



All Aboard Aotearoa Inc

COVID Responsive Active Mode Crossing over the Auckland Harbour Bridge

31st January 2022

**Attn: Minister of Transport, Hon Michael Wood
Chair of Waka Kotahi, Sir Brian Roche
Chief Executive of Waka Kotahi, Nicole Rosie**

**CC: MP For Northcote, Shanan Halbert; MP for Auckland Central, Chlöe Swarbrick;
Auckland Transport Chair, Adrienne Young-Cooper; Auckland Mayor Phil Goff**

**RE: Public health response to COVID-19 through a temporary opening of the
Auckland Harbour Bridge to active modes**

1. The public health response to the outbreak of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in Aotearoa has placed the whole country into Traffic Light Red (Phase 1). As the number of cases rise in the motu, we will move into Phase Two and Three.
2. The transport response in Auckland must support this health response, and enable Aucklanders to continue to participate in society and the economy.
3. The use of lanes on the Auckland Harbour Bridge for walking and cycling is safe and convenient, as shown by the recent closure for the Auckland Marathon.
4. **A temporary lane allocation for walking and cycling would provide a resilient transport response to the current Omicron outbreak.** This initiative would:
 - a. Mitigate the higher risks of using public transport: COVID-19 infection due to insufficient social distancing on board buses.
 - b. Provide alternatives to public transport services that if cancelled could leave vulnerable users stranded.
 - c. Present an opportunity for positive long term behaviour change.
5. Many disabled, medically vulnerable or low income people may be particularly hesitant to continue their use of public transport in coming months, and these users require safety and agency regarding their transport needs. Many Aucklanders cannot or do not own or operate a motor vehicle for a wide variety of reasons, and their transport needs require urgent attention in response to the currently unfolding public health situation.
6. Across 2021, a significant decline in public transport usage resulted from concern over public transmission of COVID-19. Owing to a lack of genuine transport choice, many of

these trips shifted to private motor vehicles, resulting in poor sustainability outcomes for the Auckland transport network.

7. Auckland Transport have recently signalled that reduced public transport services are likely and there is a risk of services being cut at short notice, owing to expected staff illness and absence as a result of the Omicron outbreak. With this lack of service dependability, a further decline in ridership can be expected, with longer term behaviour change likely.
8. Internationally, adjustments to the transport network to improve public safety in response to COVID-19 has led to a significant increase in the number of people choosing to walk and cycle regularly. Temporary changes have been made permanent and significant progress has been made toward encouraging more people into active, low-carbon transport.
9. Waka Kotahi and the road contracting community have proven they can quickly and effectively respond to emergencies such as the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake and the 2020 truck strike which caused damage to the harbour bridge. Responding to the Omicron situation by reallocating lanes for active travel is a people-focussed initiative which would send a strong message that the Government and the transport agency are serious about their response to current transport challenges.
10. Temporary reallocation of space on the Auckland Harbour Bridge would provide a low-cost and equitable public health response to the Omicron outbreak and improve the resilience of the existing transport network, providing an opportunity for all Aucklanders to continue to travel safely as required.
11. **We ask the Minister and Waka Kotahi to expedite the temporary reallocation of existing road space on the Auckland Harbour Bridge to enable walking, cycling and active transport.**

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Lee
Chair, All Aboard Aotearoa Inc