

By email

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Dave Brash, Chair, LGWM Board
Sir Brian Roche, Chair, Waka Kotahi
Mayor Andy Foster, WCC

Kia ora koutou

Let's Get Wellington Moving

As we build towards the preferred option for the transformational programme component of LGWM in June, there are a number of linked policy settings and programmes that need to be addressed to give decision-makers the confidence to make an informed decision. Many of these require commitment from our partners to resolve and I have highlighted the key governance concerns from a Greater Wellington Regional Council viewpoint to bring these to your attention and enable focus on these prior to decisions being taken. We have already traversed many of these (but not all) at the GRG but nevertheless feel it worthwhile to reiterate the key issues that still need to be addressed from a governance perspective.

Robust evaluation and review: It goes without saying that the report on the preferred option needs to be robust, thorough and backed by clear evidence. The assessment of the options needs to be clearly shown in a decision-tree, including assessment against the programme objectives, then considered against other assessment factors including key risks. Consideration needs to be given to the key assumptions and triggers that support the preferred option and if not met what the alternative option(s) might be. Peer review of the key areas of analysis and conclusions would assist in giving decision-makers confidence in the process. This particularly relates to a peer review of the greenhouse gas analysis, where an independent review would be highly beneficial.

We need this decision to be an enduring one that sets the long-term future direction for the development of Wellington and the region and goes beyond any one political term of office. If there is a tension between meeting these required robustness standards and the agreed deadlines then I believe the partners need to be flexible enough to move their governance meetings and decisions to allow additional time.

Urban development: The decision on the preferred route and mode of MRT is very closely aligned to the desired future pattern of urban development along the LGWM corridors. Indeed, the transport solutions respond to and facilitate the desired form of urban development. As such it is essential that there is clarity on the policy settings for future urban development and that there is as much certainty as possible. This includes both the policy settings through the Wellington City District Plan, the potential SDP under the Urban Development Act and how the partners will actively facilitate urban intensification.

Whilst many of these processes will not be fully completed in time for the preferred option decision on the Indicative Business Case, it has been agreed that a Heads of Agreement should be developed by the LGWM partners, mana whenua and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development/Kainga Ora and their respective Ministers to provide clarity on their respective roles, the intended actions by each partner and a firm political commitment to work together to achieve the urban development objectives. This should be completed in time for the June decision and it would seem appropriate for this to be led by Wellington City Council.

The desired form of urban development along the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) corridor also needs to be set within its regional context, as the region forms an inter-connected housing market. This will require discussion with territorial authorities in the region through the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee. There may well be trade-offs that need to be made in directing and facilitating growth to the MRT corridor in Wellington.

Funding: Whilst funding for the next phase of detailed investigations is already funded through the Long-Term Plans of both Councils, the funding from Waka Kotahi is yet to be released. It is critical that there are no delays to the commencement of this next phase.

The preferred option decision is also the appropriate time to determine the funding split between the local partners for the construction phases. This will provide certainty to the respective Councils and communities on the financial impacts. Considerable work has already been undertaken by the partners and Programme Team on the options and a draft recommendation has emerged.

The broader issues of affordability for all three partners also needs to be reviewed to provide assurance to decision-makers that the programme can be funded through all future phases.

Opportunities to accelerate: We have heard clearly through the public engagement that the community wants to see implementation on the ground earlier. It will be important for decision-makers in June that the opportunities for achieving this are clearly outlined. This should include:

- ensuring the detailed business case process is fit for purpose;
- bringing forward discrete elements of the Programme for construction where possible;
- running investigation, design and consenting processes in parallel where practical; and
- consideration of enabling legislation.

Regional transport network: LGWM is a programme focussed on investment within Wellington City, however it clearly needs to be integrated with the wider transport network to be effective and to maximise the benefits. This includes the existing and planned public transport system within Wellington City (the bus network), the wider regional public transport system and planned improvements to infrastructure and services (particularly on the rail network), the regional roading network; and travel demand management measures. Councillors will be looking for clear evidence of how integration has been considered and what processes will be in place to ensure maximum benefits can be achieved as we progress through to construction.

Timing of Indicative Business Case: The three funding partners have heard the Wellington public's cry for the overall Let's Get Wellington Moving Programme to move faster. All partners agree with this call, but we must also balance the need to ensure robust advice to the decisions we are being asked to make. The Indicative Business Case is currently due to come to the partners for decision in June 2022. From a Greater Wellington perspective, we are of the view that robust information underpinning the indicative business case is critically more important than simply getting a decision over the line before the local government elections. We need decisions that can withstand scrutiny into the future.

In this regard I urge the Programme to consider whether it is desirable and possible to disaggregate decisions on the Indicative Business Case between:

- a) elements where there is robust information and strong alignment amongst officials now – for decision in June 2022; and
- b) elements that require further work – for decision in late 2022 / early 2023 (e.g. the decision on the MRT mode, which relies on robust information on the housing projection).

GW officers are already heavily involved in supporting the Programme Team and are available to support alignment on the key issues I've outlined above.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter

Chair

Greater Wellington Regional Council

CC: Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport
Hon Megan Woods, Minister of Housing
Helmut Modlik, CEO, Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Inc
Lee Hunter, CEO, Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust