

Mana Clearways – Potted History

October 1989 – A major report on transport options for the Greater Wellington Area (the GATS Study) recommended the Transmission Gully (TG) inland route as being preferable to all of the coastal route options.

March 1990 – An audit of that Study by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment recommended that:

- *All further consideration of four-laning the Coastal Route be abandoned; and*
- *A firm commitment be made to the public to this effect.*

May 1997 – Hearings to designate the route for a TG motorway were held. The Commissioners were told that *“the project was part of a staged improvement plan, the traffic need for which will mature in a 10-15 year time horizon”*.

June 1998 – An initial proposal by Transit NZ to install clearways through Paremata and Plimmerton was rejected by a panel of independent Commissioners, who described it as *“too tight a fit within the narrow road corridor”* and *“so deficient in so many respects that it is inconsistent with the purpose of sustainable management”*. Reasons included the substandard lane and footpath widths, unhappiness with proposals to impose *“sight plane”* restrictions on some adjoining properties, and difficulties in meeting recommended noise, vibration and air quality standards with traffic travelling so close to adjoining footpaths and properties.

August – November 2000 – To get around these weaknesses, Transit took to the Environment Court revised proposals for a *“Reduced Upgrade”* through Paremata and Plimmerton. This was described as an *interim* measure pending construction of the TG Motorway which could be completed (with special legislation and funding) as early as 2005/6, but otherwise by 2014. The revised proposal made minor changes to the lane widths (to widen the kerbside buffer lanes as much as possible) and also included plans to restrict use of the clearway lanes to just *“high occupancy vehicles”* (vehicles with 2 or more passengers). These T2 lanes, they said, *“will result in a reduction of traffic flow in the kerbside lane (in the peak direction) during peak periods. During non-peak periods, the road through Mana would otherwise revert to one lane of traffic in each direction, with kerbside parking, as at present”*. Evidence given by Dave Rendall (Transit NZ) to the Court also included an assurance that: *“At no time under the reduced upgrade will four lanes operate along Mana Esplanade – I mean that at no time will both northbound and southbound clearways operate concurrently”*.

July 2001 – Transit’s proposals were eventually approved by the Environment Court, but subject to 27 pages of *“Restrictions, Terms and Conditions”* primarily aimed at providing greater protection for pedestrians, cyclists and residents accessing their properties while ensuring that noise, air quality and vibration impacts stayed within limits. Because of the sub-standard nature of the proposed road, the Court not only expected use of the kerbside (T2) lanes to be restricted to peak hours, but also directed Transit to take steps to *“encourage heavy commercial vehicles to use the central lane at all times of the day”* and to *“discourage all drivers from travelling in the kerbside lanes during off-peak hours”* – not just through Mana but for the whole stretch of road between the two roundabouts. In other words, it was expected that outside the clearway hours, the kerbside lanes would not only be used for parking (and cycling) but they would also act as a **buffer** between the traffic and properties.

November 2005 – The extra Paremata Bridge was completed and the clearways were opened. Transit initially denied any obligation to keep traffic out of the kerbside lanes outside clearway hours and the road effectively became a 4-lane highway. Subsequently the kerbside (T2) lanes were painted green and individual carparks were painted on the road in efforts to discourage use by traffic outside clearway times, but no measures which would enable enforcement have ever been introduced. Although warning letters were sent for some time to single occupant cars using the T2 lanes during clearway hours, none were ever fined.

November 2006 – A review of the operation of the clearways undertaken for Transit NZ was rejected because PCC and the community had not been consulted. PCC and Transit agreed to commission an independent review by Hyder Consulting Group.

May 2008 – A preliminary report from the independent review was sent to selected stakeholders who were invited to a closed meeting with PCC and Transit.

June 2008 – A final review report, incorporating recommendations from the closed meeting of “stakeholders” was produced. The report’s recommendations included: installation of traffic signals at the Marina View intersection; further steps to ensure trucks remained in the central lanes; changing the T2 lanes into clearways; and altering their operating hours in anticipation of higher traffic volumes at weekends and during peak periods. The report also recommended installation of a pedestrian safety fence around Goat Point to separate the footpath from the roadway.

October 2009 – A Notice of Requirement was submitted by NZTA proposing to (a) remove the T2 restrictions that applied to use of the kerbside lanes, (b) replace them with clearway restrictions during restricted peak hours on weekdays and weekends, and (c) install traffic signals at the Marina View intersection.

Feb 2010 – Submissions on the NOR were heard by David Forrest, Commissioner. His report recommending confirmation of the NOR subject to extensive conditions was released in April 2010. The conditions included use of temporary physical barriers and stronger signage to direct through traffic to use the centre lanes. NZTA accepted some (but not all) of the Commissioner’s report.

June 2010 – In the absence of clarity from NZTA and PCC, the Paremata Residents Association lodged an appeal with the Environment Court and asked the Court to set up a mediation process with NZTA. The Plimmerton Residents Association also registered as a party to the appeal.

