

**BEFORE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS
AT WELLINGTON**

IN THE MATTER OF

the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

the hearing of submissions on the
Proposed Wellington City District Plan

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MARK GEORGESON ON BEHALF OF
STRIDE INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT LIMITED (SUBMITTER 470) AND
INVESTORE PROPERTY LIMITED (SUBMITTER 405)**

TRANSPORT

Hearing 1 – Strategic Direction

21 February 2023

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 My full name is Mark Grant Georgeson. I am a Chartered Professional Engineer and hold a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree from the University of Auckland.

1.2 I hold memberships with the following:

- (a) Engineering New Zealand;
- (b) International Professional Engineers;
- (c) The Institute of Transportation Engineers; and
- (d) The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia.

1.3 For the last 31 years I have worked as a transport engineer with Stantec New Zealand, practicing as a transport engineering specialist throughout New Zealand. I have resided in the Wellington region for these same 31 years.

2 CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the latest Environment Court Practice Note 2023, and agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person.

3 SCOPE

3.1 My statement of evidence is presented on behalf of Stride Investment Management Limited (Stride) and Investore Property Limited (Investore).

3.2 It addresses Stride and Investore's submission points on the strategic direction topics within the Wellington City Proposed District Plan, as they relate to the classification of the Johnsonville Rail Line as 'rapid

transit' and the walkable catchment of the Johnsonville Metropolitan Centre.

3.3 In preparing my evidence, I have reviewed and draw from:

- (a) The plan wide matters and strategic direction Section 42A report;
- (b) The appendices of the Section 42A report; and
- (c) Relevant transport statutory documents including the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, the National Land Transport Programme, and the Regional Land Transport Plan.

3.4 I have also read the statement of evidence of Mr Jeffries on Planning, presented on behalf of Stride and Investore.

4 STRIDE AND INVESTORE SUBMISSIONS

4.1 The Stride and Investore submissions on the Proposed District Plan (PDP) opposed the exclusion of the Johnsonville Rail Line as rapid transit, and sought a 10-minute walkable catchment for the rapid transit stops, including the Johnsonville Metropolitan Centre. The Stride submission states:

“Stride is opposed to the exclusion of the Johnsonville rail line as “rapid transit” for the purposes of implementing policy 3 of the NPS-UD. The NPS-UD defines “rapid transit service” as “any existing or planned frequent, quick, reliable and high-capacity public transport service that operates on a permanent route (road or rail) that is largely separated from other traffic”. The Johnsonville rail line meets this definition for many reasons, including as its peak frequency is 15 minutes and it is identified as planned rapid transit in the Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021.

Accordingly, Stride seeks that all stations on the Johnsonville rail line are included as rapid transit stops and that building heights of at least six storeys within a 10-minute walkable catchment of the stations are provided.

Greater Wellington Regional Council have classified the Johnsonville rail line as rapid transit for the purposes of implementing policy 3 of the NPS-UD and has commented “when considering the Johnsonville Line as part of the region’s transport network, it is almost uniquely placed to play a future significant role. It is a sole use public transport corridor and one that is not being used to its full potential.” The Wellington Regional Growth Framework also identifies that the Johnsonville rail line is a rapid transit service. It is unclear why Wellington City Council have taken a different view.

We note Wellington City Council was advised by its own planning staff to include the line as rapid transit”.

- 4.2 I agree with the submissions by Stride and Investore with regard to the classification of the Johnsonville Rail Line and walkable catchments, and provide context to my view through the evidence that follows.

5 THE SECTION 42A REPORT

- 5.1 Paragraphs 140 to 206 of the Section 42A report set out the full background and discussion of the classification of the Johnsonville Line as a rapid transit service. At Paragraph 201, the Reporting Officer concludes that:

“In my assessment, the Johnsonville Line fits within the NPS-UD’s definition of a rapid transit service. This means the plan should enable at least six storey building heights within walkable catchments of its rail stations. This is consistent with rapid transit interpretations from the other Wellington Region councils, national guidance and the Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan. Enabling six stories in these areas would also meet, or not be inconsistent with, the NPS-UD objectives”.

