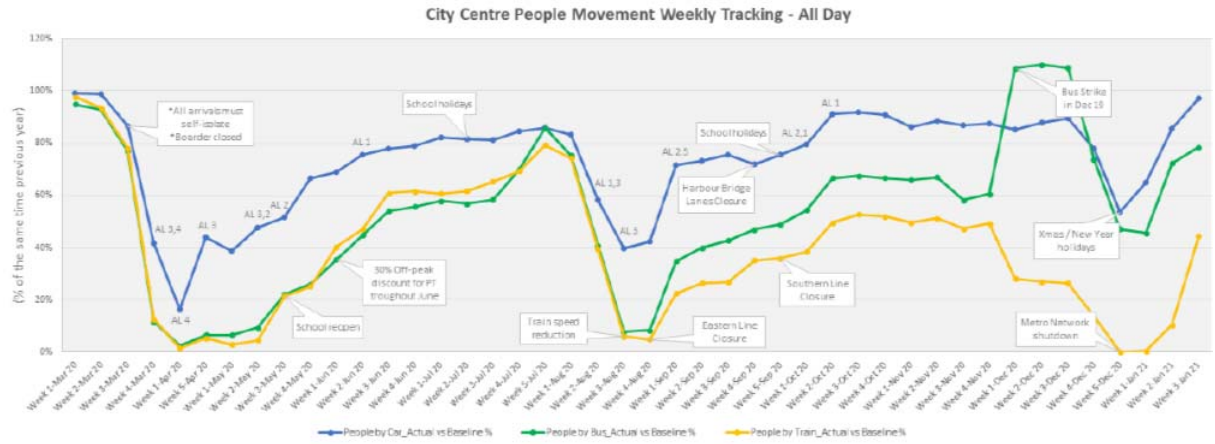

Figure 2: People movement by car, bus and train into city centre compared to previous year.

CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN

In March 2020, the Auckland Council's Planning Committee adopted a refreshed version of the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP), the visionary plan to guide the city centre's development for the next 20 years. It sets out the strategic direction for the city centre *"…to ensure the heart of our city remains a vibrant, bountiful place for everyone".*

The CCMP is the key guiding document for the Auckland Council whānau, setting the strategic direction for the city centre over the next 20 years. It applies the Auckland Plan to the city centre through 10 Outcomes, to be delivered through eight Transformational moves.

ACCESS FOR EVERYONE CONCEPT

A key part of the CCMP is Access for Everyone (A4E), a concept that redefines the use of street

space in the city centre to provide a friendlier pedestrian environment and prioritises space-efficient modes of transport whilst enabling deliveries and access for emergency services.

This concept aims to maintain and improve public transport and active mode movements, whilst better managing other vehicular movements, with the aim of creating a Zero Emissions Area (ZEA) within the Queen St valley which only limited electric (mainly public transport) vehicles would enter (some night time access would be allowed for servicing, maintenance, etc.). This is shown schematically below.

