

# A well-planned public transport system for North West Auckland

August 2021



We're planning a long-term public transport system for North West Auckland to support growth. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is working with Auckland Council and Auckland Transport to plan this now so that current and future communities can move around in a safe, low carbon public transport system.

Supporting growth, addressing safety issues and dealing with congestion are complex challenges that take time to get right. We want to make sure we're investing wisely in transport modes, including a rapid transit corridor along State Highway 16 (SH16) between Westgate and the city centre, that will serve the future needs of residents and offer sustainable travel choices to keep people moving.

We're talking to landowners, the community and stakeholders in the North West to hear their views and align expectations. This work intends to speed up the process so projects can be built more easily when funding becomes available. In the meantime, some projects will be prioritised to support accelerated housing development and some short-term projects are already funded or underway. These include [SH16 Brigham Creek to Waimauku](#) safety improvements, [North West interim bus improvements](#) and [Station/Access Road improvements](#) in Kumeū-Huapai.

## Why propose a rapid transit corridor instead of using the existing railway line?

One of the frequently asked questions during our conversations with local communities over the past few years has been "Why can't the rail line between Swanson and Huapai be used or upgraded to provide passenger services that connect to the city centre? The infrastructure is there, so why not use it?"

It's a good question. Auckland Transport has investigated this option several times since 2013 and currently, it is not considered viable or the best long-term rapid transit option to move people from west Auckland to the city centre. Instead, a new rapid transit corridor that follows SH16 is the preferred option.



### Did you know

North West Auckland will grow with 30,000 houses and 13,000 new jobs over the next 30 years



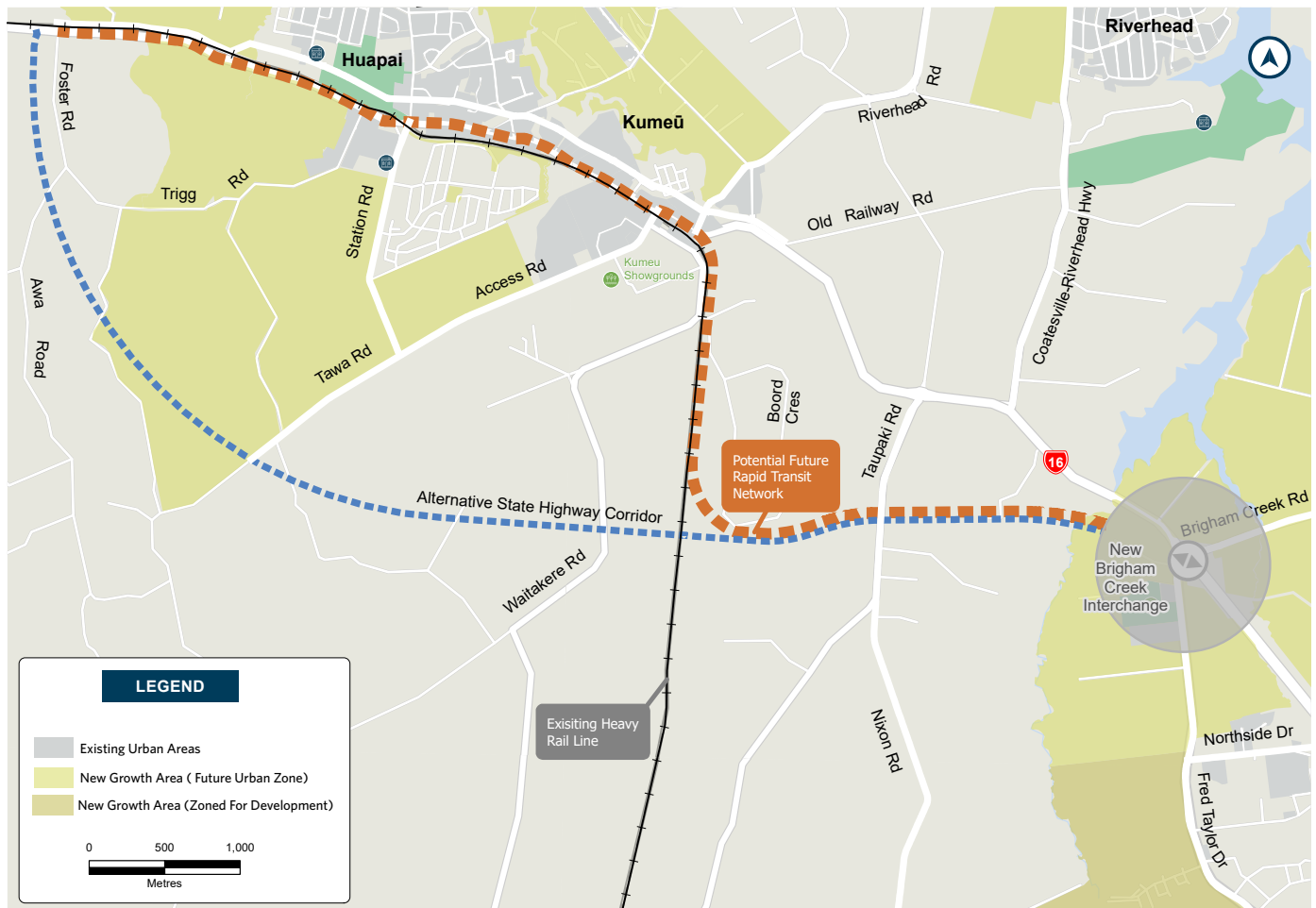
### Did you know

A rapid transit corridor along SH16 between Westgate and the city centre:

- Will provide bus services that will carry 9,000 passengers every morning during peak travel by 2046
- Will provide bus journeys that are 25 minutes faster than using rail (via Henderson station)

## The key reasons and benefits of the new SH16 rapid transit corridor are:

- Greater surrounding population catchment and the proposed rapid transit corridor being more accessible than the existing rail.
- Much shorter travel times.
- Faster connections for those travelling from Kumeū-Huapai to high demand destinations such as the Westgate area and the city centre.
- Avoiding costly major upgrades to the rail line.
- Connecting key metropolitan centres (Westgate) to the city centre with rapid transit, which long term may also connect from Westgate to the North Shore rapid transit network.



