



## Memorandum

**To:** Design & Delivery Committee  
**From:** Melanie Alexander, Acting Director Network Performance  
Dan Lambert, Director Partnership & Engagement  
**Date:** 14 November 2025  
**Subject:** Update on City Centre Operational Changes pre-CRL

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### Executive Summary

To provide an overview to Committee on several operational changes that are occurring in the City Centre over the next year.

A number of changes are occurring in the city centre over the coming year as key infrastructure projects, including CRL, reach completion. Public transport services are being realigned to new corridors to support CRL operational readiness and the City Centre Bus Plan, with bus corridors connecting to an interchange at each new station. This provides an opportunity for operational changes to support outcomes provided in the city centre masterplan.

Some of these changes have been questioned by key stakeholders and the Mayor who have sought further understanding of operational changes and a focus on east-west movement by car. An update and overview of these recent requests is provided in this paper.

### Summary of upcoming operational changes in the City Centre:

In advance of the opening of CRL a number of key infrastructure projects will be completed to support a connected network of multi-modal transport options that will enable improved access and movement into and around the city centre. These changes are in accordance with the City Centre Masterplan and Action Plan. Proposals are developed with Auckland Council and are reviewed by City Centre Advisory Panel, City Centre SteerCo, and elected members including the Waitemata Local Board.

In addition to these public works, shown in the timeline Figure 1, private developments will continue over the coming years resulting in temporary disruption and impact on operations. Beyond CRL, significant works on the network include the Downtown development and the Customs Street bus improvements.

### Traffic Circulation

As these projects become operational there will be changes to the way vehicles navigate the city. In particular, east-west patterns will change, although recent monitoring suggests that only 20% of general vehicles cross the Queen Street valley. Therefore an integrated approach to network management is being taken to ensure improved customer experience for public transport users and access for general traffic and service vehicles is efficiently managed.

Circulation plans for these changes are provided in the attachment. In summary, at the end of November 2025 the bus network will switch to use Albert Street and Vincent Street followed early

next year with the completion of the new bus interchange on Wellesley Street. Completion of Te Hā Noa will mean that three key corridors (Albert, Wellesley and Victoria Streets) will be available for use. This provides the opportunity to reconsider movement on Queen Street and Mayoral Drive.

**Figure 1 Timeline of Upcoming works**

Vincent St Bus improvements	■	mid-Nov 2025
Albert St Northwestern bus services switch	■	29 Nov 2025
Mayoral Dr north (Cook-Wellesley) – complete eastern footpath and bus stops/shelters, outside Symphony Centre development	■	late Feb 2026
Queen St Authorised Vehicles Only (AVO) hours of operation change	■	late Feb 2026
Additional loading zones and pick-up/drop-off in Wakefield St/Queen St area	■	late Feb 2026
Wellesley St Bus Improvements stage 1 (WSBI)	■	Feb/Mar 2026
Wellesley St – bus services begin using new WSBI interchange	■	March 2026
Queen St/Wellesley St Watercare works	■	Apr/May 2026
Queen St/Victoria St Watercare works	■	Mar/Apr 2026
Te Ha Noa (Victoria St Linear Park) Queen St-High St section	■	Q3 2026

**Mayoral engagement**

A number of issues have been raised as this transformation occurs across the city centre. These include matters the Mayor has raised about vehicle movement east-west through the city. This was highlighted in his letter of 17 September:

In all matters of high public interest or affecting large numbers of Aucklanders, I expect you to keep the council informed on any consequences, and for this to be initiated at the start of your considerations and not just at the end. Examples of this would include matters such as the Victoria and Federal St intersection changes, and ways to traverse the CBD east to west by car.