November 2010 – Following mediation, a Consent Order to resolve the appeal was agreed upon. The Order provided for installation of lights and pedestrian crossings at the Marina View intersection and replacement of the T2 lanes with normal clearway lanes. Hours of operation remained the same with provision for them to be reviewed within 18 months and thereafter as required. The Commissioner’s condition requiring temporary barriers was dropped but more instructional electronic signage to encourage use of the centre lanes outside clearway hours was expected. A safety and operational audit was required within 18 months. (NZTA also advised that installation of the lights at Marina View and the changeover from T2 lanes to clearways could be as late as 1 March 2012.)

15 March 2011 – The Consent Order was signed by Environment Court Judge B P Dwyer.

1 March 2012 – The new lights at Marina View and the changeover from T2 lanes to clearways became operational. NZTA also installed 9 new CCTV cameras to monitor the Paremata to Plimmerton stretch of highway, together with a new variable message sign at Goat Point and a speed activated warning sign north of Marina View. Others signage changes required by the Consent Order were not implemented.

June 2014 – Reports were received from NZTA on a Safety and Operational Audit and review of Compliance with Clearways Conditions, carried out by MWH. The reports recommended:

- Minor changes to clearway times
- Continued monitoring of the clearway operation through the Wellington Traffic Ops Centre
- A further review of the clearways crash history in another 18 months or sooner
- Further education for northbound HCV drivers.

July 2014 – The Paremata Residents Association provided preliminary thoughts on the MWH recommendations at a meeting with NZTA and PCC, and confirmed these in November 2014 after receiving community feedback. The Association recommended:

- Endorsement of the changes to clearway times recommended by MWH but also introduction of a new clearway southbound on Saturdays between 10.30am (or 10.00am) and 1.30pm.
- As a minimum, additional and more effective signage (particularly the use of VMS signs) on use of the kerbside lanes outside clearway times.

- Clarification of the expectations on heavy vehicles to use the centre lanes.
- Extension of kerbside parking outside clearway times to discourage through traffic use of the kerbside lanes.
- Extension of the Paremata Station parking area and an extra exit from the southern end.
- Trialling of lights or pointsmen at the Paremata Roundabout to reduce southbound queues on SH1 in the early evenings.
- Urgent publicity and installation of signs to clarify use of lanes when exiting side streets onto the Esplanade.

April 2015 – Paremata Residents Association sent a paper to GWRC and NZTA formally asking for extension of the Railway Station commuter carpark and construction of an extra exit from the southern end of the carpark.

June 2015 – MWH produced an Addendum to their Safety and Operational Audit recommending:

- Consideration of the Association’s proposal for introduction of southbound clearways on Saturdays.
- Investigation of the Association’s proposal for “turn into nearest lane” signage in order to reduce confusion and reduce crash risk at intersections along Mana Esplanade.

November 2015 – NZTA advised that they intended to make the following changes to the clearway hours as from 1 February 2016:

- Northbound Saturday: Move both the start and finish times back by 1 hour, starting at 10.30am and ending at 1.30pm.
- Southbound Saturday: Introduce Clearway operating hours from 10.30am to 1.30pm.

December 2015 – Paremata Residents Association advised NZTA that they supported the proposed changes but asked what (if any) action was intended in relation to all the other recommendations from the Association and MWH. No response was ever received from NZTA.

October 2016 – NZTA agreed to present proposals for improving the Paremata Roundabout and railway station parking to a public meeting.

October 2017 – The promised public meeting was eventually held at Mana Cruising Club where the community were advised of NZTA’s proposal to widen the exit from the Station carpark and to install an extra lane on part of the roundabout. The Paremata Residents Association subsequently advised NZTA that the proposal would not address the problems and sought an opportunity to meet with their experts. PCC declined to get involved.

December 2017 – NZTA released a report by Opus on some of the suggestions that had been made at the public meeting. All the suggestions were rejected except one to remove some vegetation. NZTA advised that work on their proposed modification would proceed in early 2018. The work was completed in early March 2018.

5 July 2018 – NZTA met with PCC, GWRC and residents associations to report on the performance of their modifications at the Station exit and roundabout. Under pressure from the associations and PCC, NZTA agreed to approach another consultancy that had prior experience with metering at roundabouts for their advice. NZTA also produced data on traffic volumes using Mana Esplanade during 2017 for the meeting.

19 December 2018 – NZTA released a report by Stantec looking at the feasibility of metered signalling options at the Roundabout. Stantec’s proposal to install a single traffic metering signal on the south approach to the roundabout was endorsed at a meeting of representatives from NZTA, PCC, GWRC and residents associations on 24 January 2019. It was expected to be operational by the end of June 2019.

26 February 2019 – At a follow-up meeting to report on progress, concern was raised about growing traffic delays getting through Mana Esplanade. NZTA undertook to produce updated data on traffic volumes to enable clearway hours to be reviewed. This information was provided on 1 April 2019.