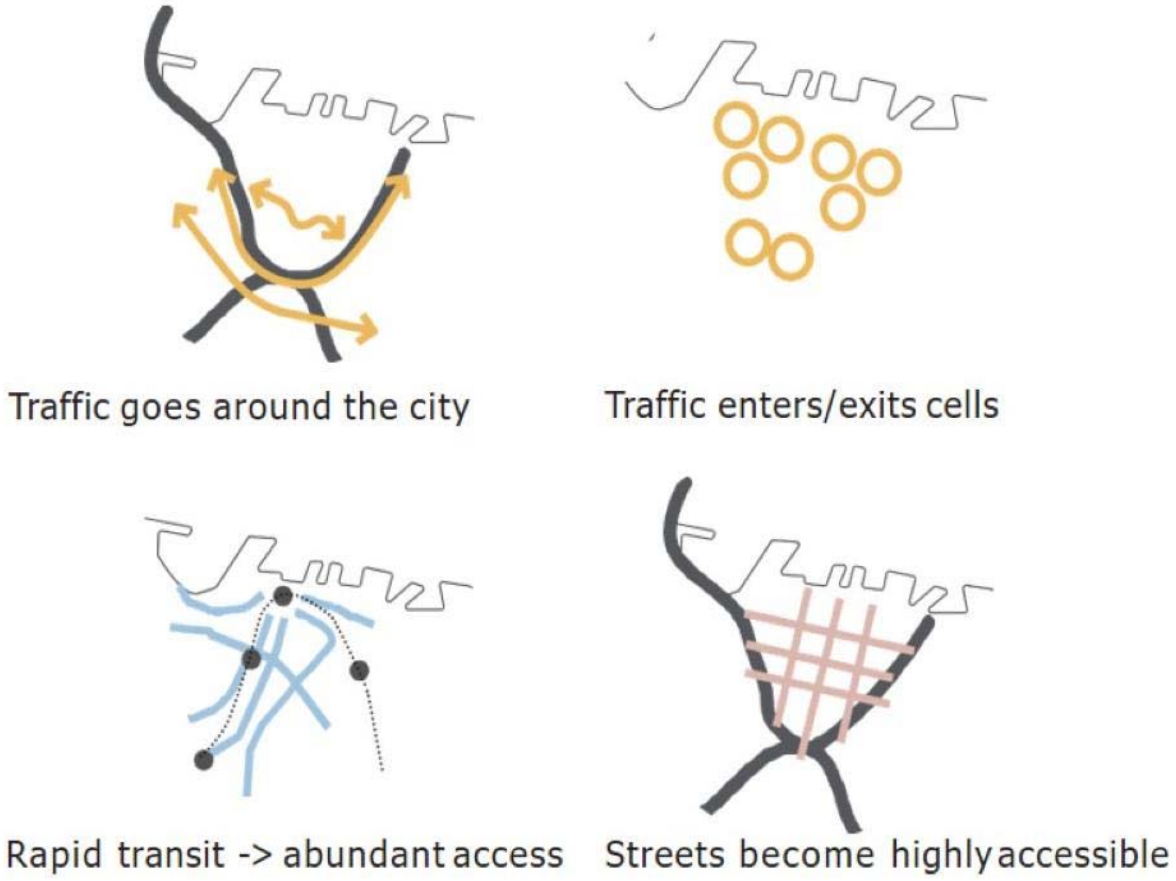

Figure 3: Schematics illustrating A4E principles

Through legal and physical mechanisms, general traffic is effectively allowed into ‘zones’ of the city centre but not between them, which would remove all through traffic and likely suppress discretionary vehicular traffic. The intent is that remaining non-discretionary traffic would experience better travel conditions, streets would be safer for active modes and more carriageway space could be freed up for cycleways, wider footpaths and new urban realm. A visual illustration from the CCMP is shown below.

Figure 4: A4E concept as envisaged in the CCMP

The A4E concept was assessed to an initial level by both AT and the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi and found to be in line with current strategic directions, although it takes them a lot further. Both agencies supported the concept and pledged to undertake comprehensive investigations into the optimal implementation of A4E.

As part of the adoption of the CCMP, the Planning Committee requested that a Queen St pilot be undertaken as a test of A4E principles. The pilot was to focus on creating additional pedestrian space in a move towards a new, sustainable transport system. This was to lead towards a future light rail system along Queen St and a Zero Emissions Area (ZEA) in the Queen St valley. This zone was to be achieved by removing unnecessary traffic and freeing up road space for public transport, deliveries, emergency services and for people with limited mobility. A separate paper has been prepared on the Queen St pilot.

The systemic transport changes encompassing A4E are the responsibility of AT and Waka Kotahi. The upcoming work is therefore being managed by a joint group consisting of representatives and specialists from AT, Waka Kotahi and Auckland Council

PROGRAMME BUSINESS CASE SCOPE

In December 2020, AT appointed professional services from Aurecon and MRCagney to assist in the development of the Access for Everyone Programme Business Case (PBC). Peer review will be undertaken by Jacobs/Boffa Miskell and former staff member Tim Fitzpatrick.

This PBC investigates the options for achieving the desired city centre outcomes (as identified in the CCMP and other strategic documents) and will identify an optimal programme for implementation. This will consider the optimal timing of investments in new projects or co-ordination with ongoing programmes.

The primary outcomes sought by the PBC will be for an A4E implementation programme which:

- enhances urban realm through greater space for people within the city centre street network
- provides better access and reliability to the city centre through public transport
- has safer streets for walking and cycling
- improves air quality (in the form of a Zero Emissions Area within the Queen Street valley – e.g. use of electrical buses).

One key aim of the PBC is to be able to explain in 'layman speak' the outcomes A4E seeks, why it is important for the city centre and evidence for the recommended way forward.

Whilst the PBC is expected to identify and confirm the scope for a number of enabling projects, it will not undertake them. Instead the PBC will seek the funding to allow these projects to proceed as necessary to subsequent stages of more detailed investigation and design. This will allow a delivery mechanism to be developed.

The scope of work for the PBC includes:

- Holding workshops with stakeholders (internal, Waka Kotahi, Council, iwi and key external stakeholders – utilising a reference group established for the CCMP).
- Identifying and developing potential programmes, including developing alternatives, and assessing against project objectives and other relevant criteria
- Identifying issues, risks and mitigations, dependencies and challenges.
- Assessing options against relevant criteria and identifying a preferred programme for stakeholder feedback
- Identifying optimal phasing/staging (internal and external dependencies) of the preferred programme
- Sensitivity analysis of various post-COVID-19 scenarios.

