



28 April 2023

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Chief Executive  
Auckland Transport

## **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDs)s COLLECTIVE SUBMISSION TO AUCKLAND TRANSPORT**

### **Importance of Business Improvement District (BID) Liaison Positions**

We are a collective of 45 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) from across Auckland who have come together to provide this feedback to Auckland Transport (AT).

#### **Background**

- Up to 2015, the BIDS and residents' associations used to have a liaison person, who was 'geographically' focussed and would provide information on upcoming projects etc and would assist in navigating the organisation. This process worked very well.
- From 2015 there was a team from AT that supported local boards but not BIDS. This absolutely did not work, and it was during that time that the BIDs' relationship with AT deteriorated significantly. BIDs were largely excluded as stakeholders and all communications were supposed to be via local boards. This whole process did not function as intended and varied across the region as some local boards did not keep their BIDs duly informed and the BIDs had little or no input into AT.
- In 2017 and 2018 as frustration with the process described above increased across the BIDs, meetings were held between BID representatives and the CEOs of the Council CCOs including Stephen Town, Shane Ellison, and Nick Hill.
- In June 2018 the BID representatives met with Wally Thomas to discuss key issues, asking for the BID Liaison roles to be re-introduced.
- In 2020 BIDs participated in the CCO review which saw a great deal of negative feedback given regarding AT as the relationship with BIDs was still very poor.
- Around the same time AT appointed Stephen Rainbow and attached is his report and recommendations to the AT board (AT and its relationship with BIDS).
- We believe that the Auckland Transport BID Liaison team as it has grown under Stephen, has improved our relationships with AT tremendously. We have found the BID Liaison personnel to be immensely helpful, not only in navigating the organisation, but also in providing early information regarding processes or intended projects, which has certainly taken the 'sting' out of some of the issues by providing AT with some useful local community feedback.
- Collectively, we do not believe that we can support AT or our members as effectively and efficiently moving forwards without this team, the individuals within it and their positive and successful relationships with the BIDs who are key stakeholders of AT.

## **Feedback**

As a collective of BIDs, we acknowledge the difficult situation that Auckland Transport (AT) finds itself in with the need to reduce operating costs because of the significant budget shortfall of \$295 million projected in the Auckland Council Annual Budget 2023/2024.

We collectively ask that AT DOES NOT disestablish the BID Relationship Management / BID Liaison positions which we believe have proven to be very successful since their introduction.

Maintaining these positions is vital as they support a mutually beneficial relationship between AT and the current 50 BIDs across the City for the following reasons:

- (1) BIDs are important key stakeholders
- (2) The cost benefits from involving BIDs early in the decision-making process
- (3) BIDs provide a communications and engagement platform for AT for the dissemination and receipt of information important to business
- (4) The correlation between transport, business, and economic development
- (5) BID/AT Liaison successes.

### **(1) BIDs are important key stakeholders**

The current BIDs are spread across the Auckland region and are critical stakeholders for AT as they represent 25,000+ businesses whose employees need to travel via some mode of transport to access their place of work.

Additionally, the BIDs have access to all these businesses and their employees, enabling important local community feedback to be sought and provided to AT on any number of large scale or smaller projects. This results in greater engagement and transparency in the process for any proposed projects shared with the BIDs.

### **(2) The cost benefits from involving BIDs early in the decision-making process**

Involving BIDs in discussions regarding proposed projects, particularly large-scale projects such as the recent major changes on Karangahape Road, is vital from a cost benefit perspective. Any early engagement with the BIDs ensures that feedback from the local business community regarding the practicalities and effects of any project is factored into conversations from the outset. This enables time and money to be saved by supporting the cost saving mantra of 'do it once – do it right'.

### **(3) BIDs provide a communications and engagement platform for AT for the dissemination and receipt of information important to business**

Providing a communications platform for AT to disseminate and receive information is a critical aspect of these BID Liaison positions. This not only helps to provide the BIDs and their members with the necessary information upon which to base their fully informed feedback, but as noted above, it also supports AT to engage more effectively with the local business community, thus offering a more transparent process around any project consultation.

#### **(4) The correlation between transport, business, and economic development**

Local and regional economic development is vitally important to Auckland, particularly following the well-documented economic challenges that the city and businesses have faced during and post the pandemic. There is an obvious correlation between transport, business, and economic development. Transport is a vital link - bringing patrons to businesses and other economic activities such as events, then moving some of the same patrons from one economic activity to another.

This is a win-win situation as the resulting financial growth then provides more opportunities for an increase in business and other economic activities, which is a win for business and the development of Auckland. These opportunities, in turn, attract more patrons on AT services, providing increased income and so the cycle continues to everyone's benefit!

#### **(5) BID/AT Liaison successes**

We have a wide variety of examples of where the AT BID relationship managers have made a difference. Here are three instances that we want to share:

In Orewa, Alex Felton-Farr has ensured communications to affected residents and businesses were in place when plans were put in place to extend the cobblestone streetscape south of the town centre. The businesses/residents were significantly impacted by these works for a long period of time. Alex engaged the project manager with the affected businesses / residents and organised a face-to-face meeting to discuss issues and find some resolutions.

When the impact of Onehunga train line closure was being worked through, Michael Richardson organised a meeting between AT, Onehunga Business Association and Dress-Smart where the AT better understood the needs of the local retailers. This has resulted in much better communication and engagement and impacts for the businesses regarding any line closures.

Business Manukau recently worked with Michael on a submission on the Auckland to Botany project. Michael gave us amazing insight to the project and background on when they agreed to the proposed route. Our submission was a lot more balanced because of his help.

In 2022, Manurewa worked with Kenneth to mediate a negotiation with Auckland Transport and Network Visuals in relation to Town Centre flags for Manurewa and Clendon. Kenneth was able to filter and summarise the key points and between the parties and recommend a solution.

Michael helped Ellerslie escalate a dangerous damaged bollard onto the fix schedule. This bollard had been reported previously but no action was taken until Michael was involved.

## **Conclusions**

As a collective of BIDs, we acknowledge that AT needs to carefully consider the decisions being made to make the operational savings required of the organisation, but we ask that the disestablishment of the BID Relationship Management / BID Liaison positions are not deemed necessary to achieve the requisite savings target.

We fundamentally believe that for the reasons identified above, maintaining these positions will provide greater financial and other non-financial benefits to AT versus the upfront spend invested into these positions.

Yours sincerely,



Business Associations of: •Avondale • Birkenhead • Browns Bay •  
Business Manukau • Business North Harbour • Business East Tamaki •  
Central Park Henderson • Clendon • Devonport • Dominion Road •  
Ellerslie Village • Glen Eden Village • Glen Innes • Heart of the City •  
Howick Village • Karangahape Road • Mahurangi • Mangere Bridge •  
Mangere Town Centre • Manurewa • Milford • Mount Eden • New Lynn •  
Newmarket • Northcote • Onehunga • Orewa Beach • Otahuhu • Otara •  
Panmure • Papakura • Papatoetoe • Parnell • Ponsonby • Pukekohe •  
Remuera • Rosebank • South Harbour • St Heliers • Takapuna • The  
Fringe District • Toray • Uptown • Waiuku • Wiri

c.c. Mayor Wayne Brown, Deputy Mayor Desley Simpson, Councillor John Watson, Minister of Transport Michael Wood