



Wellington's Transport Future

Driving climate change action



GREEN PARTY ELECTION PRIORITY

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make healthier, vibrant communities a reality while tackling the climate crisis and rebuilding the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic. By making smart decisions now, we can deliver truly fast, frequent, low-carbon transport alternatives that help put Wellington on the path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

Congestion Free Wellington



Situation

Wellington is one of the most compact cities in Aotearoa, which contributes to making it a vibrant and attractive place to live. The small geographical area of the central city means it is relatively easy to walk around, making it simple for people to connect, do business, shop, and socialise. This means forms of transport that use space efficiently, like buses, walking, and cycling, are the logical choice.

Yet Wellington is still a car-dominated city and region. It is harder than it should be to get around by public transport, on foot, by bike, and even by car.

Buses have limited priority on many routes so are relatively slow and unreliable. Safe cycling routes are limited to waterfront and riverside areas, restricting the ability of people to cycle safely for everyday trips. Commuter trains to the Hutt Valley, Porirua, and further north are expected to reach capacity in less than five years.¹

While there has been some recent investment in public transport and cycling, the vast majority of additional transport investment in the last decade has been to expand motorways to the north of Wellington. This creates a short term benefit of slightly faster drive times, but also significant problems. As more people are encouraged to live north of the city and drive in to work, traffic will quickly build back up, adding to congestion and driving up climate pollution.

Climate-damaging pollution from transport has grown 8 percent across the Wellington region since 2001, with the biggest increases driven by suburbs to the north and Kāpiti Coast. At the same time, Wellington City Council has declared a climate emergency and set a target of reducing emissions by 43 percent in less than ten years.² Wellington Regional Council has also declared a climate emergency.

The inner city suburbs of Wellington will be home to 50,000 to 80,000 more people in the next 30 years. The city will not meet its climate target, and will grind to a halt, unless we make getting around without a car fast, convenient, and affordable for many more people and families.

Transforming Wellington's transport network

With less than ten years to halve transport emissions if we want to stay within 1.5C of global warming, we cannot afford to waste time and money widening motorways which make climate change and traffic congestion worse.

Let's Get Wellington Moving

The Green Party is proud to have helped negotiate the \$6.4 billion Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) plan, which includes a massive upgrade to Wellington's public transport, walking, and cycling infrastructure. The LGWM plan features many of the major projects we will prioritise in the next term of Government, including rapid transit, bus priority, and cycling improvements.

The projects outlined in LGWM, however, are still subject to further due diligence. This means specific detail around the phasing, scope, and alignment of projects is still to be decided.

The Green Party does not intend to renegotiate LGWM if we return to Government. We will, however, continue to push for public transport improvements to be delivered first, for "rapid transit" to take the form of light rail, not buses, and for simpler, more cost effective alternatives to urban motorways to be considered.

New light rail lines

Light rail needs to be the form of rapid transit delivered between the Railway Station, Newtown, and the eastern suburbs – not buses. Light rail will provide a congestion-free travel option for people living in the city centre, southern and eastern suburbs, and help enable these areas to house more people in coming decades. It will take buses and cars off inner-city streets, creating more space for people, and less noise and pollution.

Light rail from the Railway Station to Newtown should be the first major project delivered under the LGWM plan. We expect the city to Newtown section, where the most housing growth is expected in the next few years, could be completed by 2027. Light rail would then be extended to Kilbirnie and the airport and/or Miramar (subject to further analysis).

We also support further investigation of extending light rail to Island Bay in the south, and converting the Melling rail line to light rail and extending it through Lower Hutt to connect with the Hutt rail line. This would improve access to new housing and a retail and business hub in Lower Hutt.

Bus priority lanes

Wellington's Bus Priority Action Plan has the potential to reduce travel times for bus commuters by a third.³ This will provide more continuous, congestion-free routes into the city with more bus-only lanes, traffic signal priorities, and more spacing between bus stops.

The Green Party will fast-track the Bus Priority Action Plan, elements of which have been held up by delays in the Let's Get Wellington Moving process.

Priority routes will include Brooklyn/Kingston, Karori, Kelburn, Newtown, Kibirnie/Lyall Bay, Miramar, and Johnsonville. We will also add an additional bus priority route between Petone, Lower Hutt, Stokes Valley, and Upper Hutt.

Faster, more frequent commuter rail

The Green Party's Regional Rapid Rail Plan will create new daily passenger services to Wairarapa, Palmerston North (including Ōtaki and Levin), and eventually Whanganui. These new regional services will also benefit people living along the Kāpiti and Hutt lines because they will mean more frequent trains servicing stops on these lines.

These improvements will be phased in so benefits are realised quickly. Electrification to Ōtaki will be an early priority.

By purchasing new hybrid-electric trains, capable of extending beyond the electric overhead lines, we will be able to progressively extend the reach of regional passenger services. For example, electrification of the

line to Ōtaki will allow hybrid-electric trains to service Palmerston North. Once rail is electrified to Palmerston North the hybrid trains will be able to extend further to Marton and Whanganui.

