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Auckland Harbour Bridge “Clip-on” Lanes - Safe Loading Capacity questions

Dear Dave,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December 2008. In response, we have the following questions:

1. You refer to the strengthening work as having been designed to future-proof walking and cycling options, but make a critical proviso in paragraph two: *“However, this does not address the overall capacity of the bridge to carry the loading from traffic in its various forms.”*

Yet in reading the May 2008 LTNZ Board Paper 08/05/3089: “Auckland Harbour Bridge Box Girder Strengthening Project”, it is clear that the matter of loading capacity was addressed – as per clause 8: *“While carrying out structural analysis of the AHB, Transit included a loading case involving a cycleway/walkway. The analysis found that a cycleway/walkway, which partly used the existing carriageway and also included a slight extension on the operating width, was structurally feasible.”*

As we have relied on previous NZTA assurances¹ on this matter, we respectfully request that you please explain this discrepancy.

2. We note from clause 15 of the NZTA Board Paper 08/10/0071 “Walking and Cycling on the Auckland Harbour Bridge” that *“further detailed analysis is required to verify the results presented.”* Given the critical effect of the recommendations² made by this Board Paper and Beca’s advice³ that it was giving a *“rough assessment”* and *“the reliability of such projections beyond 10 years or so is unknown”*, could you please advise the status of this verification work and when it is expected to be completed?

¹ Bryan Jackson, NZTA Board member, letter to ARC’s Christine Rose, 19 May 2008: “the purpose of the structural upgrade of the clip-on lanes is to ensure they stay in good condition for the next 20 to 30 years. I assure you that these works do not preclude the addition of a walking and cycling facility.”

² Board Paper 08/10/0071 claims “the main consequence of adding walking and cycling facilities to the Auckland Harbour Bridge is to significantly shorten the service life of the ‘clip-on’ box girders”

³ 28 October, 2008 letter to NZTA’s Robert Strong from Ian Billings, Technical Director, Beca Infrastructure

3. We are concerned that the NZTA appears to have confused when the safe load capacity is reached (and managed appropriately), with exceeding the safe load capacity (which may mean the serviceable life ends). These are two quite different situations, yet the Board Paper 08/10/0071 claims that reaching the safe load capacity means it is the end of the clip-ons serviceable life. This is incorrect and misleading.

Despite having prepared Board Paper 08/10/0071, Tommy Parker appears to correctly understand this concept when talking to the media⁴ and so we are asking the NZTA to clarify its position on this matter.

We appreciate your assistance and look forward to receiving your response on the above three matters.

Please do not hesitate to contact the writer with any questions.

Yours sincerely,

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⁴ NZ Herald, 7 January, 2009: "Mr Parker noted that the estimated time before reaching the safe load capacity did not directly equate to the longevity of the bridge"