



Transporting Auckland Forward: A Call to Action

Infrastructure New Zealand in partnership with Committee for Auckland

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**COMMITTEE FOR
AUCKLAND**
Komiti mō Tāmaki Makaurau

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Transporting Auckland Forward: A Call to Action Summit

In early March 2026, the ‘Transporting Auckland Forward’ Summit brought together a diverse group of over 60 senior leaders from across business and the development sector, industry professionals, and central and local government.

The message was clear: Auckland does not need further diagnosis. It needs stronger political commitment, clearer alignment on priorities and much faster delivery. It is time to be bold.

Auckland’s transport challenges are not a local planning issue. They are a national economic issue. As New Zealand’s largest city, global gateway and commercial capital, Auckland and New Zealand cannot succeed if its transport system remains fragmented, underpowered and too slow to respond to growth.

What We Heard

A clear shift in tone was evident. The time for relitigating past debates has passed.

Against the backdrop of current constraints and necessary trade-offs, there was a high degree of alignment in the room on what must be done to deliver Auckland’s future, including leveraging what we have, prioritising rapid transit corridors, enabling key nodes and stronger partnerships to deliver outcomes.

Get More Out of What We Already Have

Auckland must make better use of its existing network assets. Focus needs to turn to realising the value of smaller, targeted interventions across the network to unlock capacity and overall system performance.

- “We need to focus on small marginal improvements across the network – that’s where we’ll get real bang for buck.”
- “We should be optimising what we’ve got before we build more.”

Put Growth in the Right Places

There needs to be stronger connection between where the city is growing and where transport infrastructure is being delivered. Greater alignment is needed between land use, housing, and transport to ensure growth occurs in the right places.

- “If we want to realise the benefits of the CRL, we need to invest in the enabling works around it.”

Have the Hard Conversation About Who Pays

Auckland needs a more open and honest conversation about infrastructure funding. That means being honest about costs, who benefits, the trade-offs, and who ultimately pays – as has been done with the cross-party agreement to implement time of use congestion charging.

- “If it delivers productivity, people will pay but we need to be clear on the benefits.”
- “We need to build the public narrative on why we all need to pay for infrastructure.”

Get Things Done

There is strong alignment on what needs to be done, but progress is often slowed by repeating analysis and changing settings from Wellington. The focus now needs to shift to execution.

- “We’ve done the studies – we need to start using them.”
- “The cost of doing nothing is real.”

Think Like a Global City

Auckland must take a more long-term, city-shaping view of its future – including its role as New Zealand’s global city and how transport supports that. This is how our peer cities operate.

- “We need to be clear on what kind of city we’re trying to build.”
- “If we want to be more productive and vibrant, transport has to support that.”

What Needs to Change

Start With a Clear, Shared Vision for Auckland

Auckland needs a clear and enduring vision for what it is trying to become – this must be backed by leadership at all levels. The lack of it is imposing real and growing costs on the city. Auckland should be confidently positioning itself as a globally competitive, productive and liveable city.

- “What does a city truly need to look like in 30 years’ time – do we really have that vision and aspiration?”
- “We set the vision before for Auckland to be a ‘quality compact city’ but investment decisions haven’t aligned to that.”

Auckland Needs Greater Agency to Shape its Own Future

Auckland needs a more mature partnership model across governments. There exists imbalance between central and local interests – significant funding, policy and decision-making levers sit in Wellington, while delivery pressures are left to Auckland. That model is no longer fit for purpose.

- “There’s an extreme skew... about 90% goes to central government... 10% to local.”
- “Auckland needs stronger local funding tools – user pays, value capture, tolling and asset recycling.”
- “We need to build on cross-party alignment that was reached on congestion pricing...”

Use Data, Evidence and Technology to Drive Better Decisions

While Auckland is not short on data, plans or strategies, progress is too often slowed by over-analysis and a lack of decisive action.

- “We’ve got data, we’ve got evidence – we can actually have informed conversation.”
- “There’s a lot of AI and technology available – how are we actually using it to optimise the network?”