Planned track upgrades like double tracking between Trentham and Upper Hutt and between Porirua and Pukerua Bay will also speed up commuter rail services.

Doubling the tunnels to the eastern suburbs

LGWM proposes a new car tunnel through Mt Victoria, in addition to the existing car/pedestrian tunnel and the existing bus-only tunnel. This would require road widening and the demolition of rows of houses in Hataitai and Mt Victoria. Due diligence is continuing on this project and our expectation is that further analysis will confirm the project offers little to no benefit compared to alternatives, and could be deferred or re-scoped. In this case, the Green Party will push for an alternative “double the tunnels” plan to the eastern suburbs.

The Green Party’s plan to double the tunnels prioritises:

- A new dedicated walking and cycling tunnel parallel to the existing Mt Victoria car tunnel, between Hataitai and the Basin Reserve.
- A new dedicated light rail tunnel near the Wellington Zoo, connecting the eastern suburbs via Newtown to the city and Railway Station.

Improving buses, building mass transit, and making walking and cycling safer and easier from the eastern suburbs will benefit the largest number of people. The majority of people commuting from the eastern suburbs use public transport, walk, or cycle.⁴ There is no short, safe, convenient cycling route. Currently, cyclists either brave the winds around Evans Bay, squeeze through the tunnel on the narrow footpath shared with people walking, or use narrow Newtown streets with inadequate protected cycle lanes.

According to Waka Kotahi NZTA, light rail could take just 20 minutes between the airport and railway station, accommodating an extra 4,700 people on public transport.⁵ Improving bus priority from Seatoun could save up to 15 minutes of a daily bus commute. A two way protected

bike path from the east could carry extra 7,500 people an hour from Kilbirnie and Hataitai to the city.⁶

A second car tunnel *feels* like it should improve driving options and some political parties have promised it will “fix” congestion. Unfortunately, despite costing close to a billion dollars, the analysis to date shows a second car tunnel would have little to no benefit. According to Waka Kotahi NZTA, a second tunnel would accommodate only 550 extra car trips in the morning peak (eight times less than light rail)⁷ and only change travel times by three percent.⁸ Three percent is a saving of just 30 to 60 seconds on a car trip between the CBD and airport. A second car tunnel would also likely add to congestion in other parts of the city and region by encouraging more people to drive.

The Green Party’s alternative vision is to double the number tunnels to the Eastern Suburbs and deliver more than ten times the capacity of a second car tunnel.

A dedicated walking and cycling tunnel is estimated to cost \$100 million to build and would involve expanding the existing pilot tunnel that runs parallel to the existing car tunnel. It could be built much sooner and at a fraction of the cost of second car tunnel. People walking and cycling from Hataitai and Kilbirnie to the city will no longer have to do so on a cramped path amongst the fumes and noise of car traffic.

The Go Anywhere Transport Card

To make public transport more affordable and convenient, the Green Party will introduce a nationwide Go Anywhere transport card. With convenient, affordable access to all modes of public transport, car share, bike hire, and e-scooters, the Go Anywhere card will enable more people to choose not to own a car.

The Go Anywhere transport card will:

- Provide access to all public transport services (bus, train, ferry) in every city in Aotearoa.
- Have a maximum limit on how much a person can be charged for public transport in one week – for example, people could pay for their first eight journeys a week, after which the rest are free.

- Include automatic access to participating car share programmes and shared micro mobility schemes such as e-bikes and e-scooters. The cost of these would depend on the service, and would not be counted towards the weekly maximum cost limit for public transport.
- Have targeted fare reductions within cities, including:
 - Free public transport for people over the age of 65, under the age of 18, and community service card holders.
 - 50 percent off standard fares for tertiary students and apprentices.

More information about the Go Anywhere transport card can be found in the Green Party's [full Future of Transport plan](#).

Walkable Wellington

Part of what makes Wellington a great place to live is its compact form that makes it possible to easily walk from the inner suburbs to the CBD, the waterfront, green belt, and the many cafes and bars. Pedestrian spaces like Cuba Mall and the waterfront are also magnets for people, which help bring people into the city and make Wellington feel alive.

The Green Party strongly supports the pedestrianisation of the Golden Mile agreed in LGWM. This will make Wellington's premier commercial and retail area a more attractive destination that entices people into the city. It will also make the city centre a more pleasant place for the tens of thousands of Wellingtonians who live and work there.

LGWM will also deliver other walkability improvements like safer pedestrian crossings and count-down cross-walk timers in the CBD.

Cycle Super Highways

The Green Party is proposing a nationwide \$1.5 billion Cycle Super Highway Fund, which would be available to Wellington. These projects will be 100% funded by central government, subject to meeting certain quality criteria, similar to how major urban motorways are funded.