Why is this the preferred option? Here's some background history to help explain why.

## The story with rail

2013

In 2013 Auckland Transport commissioned an independent investigation into the viability of providing a diesel passenger shuttle between Huapai and Swanson. This concluded that high set up costs, ongoing high operating costs and expected low patronage outweighed the investment needed.

2016

Another independent investigation was carried out in 2016, taking into account new population growth and expected future growth, and reached the same conclusion.

In addition, Auckland Transport has been investigating the need and feasibility of rapid transit from the North West to the city centre since 2013 and included using the existing railway line as an option. These investigations focused on the journey between the city centre and the Westgate Metropolitan Centre.

The investigations recommended a new rapid transit corridor that largely follows SH16, and concluded that:

- The SH16 corridor is a more direct rapid transit route to the city centre for the growth expected in the North West compared to the existing heavy railway line.
- Rapid transit services along SH16 will enable a more frequent and reliable bus service that can be expected to generate greater patronage (around 9,000 passengers each morning peak period by 2046).
- Buses using SH16 will be approximately 25 minutes faster than using rail (via Henderson station).

2019

In 2019 Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth, a collaboration between Auckland Transport, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency to plan future transport networks for Auckland's growth areas, carried out detailed investigations to assess different rapid transit options to support growth in the North West (Kumeū-Huapai, Redhills, Whenuapai).

This looked at options using the existing heavy railway line and also considered extending a future SH16 rapid transit corridor from Brigham Creek Road to Kumeū-Huapai. The Indicative Business Case recommended extending a future SH16 rapid transit corridor to Kumeū-Huapai as the preferred option. The key reasons and benefits of this option are:

- The SH16 corridor is a more direct rapid transit route to the city centre for the growth expected in the North West compared to the existing heavy railway line.
- The higher predicted patronage for Kumeū-Huapai (3,300 passengers each morning peak period by 2046 compared to 2,000 passengers for rail).
- The shorter travel time (45 minutes to the city centre compared to 1 hour by rail).
- Direct connections to key North West destinations at Westgate Metropolitan Centre and Whenuapai.
- Providing a quality public transport-based connection to the metro centre developing around Westgate.

In addition, the investigations carried out by Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth did not recommend investment in passenger metro rail services on the existing rail line (north of Swanson station) in either the short or long term.

The key reasons for this recommendation are:

- Indirect route to the key North West destinations of Westgate, Whenuapai and the city centre, 35% longer travel time and insufficient patronage (2,000 passengers per morning peak period by 2046).
- Investing in two rapid transit modes/corridors is extremely expensive and not considered good value for money. Providing passenger rail to Huapai in addition to an alternative rapid transit corridor alone provides only a modest increase in total patronage (3,600 passengers per morning peak period by 2046 compared to 3,300 passengers).
- Extending passenger rail to Huapai as an interim solution requires significant investment (approximately \$300m for double tracking, enlargement/bypassing of the Waitākere rail tunnel and potentially electrification) to make the service attractive to users resulting in a high cost for a relatively short-term solution.

## Fast, frequent and high-capacity bus travel along a dedicated corridor

In the future, the long-term plan is to extend rapid transit services to Kumeū-Huapai once the rapid transit corridor from the city centre to Westgate is complete.

To keep people moving in the interim, projects to support improved public transport in the area are underway. This includes the [North West interim bus improvements](#) which will deliver:

- New bus stops at Te Atatū and Lincoln Road motorway interchanges and bus shoulder lane improvements along SH16 – construction expected to start in late 2021.
- Improved bus services following completion of the above – expected in late 2022.
- Westgate Station (potentially with park and ride) – construction expected in late 2022/early 2023.
- Improvements to local bus services for the Kumeū-Huapai area are planned from 2023, subject to funding, with further improvements beyond 2024 subject to a business case and funding.

## What is rapid transit?

Rapid transit forms the backbone of Auckland's public transport network.

It provides fast, frequent and high capacity services along corridors separated from general traffic and is therefore not affected by road congestion.

Auckland's rapid transit network barely existed a decade ago, but now carries over 26 million passengers a year, with use continuing to grow strongly.

The rapid transit network will need to play a central role in meeting the travel needs of the fast-growing North West, as well as supporting and shaping North West Auckland's growth and urban form.

## Four benefits of rapid transit:

- ① Efficiently move large numbers of people to intensely developed places like the city centre and other major centres.
- ② Dramatically increase the number of people able to travel between major parts of Auckland (north, central, west and south)
- ③ Provide a fast and reliable travel option that encourages people out of their cars for longer-distance journeys.
- ④ Deliver long-lasting access improvements to areas near rapid transit stations, which improves their attractiveness for redevelopment.



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