



**TO:
THE TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

**SUBMISSION:
THE INQUIRY INTO CONGESTION PRICING IN AUCKLAND
12 MAY 2021**

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SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO CONGESTION PRICING IN AUCKLAND 2021

Business North Harbour (BNH) representing the North Harbour Business Improvement District welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into Congestion Pricing in Auckland.

Introduction:

BNH is a significant commercial and industrial Business Improvement District (BID), representing over 4,500 commercial property owners and businesses within the North Harbour area. Collectively they employ over 35,000 Auckland residents and ratepayers.

The organisation is located within the Upper Harbour Local Board area, which is expected to be the fastest growing area in the country over the next ten years, in both absolute and percentage population terms,¹ which brings both challenges and opportunities to the North Harbour business district.

BNH represents and works with a wide range of businesses comprising of a mix of sole traders, Small Medium Enterprises (SME), through to multi-national organisations, representing sectors such as ICT, business services, specialist manufacturing, light – medium warehousing, logistics, retail, and hospitality. In addition, we have key educational institutions within or on our boundary, including Massey University Albany and AUT Millennium, along with a variety of primary and secondary schools including Rangitoto College, the largest secondary school in New Zealand. All are located within an industrial estate which is on average less than 20 years old.

Background:

Of critical importance to the Association and its members are access to and transport through our business precinct, with the efficiency and effectiveness of the arterial roads (and their connections to motorways) being of paramount importance. Also of great importance is that the Precinct must be well served by public transport.

Business North Harbour is a strong advocate of sustainability. Encouraging its members to live and work locally, thereby reducing emissions, reducing stress, and improving time efficiency, which in return enhances a better quality of life.

The latest Auckland Transport statistics have shown that bus patronage is dramatically down post COVID. The Bus services totalled 40.9 million passenger boardings for the 12-months to March 2021, -43.8% on the previous year. Patronage for March 2021 was 4.5 million, -10.2% on March 2020.²

1. Auckland Council 10-year Budget 2018-28, Supporting Information, Section 6: Local Board Information, 6.17 UHLB
2. Auckland Transport Business Report - April 2021

Our feedback will cover:

- (1) Summary of Members' Feedback
- (2) Our Priorities
- (3) Conclusion
- (4) Appendix 1 – Survey Feedback on the Inquiry Into Congestion Pricing in Auckland

(1) Summary of Members' Feedback

425 members responded to the BNH survey. Please see Appendix 1 for the summary and individual responses.

- 83% of BNH members oppose the proposal to implement congestion charging.
- 86% oppose the proposed area for congestion charging.
- 87% oppose the proposed pricing scheme.

Our members view implementing congestion charging as a regression to the live and work local philosophy, which reduces the communities' carbon footprint. Therefore, the only area seen as a viable option for congestion charging would be the citycentre, to discourage commuters from travelling greater distances from their home to work.

Before implementing congestion charging within Auckland our members raised two critical points that Auckland Transport must deliver on:

1. Provide a more efficient and viable public transport system, including rapid rail, ferry, and increased bus services (including feeder services).
2. Transparency and ring-fencing regarding where and what the additional income would be used for.

BNH believes that further research needs to be conducted to ascertain whether there needs to be an increased differentiation between peak and off-peak prices.

We also believe that due consideration be given to reducing charging for public transport, to encourage commuters to make permanent behavioural change.

In addition, we believe that more work needs to be undertaken to better understand what will be required to discourage drivers from engaging in the practice of rat running, should congestion charging be introduced.

(2) Our Priorities

Congestion Charging **should not** be implemented on the North Shore as living and working locally needs to be encouraged, and charging people to make local journeys would be hugely counter-productive.

AT must provide the necessary solutions prior to enforcing any change, as many local residential areas do not have any public transport options. Therefore, AT must increase both local services and inter-regional routes.

With Auckland rapidly expanding, Auckland Transport must invest in the relevant technology and advanced public transport services, including a rapid rail, connecting not only the Auckland regions, but running from north to south of the city in its entirety.

The current ferry service must be reviewed to provide more options covering a larger area. This could initially run from Gulf Harbour to the Auckland viaduct, with stops at Browns Bay, Takapuna, and Devonport, with further increase as other opportunities are identified.

(3) Conclusion

Business North Harbour **opposes** the planned congestion charging, especially within the current environment, which sees insufficient services being provided, COVID-19 discouraging the use of public transport and an increased number of people working from home.

Due to COVID public transportation has been viewed as 'moving incubators', therefore Auckland Transport must engage in a positive public awareness campaign if patronage is to return to anywhere resembling pre-COVID levels.

Once AT have increased the services as indicated in 'our priorities' we recommend the congestion charging be implemented in the Central Business District only.