The PBC is also likely to identify improvements to a range of ongoing workstreams (e.g. car parking management, network optimisation, safety, travel behaviour change, etc.) to support the achievement of the desired CCMP outcomes. The overall management and development of these workstreams will likely involve co-ordinated efforts by AT, Waka Kotahi and Council.

The PBC will identify the necessary interventions and actions to implement A4E. These are expected to involve:

- amended loading and servicing/logistics regimes,
- access control systems,
- network management changes,
- travel behaviour change programmes,
- place-making opportunities, etc.

The responsibility for some of the interventions may sit with Council (e.g. activations and place-making) or Waka Kotahi (e.g. managing motorway off-ramps), so a cross-agency team is involved in the development of the PBC.

The PBC will include data gathered and lessons learned from the ongoing Queen Street pilot, including how A4E can be incrementally implemented (such as the imminent bus fleet electrification as part of creating a Zero Emissions Area within the Queen Street valley).

The PBC is also expected to include:

- Legal analysis and recommendations from examples of legislative mechanisms used for innovative street treatments/closures/restrictions (using AT and Waka Kotahi existing legal advice)
- How an access management regime can be implemented
- Advice on pilots or trials to test concepts
- Engagement recommendations in terms of meeting legal requirements
- Traffic modelling – network options, mode share options, traffic volume options, pricing options, parking options
- Possible stages or dependencies on other projects
- Supporting programme identification.

A summary of the PBC programme is shown in Figure 5 below. Broadly the PBC is intended to be complete in mid-2021 and be followed by a range of further workstreams and projects towards the implementation of the A4E concept.

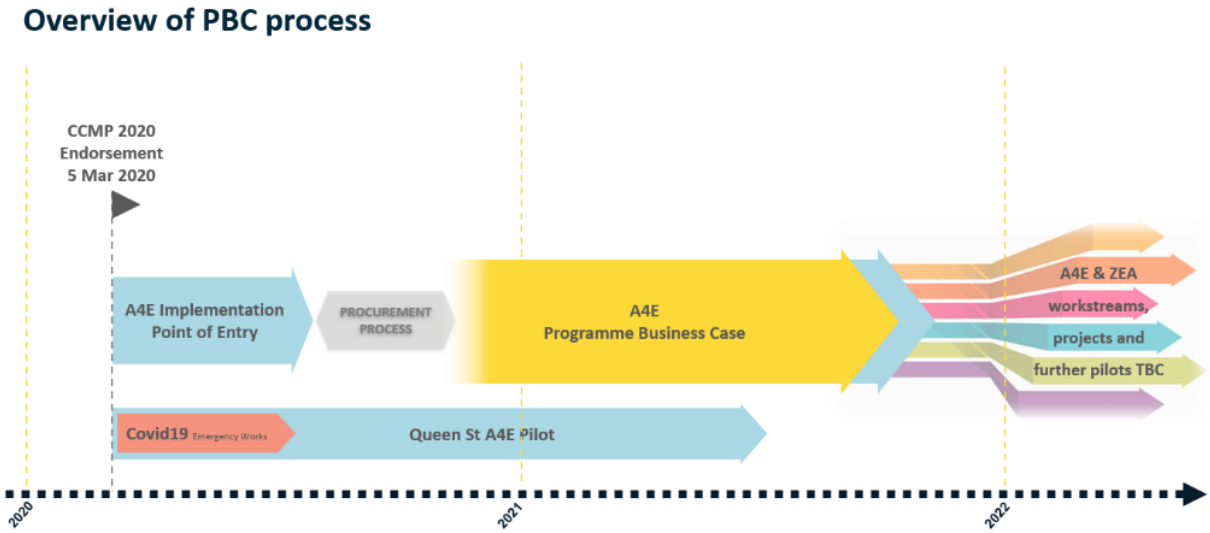

Figure 5: Summary A4E PBC programme

An initial item in support of A4E implementation has been submitted for funding in the upcoming Regional Land Transport Programme 2021-31. This is effectively a placeholder, as the PBC will identify the specific future funding requirements and future RLTPs (or Long- Term Plans) will be updated once the preferred investment programme is known.

The intention is to develop a robust PBC which 'tells the story' in the compelling way and in which stakeholders feel their issues have been understood and incorporated.

NEXT STEPS

The PBC is expected to be completed around August 2021. This will allow us to seek funding for specific A4E projects and coordinate ongoing programmes to meet A4E outcomes. A full update will be provided at the conference presentation.

REFERENCES

Auckland Council, (2020) *City Centre Masterplan*, Auckland