

12 April 2022

**Some of my concerns about the LGWM project.**

**Action I have taken to this point:**

When I became a Regional Councillor, I was determined to use my experience to see that ratepayers were getting good outcomes. Over time I have become concerned about the once in a generation opportunity to improve Wellington's transport. I have also closely studied the financials that were available and reviewed previous information from earlier years. Many unanswered questions lead me to follow up on these concerns about Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) including several meetings where I have tried to get key people to act about cost and other issues I have raised. Other Councillors may not share my concerns and some points may not stand up to scrutiny however I am confident over most issues I have raised. I now intend to publicly oppose this project until these matters are reviewed and attended to.

**My position as a GW Councillor.**

I have a business background, have successfully chaired several National organisations, had extensive involvement in Charities as Chair, Board Member, and donor. Being elected to GW I have always seen it as my responsibility to represent the interests of low and middle-income people that make up the core of an estimated 520,000 people in the GWRC area. Our Councillor Handbook outlines our responsibility to the whole of GWRC people and emphasizes that although we may come to Council as a person representing a political view, such political preferences are required to be put aside once we join GWRC while we consider the greater interests of the whole of those people within our area.

**My concern for LGWM.**

I believe at executive level full and transparent financial information should be available for public consultation. I believe that full disclosure and transparency mean that any claim of a political focus can be refuted by real evidence thus showing that LGWM are open and forthright about all information being available for public scrutiny so any citizens who are willing to put in the time can fact check the information. This allows our public to understand the financial costs and then they can make submissions on the social, environmental, climate and lifestyle choices that are likely to influence the costing options.

In the same manner I accept that once quality and honestly independent information has been made available then the elected officials, those at Governance level (rather than executive level) may decide, at their discretion, to make choices that may in many cases not be so cost effective but have weighting, based upon other important issues along with social, environmental and climate impacts.

It is essential that we move forward by winning the overwhelming support of our Wellington residents. Transport makes up 66% of the Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) budget and 60.1% of the regional Transport budget is paid by Wellington ratepayers, (35.9% business contribution and 24.2% Residential rural). In my view, the consultation documents in many cases have been based upon financial information that is misleading and polarized to various views that do not align with the public's view of the desired outcomes of the project and make it impossible for those without extensive financial ability to make informed judgments on this project.

I, as a Councillor will no longer give support to LGWM until my concerns are addressed. I believe that integrity, honesty, along with my own reputation need to be above political expediency. I understand that standing up for what I believe in the face of political spin may mean I am standing alone against LGWM, but I am happy to do so if needed and will face the public support or censure at the GWRC elections later this year. I believe my integrity is not something that can be traded.

**Here are a few of the issues that I am looking to have addressed:**

**1. Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) verses Light Rail Transit (LRT)**

- a. LGWM have assumed that below ground costs were equal for both options. The whole point of BRT is that it can use normal road surfaces and does not need the extensive in ground costings associated with LRT.
- b. The 2013 Spine Study noted that BRT does not require the services relocation associated with LRT.
- c. Underground strengthening along with services relocation could run into hundreds of millions of dollars, also it can create critical disruption to business during construction and has a negative climate impact.
- d. LGWM say that the operational costs of BRT are higher than LRT. The Spine Study of 2013 says they are similar or lower for BRT.
- e. When saying that BRT is very high cost LGWM give no examples of the basis for that comment and neglect the advantages such as route sharing by local buses.
- f. *Based on feedback I believe that the BRT option will have over \$350 to \$700 million less in in ground costs which has not been disclosed in the consultation documents.*

**2. Tunnel Option Costs**

- a. I have asked why there is little variance in the Indicative Business Case costing options between a second Mt Victoria Tunnel of 700meters as compared to the Diagonal Tunnel through Mt Victoria with a length of 2400meters.
- b. LGWM brush this off as being addressed in a future Indicative Business Case (IBC). LGWM has refused to release the full financial details, so we need to make our own estimates. \$1.2million per metre is a basic cost from the Vox International study (inclusive of entry and exit costs). *This would suggest a difference in cost of \$2,040 million, why is that not included or explained as it is significant within the suggested \$7000million project cap. This estimate is supported by the 2013 Spine Study costings.*
- c. This is over 8 times the cost estimate for Transmission Gully, just imagine if we have the same cost overruns!

**3. Safety concerns for Critical vehicles and route planning.**

- a. I understand there are several online bus stops. This happens where the road is narrow, and it is impossible to have the bus stopping offline.
- b. I do not support such planning in what is meant to be a rebuild of Wellington Traffic flow for the next 30-50 years.
- c. *I believe that for the safety of us all that Fire, Ambulance, Police, taxis, disability vehicles, and service vehicles should have an uninterrupted flow when going about*

*their work and will support nothing less than full access. This should also allow for private pickup and drop off which often assists people with disabilities.*

- d. There is no indication given why we have not formally investigated a Southern access and Northern access through the City Central. They could be one block apart and would extend the project lifespan as they can then achieve double the directional peak flow rates which currently restrict longer term passenger carry levels and the longer-term viability of the project.

#### **4. Other Issues.**

- a. The focus appears to be on North South only with little benefit for Karori, Johnsonville and some other areas. Why have we not addressed the Karori Tunnel choke point?
- b. The population data differs from the WCC Spatial Plan, in my view this distortion is then further twisted to support LRT over BRT when honest data would stand on its own footing, also how will we ensure the social sustainability of mass housing on such land? Historical population growth has been in the Hutt Valley and our Northern corridor, greater carbon savings are available here than within the Wellington spine.
- c. There is no indication that we will use fare pricing tools to relieve peak travel numbers, an option that gives considerable benefit to those that struggle with fare costs.
- d. Depreciation needs to be considered as if the PTOM system is retained then it is an opex item. To date it has been excluded based upon it being noncash which is incorrect under our current funding model.
- e. No allowance has been made for resilience issues between the BRT and LRT options. This is a non-costed value issue between a system limited to rails when compared with the flexibility BRT has, to run over most roads.
- f. Business and residential ratepayers do not feel that there has been meaningful consultation and in my view the public have not been clearly advised of the financial cost that will come to them.
- g. The Cobham Drive crossing was not supported by the accident research which showed that other options may have greater benefit. My issue here is about the honesty of how statistics were used in consultation.

I have been unhappy at what I consider to be answers that continually evolve and change. I have asked LGWM people that I reach as a Councillor to acknowledge the need for change and to suggest how this could be achieved. To date I am not happy with the replies and intend to discuss these concerns across Wellington until I can bring about a change to the project focus that ensures our residents will get the best value from this project with the least risk.

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