



Expanding the Auckland Rail Network

National will build a rail link to Auckland Airport from Puhinui and Onehunga

The importance of Auckland Airport and surrounding areas

Auckland Airport is a critical part of Auckland's economy. The airport contributes \$3.5 billion to Auckland's economy each year, and provides access for 75% of all international arrivals, including 92% of long haul arrivals. Within 30 years, passenger numbers are expected to triple to 40 million passengers per year.

The Airport is a nationally important freight hub and is the second largest cargo port in New Zealand by value, moving approximately 230,000 tonnes of freight every year with a value of \$13 billion.

The Airport and the surrounding business area is a major regional employment hub, which attracts employees from across the Auckland region.

Congestion

Congestion around the airport is a major problem and is expected to get worse. The 2016 South-western Multi-modal Airport Rapid Transit Business Case for Auckland Transport noted that:

- The airport is constrained in terms of connections to the wider strategic transport network. Currently, 62,500 vehicles per day move to and from the Airport using SH20A and SH20B and this volume is predicted to more than double to 158,000 vehicles per day by 2041.
- The increase in travel demand to the airport and surrounding areas is mainly driven by more businesses and houses in the area as well as the doubling of passengers flying into and out of the airport over the next 10 years. With anticipated traffic volume growth, demand is expected to exceed the capacity of a four lane expressway in the next 5 – 10 years or a four lane motorway in the next 10 – 20 years.

- "Considering the impact of future travel demands, if public transport capacity is not significantly increased, the development potential of the airport and surrounding land will be severely restricted."
- There is a widespread consensus that Auckland Airport needs better public transport connections.

Context for rail investment

- There has been significant investment in the Auckland heavy rail network in the past decade. From 2010 onwards, the network was fully electrified, Newmarket station opened, the Western Line was double-tracked and the Onehunga branch line re-opened. There were over 22 million boardings on the rail network in the year to February 2020, a key part of the renaissance of public transport in Auckland.
- The City Rail Link (CRL) will accelerate these gains, allowing the rail network to at least double rail capacity. The \$4.4 billion project will be transformational for Auckland. The CRL (or Morningside Deviation) was planned for Auckland from at least the 1940s and will finally be operational by 2024.





History

- For decades, the plan for Auckland rail, alongside the CRL, was to extend the rail line from Onehunga to the airport. It was proposed by De Leuw Cather and Company in their never-adopted Rapid Rail Transit Plan in 1965. Later, a rail line from Puhinui to the airport was proposed in the 1970 Auckland Rail Rapid Transit Plan.
- The 2012 Auckland Plan saw the city developing rail to the airport from Onehunga and Puhinui, with construction occurring between 2021 and 2030.

2011 Scoping Report

Just prior to the development of the 2012 Auckland Plan, Auckland Transport, the New Zealand Transport Agency, Auckland Council, Kiwi Rail and Auckland International Airport commissioned the South-Western Airport MultiModal Corridor Project Scoping Report, which reported in June 2011.

The report recommended a heavy rail loop from Puhinui to Onehunga via the airport, designed to run standard Electric Multiple Units (EMUs). The 2011 report said that this option:

- Reduces congestion within the existing network by removing trips from the roading system.

- Provides a high level of capacity to sustain feasible frequency that meets demand and improves accessibility across the wider region.
- Attracts the greatest number of public transport passengers as a result of the quality of the service expected to be provided.
- Provides direct integration with the region-wide rail network and leverages off the current substantial investment in electrification, new rolling stock, signalling improvements and station upgrades.
- Reduces interchange penalties for longer trips located across the rail network.

Cost and sequencing

- National envisages the Puhinui to airport line starting construction in 2026/7. The line to Onehunga would begin after 2030.
- The cost estimate for Puhinui to the airport is \$1.5 billion.
- The cost estimate for airport to Onehunga is more difficult to estimate, but we have conservatively estimated \$3.5 billion.