Priorities

A clear set of priorities were identified for Auckland which span immediate improvements and long-term strategic investments, such as:

Optimising Existing Infrastructure

Getting more out of existing investments, particularly the rail network and City Rail Link.

- Level crossing removals
- Improving rail corridor performance
- Separation of freight and passenger rail
- Strand rail bridge replacement / realignment
- Network optimisation and bottleneck removal (arterials, intersections, safety improvements)
- Time-of-use charging to manage demand

Priority Corridors and Connections

Key corridors that are critical to improving connectivity across Auckland.

- Progressive rollout of the rapid transit network
- Northwestern corridor / northwest busway
- City centre to airport corridor
- Improved airport access, including heavy rail
- Botany to airport connection
- Stronger north-south and east-west connections
- Better use of water transport

Strategic and Long-term Investments

A smaller number of projects were identified as longer-term or nationally significant, particularly from a resilience perspective.

- Additional harbour crossing
- Prioritise and incentivise intensification around CRL and broader rail network
- Integrated corridor planning linked to future growth areas utilising spatial planning

What We Are Calling for Political Parties to Commit to

- **A clear long-term transport vision for Auckland** aligned with the city's growth, productivity and housing needs – not one driven by political ideology.
- **Back a sequenced programme of priority investments** that improves network performance now while building toward long-term capacity and resilience.
- **Support stronger funding tools for Auckland**, including user-pays mechanisms, value capture and other tools that better match funding to benefit.
- **Better align transport, housing and land use decisions**, so growth occurs where infrastructure can support it.
- **Shift from repeated analysis to delivery**, using the substantial evidence base already available.
- **Recognise Auckland as a national priority**, with central and local government working in a more mature partnership model.

Auckland cannot deliver its transport future under a model in which strategic control remains concentrated in Wellington while delivery pressure sits locally. Political parties should commit to a more mature partnership model that gives Auckland greater agency, clearer funding pathways and stronger delivery certainty.

“Auckland can be one of the most extraordinary cities in the world. What it needs is leadership and the confidence to sell and deliver bold ideas.”



How Do We Pay for It

Funding should follow the benefit created by a project, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. This means being clear about who benefits and matching that to who pays – e.g. growth pays for growth – while still considering the cumulative effect on affordability.

Funding debates need to move away from the abstract toward practical decisions about when each funding source should be used, such as:

Funding Approach	When it Could be Used
Central Funding	Projects with national economic, resilience or productivity benefits (e.g. major corridors, strategic connections).
User Pays (e.g. congestion charging, tolling, levies)	Where charging can improve network performance and where users directly benefit, or where it is utilise to influence behaviour. Design user-pays settings with equity in mind (e.g. impacts on low-income households, essential trips, and areas with limited alternatives).
Local Funding (rates/development contributions)	Local infrastructure and place-based improvements.
Value Capture and Development Funding	Where infrastructure unlocks land value uplift or enables development. “There are opportunities to capture value – we haven’t missed the boat.”
Asset Recycling	Where capital can be unlocked from existing assets and redeployed into higher-priority infrastructure. “Asset recycling is not asset sales... think about the cost of owning those assets.”

A single funding source will be not always be sufficient. Some projects will need to be funded through a combination of sources like taxpayers, ratepayers, users and beneficiaries depending on its nature.

This means greater funding discipline for projects – affordability should be considered up front and funding plans should be in place before projects are announced. Ways to deliver infrastructure faster and with better value for money must be at the heart of decision-making, including innovative approaches and fit-for-purpose design standards.

Next Steps

The next election will fail both Auckland and New Zealand if it produces another round of general support for Auckland followed by delay, fragmentation and under-delivery. Political parties should now make clear what they will do to improve Auckland's transport performance, how they will fund it, and how they will give the city the tools to shape its own future.

Auckland is too important to New Zealand's future for transport policy to remain reactive, stop-start and institutionally fragmented. The city needs clearer priorities, faster delivery and sustained political commitment.

“Tāmaki Makaurau – the land of a hundred lovers – with a massive heartbeat.”

