



**Infrastructure**  
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# **Infrastructure New Zealand Submission on the Waitematā Harbour Connections project**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Infrastructure New Zealand (INZ) welcomes this opportunity to submit on the proposed options for the Waitematā Harbour Connections (WHC) project.
- 1.2 INZ is New Zealand's membership organisation for the infrastructure sector. We promote best practice in national infrastructure development through research, advocacy and public and private sector collaboration. Our members come from diverse sectors across New Zealand and include infrastructure service providers, investors and operators.
- 1.3 While INZ has submitted as the peak infrastructure sector organisation, we have also encouraged our members to make their own submissions raising those issues specific to their areas of interest or expertise.

## **2. General Remarks**

- 2.1. The WHC project is a critical addition, not only to Auckland's transport network but New Zealand's. This is a nationally significant corridor, that supports high volumes of both people and freight movements. In particular, the role of the corridor in supporting the movement of freight should not be underestimated.

- 2.2. The existing harbour bridge carries over 12,000 freight trips per day on average, with 40% of these carrying on beyond the Auckland region.<sup>1</sup> The corridor is an important part of the country's freight network as it moves goods and services through Auckland to the rest of New Zealand.
- 2.3. Given the importance of this corridor, it is positive that the Government has signalled a construction start date for the WHC project by 2029 and is taking steps now to confirm the preferred mode and alignment. The second harbour crossing has been talked about long enough, and it is great to see some certainty and intent to deliver it.

### **3. The final solution needs to meet the needs of multiple modes**

- 3.1. The final solution for the WHC project should provide equitable access for all modes across the Harbour, recognising how important this corridor is for people and freight. The final solution should future proof the corridor in relation to population and freight projections.
- 3.2. Each scenario requires trade-offs to be made. Tunnels are typically more costly, take longer to build and emit higher amounts of carbon during construction. However, they create the least impact on the harbour, headlands and seabed. The reverse is true for bridges.
- 3.3. At the same time, options that deprioritise one mode of transport in favour of another may appeal in the shorter term but are likely to lead to sub-optimal outcomes in the longer-term.
- 3.4. We encourage the Government to provide more information on how it expects each scenario will support broader socio-economic objectives, including the impact on travel times for freight, business and personal travel, emissions reductions, and contribution to housing and development opportunities. Such information will be critical to support effective decision-making on a landmark piece of infrastructure that will serve Tāmaki Makaurau and Aotearoa for decades to come.

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<sup>1</sup> Waka Kotahi (2023). Waitematā Harbour Connections information brochure. Available from <https://nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/awhc/docs/Waitemata-Harbour-Connections-information-brochure.pdf>

## **4. The scale of the project will require the Government to consider a full suite of funding and financing approaches**

- 4.1. Given the costs of the options range between \$15 to \$25 billion, we urge the Government to consider its full suite of options to meet the costs of building this new infrastructure.
- 4.2. A sustainable funding basis for the project is likely to require a range of options, including those that leverage the use of private capital. Such options include Public Private Partnerships, leasing models and soft loans and grants. The private sector has the delivery capability, flexibility to scale up, access to finance, commercial discipline and sophistication, and industry and technical know-how to support the delivery of such an important project.
- 4.3. In addition, the Government should also consider how it can accelerate its proposed congestion charging scheme to provide revenue to fund this and other critical transport projects in the city. INZ has long been a proponent of congestion charging, provided that genuine travel alternatives are put in place to mitigate its impacts, particularly for those on lower incomes.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

- 5.1. INZ supports the accelerated delivery of the WHC project as a key piece of Auckland and New Zealand's core transport network.
- 5.2. Decisions on the eventual mode and alignment need to be informed by robust modelling and analysis while the scale of the project raises key questions for the Government to consider around how it funds and finances these types of projects.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle McCormick

Policy Director

Infrastructure New Zealand