The use of any additional income must be transparent, and project specific to the area, for example, expediting the Second Waitemata Harbour crossing. This may then result in the public being less opposed to the increased charges.

Finally, as we enter another very uncertain year, especially for small and medium sized businesses, we ask the Council to carefully consider its needs in its approach to implementing an additional cost, and provide more focus on growing the economy and supporting local transport initiatives.

Should there be any questions or other matters arising from this Submission, we would be pleased to respond to those.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah de Zwart
Transport Manager

(4) Appendix 1

Survey Feedback on the Inquiry into Congestion Pricing in Auckland

Q 1. Do you support the proposal to implement congestion charges?

<u>Choices</u>	<u>Response percent</u>	<u>Response count</u>
Yes	12.47%	53
No	83.29%	354
Don't know	0.47%	2
Other	3.76%	16

Individual Responses (other)

- Not sure - need more info on the implications to lower socio-economic people. Also, what if I'm just driving locally within one of the particular areas? I don't want to have to read 10 documents to find the answer to that
- Congestion charging is a tax wage and salary workers on lower incomes, with poor access to public transport, and/or who cannot afford to live close to their work and/or education provider.
- Are there increased public transport service to help get kids to school at peak times? Or is this more revenue grabbing than trying to reduce carbon emissions/traffic
- public transport needs to improve before congestion charges for car driving come in
- There's no alternative route
- FUCK NO
- I support it for the city centre, as there are ample public transport options to and within the CBD. But I do not support it's use in the rest of the city.
- In the CBD but not elsewhere
- You will create a problem by making the SH20 Route more connected than the bridge route
- They are directly responsible for the wilful & deliberate cause & have no idea of improving the flow, their incompetence & arrogance knows no bounds
- Yes, with potential exemption for those that have no alternative. If there is a PT option or the reason for having a vehicle is work use then no exemption.
- The concept is understandable, however if no alternatives are provided, it is just another tax
- People need to get to the other side of the Harbour - e.g. Albany to Penrose. Should be no congestion charge
- Devil in the detail which I havent seen, given I live in Vic Park and own business in Albany clearly would need to see how this would apply and WHAT the money raised would be spent on before deciding.
- Central CBD Only.

Q 2. Do you agree with the proposed area covered by the congestion charges?

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Yes	9.88%	42
No	85.65%	364
Don't know	2.12%	9
Other	2.35%	10

Individual Responses (other)

- Central Auckland makes sense, the majority of the traffic on the shore at peak is people coming and going from over the bridge so it seems unhelpful to charge on the north as well shore
- Same reason as above and no proper bus system
- Lake Road must be exempt
- The issue is lack of frequent public transport.
- FUCK NO
- Whole of Auckland
- You will create a problem by making the SH20 Route more connected than the bridge route
- I do not accept that the North Shore is included as no rail service is offered, and the second crossing should have happened years ago, why should they pay for lack of council foresight
- as above
- Downtown Auckland only

Q 3. Do you agree with the pricing scheme?

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Yes	8.47%	36
No	86.59%	368
Don't know	2.59%	11
Other	2.35%	10

Individual Responses (other)

- It's fine with me but I'm in a high paying job. What about lower socio-economic people
- No I don't agree with you dumb pricing scheme.. The Fucking buses are the worst polluting vehicles in the city.
- Yes, but you should have more differentiation between peak and off peak. Before 7am should be \$0 for example. 8-9am \$5
- FUCK NO
- Charges will take people off the roads. This will only work if you provide additional parking and buses to move the people now out of cars. this is especially so on the northern express route. Even at Albany the car park is full at 8am
- Public transport needs to be free or \$2 during peak hours
- There are no alternatives for travelling direct from west to south of manukau, or from north of the city to south of the city - this is a problem
- \$15 Dollars more acceptable

- Rate proposed is inflated as a tax, make it comparable to a bus or train fare
- Needs a fee higher than PT charges

Please indicate how important the following are to you:

Q 4. Environment and climate change policies

Higher standards for fuel emissions to reduce the number of cars on our roads which emit higher emissions.

<u>Choices</u>	<u>Response percent</u>	<u>Response count</u>
Less important (-1)	29.18%	124
Moderately important (0)	44.47%	189
More important (1)	26.35%	112

Q 5. Incentives to promote electric vehicle ownership.

<u>Choices</u>	<u>Response percent</u>	<u>Response count</u>
Less important (-1)	31.06%	132
Moderately important (0)	37.18%	158
More important (1)	31.76%	135

Q 6. Removal of the Fringe Benefit Tax for employers who subsidise public transport for their employees.

<u>Choices</u>	<u>Response percent</u>	<u>Response count</u>
Less important (-1)	41.41%	176
Moderately important (0)	32.00%	136
More important (1)	26.59%	113