- 5.2 I agree with and support this conclusion by the Reporting Officer that the Johnsonville line meets the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) definition of a rapid transit service, and do so based on the informed transport direction and priorities I set out next at Section 6 of my evidence.

5.3 Paragraphs 207 to 394 of the Section 42A report address walkable catchments. At Paragraph 269, the Reporting Officer assesses that:

“...based on the guidance above, my starting point is a ten minute walkable catchment around all rapid transit stops, city centre and metropolitan centres”.

5.4 And at Paragraph 270 considers that:

“... the walkable catchment may be increased from 10 minutes where there are lots of local shops and services, frequent public transport options, transit-oriented development potential is high (high land value, many developable sections etc), and the area has good pedestrian and micro-mobility services to allow safe, convenient and efficient access to the rapid transit stop or centre”.

5.5 And then at Paragraph 363 concludes that:

“In my view, the plan’s 10 minute walking catchment from the Johnsonville MCZ remains appropriate”.

5.6 I agree with and support this conclusion of the Reporting Officer, as a minimum, but am also of the view that a 15-minute catchment would be appropriate for the Johnsonville Metropolitan Centre, as considered alongside the above indicators of Paragraph 270, and also the further background I present at Section 7 of my evidence.

6 THE TRANSPORT CONTEXT FOR RAPID TRANSIT

6.1 There is a hierarchy of statutory documents that are relevant to the identification of the Johnsonville Rail Line as a rapid transit line.

6.2 The Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2021 (GPS) is presented as a roadmap for how the Government develops and maintains the transport network, to keep pace with future social and economic changes. Its strategic priority for achieving better travel options describes that high capacity and rapid transit systems and multi-modal travel options in urban centres will help manage road congestion and enable efficient flows of people.

- 6.3 The GPS defines rapid transit as being *“a quick, frequent, reliable and high-capacity public transport service that operates on a permanent route (road or rail) that is largely separated from other traffic”*.
- 6.4 This is very similar to the definition contained in the NPS-UD (updated May 2022) being *“any existing or planned frequent, quick, reliable and high-capacity public transport service that operates on a permanent route (road or rail) that is largely separated from other traffic”*.
- 6.5 The National Land Transport Programme (2021-2024) (NLTP) gives effect to the GPS for funding direction and investment priorities. It describes that rapid transit can be delivered through a variety of modes and, to determine whether to categorise infrastructure for rapid transit rather than standard public transport requires demonstration that the targeted corridor meets the following criteria:
- (a) It is a strategic corridor that plays a critical role in an urban area’s public transport system linking major parts of the urban area, enabling substantial numbers of people to access key locations, and enabling and supporting major growth and urban development opportunities;
 - (b) It has a dedicated right-of-way that enables services to consistently meet critical performance criteria;
 - (c) It enables a sufficiently high service speed to be competitive with travel by private car at peak times; and
 - (d) It has high capacity that can capture and sustain a material share of corridor trips that would otherwise be made by private car.
- 6.6 Sitting alongside the NLTP is the One Network Framework (ONF) that provides a common language for the transport system and helps inform transport network functions and priorities. The latest (November 2022) classifications define the highest tier (Class PT1) of public transport service as:
- (a) Having a dedicated corridor;

- (b) Being a strategically significant corridors where rapid transit services are operated providing a quick, frequent, reliable and high-capacity service that operates on a permanent route (road, rail or sea lane);
- (c) Dedicated to public transport or largely separated from other traffic;
- (d) Having service levels of 4 or more services per hour. That is, a 15 minute frequency, or better; and
- (e) Moving 1000 people per day or more.