The Cycle Super Highway fund is a contestable fund so projects will be determined independently. However, the following Wellington routes could be good candidates for funding:

- *A Southern cycle highway* connecting Berhampore, Newtown, and the CBD.
- *An Eastern cycle highway* connecting the eastern suburbs to the CBD by completing the waterfront cycleway and proving a new direct connection from Kilbirnie to the city, via new dedicated walking and cycling tunnel through Mt Victoria.
- *A Northern cycle highway* connecting the city to the Hutt Valley as well as the Eastern Bays shared path via a new waterfront path along the Petone Esplanade.
- *A North Western cycle highway* from Ngauranga to Johnsonville, including greater protection on the uphill path, a wider downhill path, and protected cycle lanes on the approaches in Ngauranga and Johnsonville.

These Cycle Super Highways would be able to leverage existing planned cycleway investments like:

- The City to Hutt Cycleway, including the waterside shared path from Petone to Ngauranga.
- Petone to Melling.
- The Eastern Bays shared path.
- The Cobham Drive shared path.

Cycle Super Highways would complement the inner city improvements for safe cycling planned and funded through LGWM, including protected cycleways on Featherston Street, Thorndon Quay, Courtenay Place, Dixon Street, Taranaki Street, Willis Street, Bowen Street, and Kent and Cambridge Terraces.

More information about the Cycle Super Highway Fund can be found in the Green Party's [full Future of Transport plan](#).

Funding

Priority projects for Wellington are funded from existing Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) funding and the Green Party's proposed nationwide Cycle Super Highways (CSH) contestable fund. For proposed projects not listed in the table below, we would direct NZTA to scope and cost the projects, to begin in several years' time (such as extending light rail to Island Bay and Melling).

Project	Cost (\$m)	Funding source	Timeframe
Rapid transit			
Light rail: Railway station to Newtown	1,520 ⁹	LGWM	2022-27
Light rail: Newtown to Miramar	680 ¹⁰	LGWM	2027-30
Other funded LGWM projects			
Central city cycleways	40	LGWM	2021-23
Pedestrian improvements including golden mile	95	LGWM	2021-22
Bus priority improvements	400	\$360m LGWM plus \$40m ¹¹ in new NLTF funding for Hutt improvements	2021-23
Smarter transport network (demand management & integrated ticketing)	80	LGWM	2021 +
Indicative Cycle Super Highway projects			
Northern cycle highway	230 ¹²	CSH	2021-25
North western cycle highway	20	CSH	2024-25
Eastern cycle highway	120 ¹³	CSH	2021
Southern cycle highway	30 ¹⁴	CSH	2022

Sources

¹ Waka Kotahi NZTA ministerial briefing note, 20 February 2019, "Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) – summary of modelling of extra Mount Victoria Tunnel and mass transit", <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/lets-get-wellington-moving/docs/lgwm-bri-1594.pdf>

² Wellington City Council, "Our City Tomorrow: Te Atakura – First to Zero," <https://www.zerocarboncapital.nz/assets/Modules/DocumentGrid/1008785-Zero-Carbon-Plan-final-WEB.PDF>

³ Greater Wellington Regional Council, "Bus Priority Action Plan", draft December 2019, [https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/services/parking-and-roads/bus-priority/files/wellington-bus-priority-action-plan-draft.pdf?la=en](https://wellington.govt.nz/~/media/services/parking-and-roads/bus-priority/files/wellington-bus-priority-action-plan-draft.pdf?la=en)

⁴ Greater Wellington Regional Council, "Bus Priority Action Plan", page 29.

⁵ Waka Kotahi NZTA ministerial briefing note, 20 February 2019, "Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) – summary of modelling of extra Mount Victoria Tunnel and mass transit", <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/lets-get-wellington-moving/docs/lgwm-bri-1594.pdf>, pages 7-8.

⁶ National Association of City Transportation Officials, "Transit Street Design Guide", <https://nacto.org/publication/transit-street-design-guide/introduction/why/designing-move-people/>

⁷ Waka Kotahi NZTA ministerial briefing note, 20 February 2019, "Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) – summary of modelling of extra Mount Victoria Tunnel and mass transit", <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/lets-get-wellington-moving/docs/lgwm-bri-1594.pdf>, page 7.

⁸ Waka Kotahi NZTA memo, "MIN-2881 Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM)", <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/lets-get-wellington-moving/docs/lgwm-min-2881.pdf>, page 4.

⁹ Cost split is based on split between sections as advised in March 2019. Cost estimates are based on the estimate for delivering entire route in publicly available [Cabinet advice](#). Split estimate is based on a proportionate cost split in March 2019 Ministry of Transport advice publicly available [online here](#).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ This is an estimate for the bus priority corridor based on comparable bus priority projects in Wellington and Auckland.

¹² This estimates \$200m for the Petone to Ngauranga section and an additional \$30m to complete the Petone to Eastbourne section. \$15m of the Eastern Shared Path is already funded.

¹³ Assumes \$100m for new tunnel and \$20m for connection to Kilbirnie.

¹⁴ This is an estimate base on similar on-road protected cycleway projects over a similar distance, including likely property purchases.

[www.greens.org.nz/
Wellingtons_transport_future](http://www.greens.org.nz/Wellingtons_transport_future)

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