Particular issues over the last few months have been summarised in the Table 1 below:

**Table 1 – Issues raised**

Topic	Response	Next Steps
<p><b>East-West Traffic Flow (Midtown)</b>                      Concerns raised with the flow of traffic (cars) across the city centre especially with changes</p>	<p>Memo of 26 September and attached to the response letter to the Mayor 3 October</p>	<p>Memo to the Mayor’s office end of November. Presentation to and engagement with elected members, stakeholders.</p>



<p>on Wellesley Street and Victoria Street</p>		<p>This will include change to hours of operation for AVO for implementation Feb/Mar 2026</p>
<p><b>Wellesley Street Bus improvements (WSBI)</b> Concern with operational design, continued access to Elliot St /bus lane and cars using this corridor</p>	<p>Memo provided to the Mayor in September relating to the Midtown circulation plans including the proposal for bus operations and briefing 3 July. Followed by an update to TRIC 7 July.</p> <p>This followed early engagement with stakeholders including City Centre Advisory Panel, Heart of the City, Auckland Live and elected members (May-September).</p> <p>Site visit with the Mayor 16 October.</p> <p>Meeting with Mayors office 6 November to provide briefing on proposed operational changes.</p>	<p>Design drawings and proposed operational plan to Mayors Office, for review.</p>
<p><b>Victoria Street</b> (Federal Street and Hobson Street) Concern on the use of road space with the cycleway, bus stops and the operation of the intersection to optimise flow of traffic</p>	<p>Signal Changes made in May to improve operations, with a shared left and straight through lanes. Site Walkover 6 October with the Mayor, further assessment and memo to Mayors Office 15 October to confirm next steps.</p>	<p>Options assessment report to Mayor's office week commencing 10 November. Improvements implemented by end of 2025</p>
<p><b>Victoria Street / Nelson Street</b> Cycle Crossing trial Concern that too much time was being used for pedestrians and cyclists crossing</p>	<p>Shared Barnes Dance trial on 3 intersections of Victoria Street as part of a trial with NZTA. Implemented changes in August 2025. Reduction in pedestrian and cycle crossing times reduced to 22 seconds in response to Mayors concerns.</p>	<p>Trial will run over a 12 month period. Completion August 2026</p>
<p><b>Wellesley Street</b> Current Road Markings are causing confusion and some are worn.</p>	<p>Site walkover with the Mayor 15 October</p>	<p>Road Corridor Access team addressing confusing road marking adjacent to Watercare</p>

Temporary road markings associated with the Watercare construction site in Wellesley St East are confusing.		construction site in Wellesley St East.  Road Maintenance team to refresh road markings on Wellesley St, between Nelson St and Hobson St by end November 2025.
<b>Queen Street</b> Mid-Block removal Concern that the multiple pedestrian mid-block crossings were disrupting the flow of traffic and slowing vehicles	Trial of removal of mid-block crossings undertaken. Memo to Mayors Office to confirm intent to permanently remove the crossings.	Consultation on removal, with completion in early in 2026.
<b>Queen St bus lane removal</b> (Shortland to Customs) With the bus network changes at the end of November opportunity for the removal of the northbound bus lane reverting to general traffic	Investigation of this option noted in the memo to the Mayors office for Queen Street.	Completion Early 2026
<b>Queen Street Authorised Vehicles Only (AVO) changes</b> With changes to the bus network and Wellesley Street bus improvements the opportunity to review the operating hours of the AVO	Being considered as part of the midtown traffic circulation plan and illustrated in the attached plans for March.	Presentation to and engagement with elected members and stakeholders to confirm operational changes.

## Next Steps

Work within the city centre continues to ensure that the network is operating effectively with a focus on better movement outcomes in preparation for the opening of CRL.

Ongoing development and Watercare projects will continue in the city's midtown area. Network performance metrics have been established to track travel patterns and enable timely operational decisions. A report on operations post CRL with an emphasis on optimising east-west movement is underway and will be delivered within the next month.

A dedicated tiger team has been established to address the complexities of city centre changes and ensure timely and consistent implementation. The teams convene weekly to maintain oversight of concerns, monitor issues, and track progress.

Our work remains guided by the Auckland Council City Centre Masterplan, and we will continue to provide technical advice to facilitate future amendments to this plan. AT is actively collaborating with Council officers to ensure all outcomes are consistent with the objectives of the City Centre Masterplan. To further support alignment, we have proposed establishing a weekly city centre SteerCo meeting.



# City Centre current state

Until 1 December 2025

Ports of Auckland