6.7 I consider that the Johnsonville Line meets the criteria of rapid transit under the NLTP and Class PT1 public transport under the ONF. The Johnsonville Line provides a dedicated rail corridor and has current service levels of 15 minute train frequencies that move more than 1000 people per day.

6.8 The national statutory directions of the GPS and NLTP influence the Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) 2021 (and vice versa). The RLTP sets the direction for the Wellington region's transport network for the next 10-30 years. It is a collaboration between all Councils in the Wellington region, Waka Kotahi and KiwiRail, overseen by the Regional Transport Committee on behalf of the Greater Wellington Regional Council. Ambitious targets are set for the next ten years, including a 40% increase in active travel and public transport mode share.

6.9 The partner agencies that have developed the RLTP have agreed that forward investment in the region's transport system will include building capacity and reliability into the region's rail network as Priority 1.

6.10 Appendix A3.2 of the RLTP describes the rapid transit network for the region as currently comprising the Kapiti, Hutt (and its Melling branch) and Johnsonville rail lines. Beyond their existing defined functions as rapid transit lines, plans to upgrade and strengthen the operations of this metro network by increasing service frequency and capacity are signalled in the RLTP and as set out in the report by Mr Wharton

contained at Appendix C of the Section 42A report. For the Johnsonville Line, improvements in capacity can first be achieved by increasing passenger boardings (including in the counter-peak direction), with step improvements then proposed in the form of increasing the rolling stock from 4 to 6 unit trains, and increasing frequencies from 15 to 10 minutes by, for example, the addition of a passing loop at Simla Crescent Station.

- 6.11 Mr Troy, on behalf of the Greater Wellington Regional Council, confirms these outcomes in his letter contained at Appendix E of the Section 42A report, that the Johnsonville Rail Line will play a key part in mode shift for journeys from the north of Wellington to and from the central city.
- 6.12 It is my view that the Johnsonville Line meets the national and regional expectations of a rapid transit service for the origins and destinations that the line serves, and deserves that classification.

7 SIZE OF WALKABLE CATCHMENT AT JOHNSONVILLE METROPOLITAN CENTRE

- 7.1 As recorded at my Paragraph 4.1, the Stride and Investore submissions also supported the 10-minute walkable catchment in respect of the rapid transit stop serving the Johnsonville Railway Station and Metropolitan Centre.
- 7.2 The Ministry for the Environment publication 'Understanding and Implementing Intensification provisions of the NPS-UD' provides methods, tools and guidance to help implement the provisions. Section 5.5 addresses walkable catchments. It describes that a walkable catchment of 800 metres is typically associated with a 10-minute average walk. This is a well-established industry indicator as a starting point for planning public transport systems.
- 7.3 Many factors influence walkable catchments, including the frequency of rapid transit services and the quality and scale of the goods and services available at a centre. Indeed, research set out in the publication describes that half of the people surveyed in Auckland walked further than 800 metres to a train station.

- 7.4 Section 5.5.3 goes on to suggest that a distance of 800 metres should be considered a minimum walkable catchment for all urban areas. In my view this should be extended at Johnsonville where the train station is located within the Metropolitan Centre.
- 7.5 As I understand it, this is one of the reasons Stride and Investore sought to support the submission of Kainga Ora (Submitter 391) insofar as it is appropriate to apply a 15-minute walkable catchment to the Johnsonville Metropolitan Centre.
- 7.6 I support the view that a 10-minute walkable catchment should be regarded as a minimum for Johnsonville, and that a 15-minute walkable catchment is appropriate.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 For the reasons provided and statutory transport directions referenced:
- (a) I support classifying the Johnsonville Rail Line as rapid transit;
 - (b) I support the Reporting Officer's recommendations to introduce definitions to the PDP of "rapid transit" and "rapid transit stops" that explicitly include the Johnsonville Rail Line and stations; and
 - (c) I support a 15-minute walkable catchment around the Johnsonville Metropolitan Centre.

Mark Georgeson

21 February 2023