



**Transit New Zealand
Wellington Regional Office**

**MEDIA RELEASE
5 DECEMBER 2006**

Abel Smith Street – permanent intersection closure

Transit New Zealand today advised that there will be no vehicle access into Abel Smith Street from Willis Street effective from 10am Monday 11 December 2006.

This section of Abel Smith Street, between Willis and Victoria Streets is being permanently closed at the Willis Street end in preparation for the opening of the new northbound route of the Inner City Bypass later this month.

“Works to convert Abel Smith Street into the planned cul-de-sac, with access from Victoria Street, as part of the Bypass works, will commence on Monday morning,” said Transit NZ Project Manager Jonnette Adams.

“This section of Abel Smith Street will be open to pedestrians and cyclists, however, vehicles will need to use Ghuznee Street to get to Victoria Street and beyond,” she said. “This is a short term inconvenience for motorists between Monday and the end of January, when we will be able to permanently reverse the direction of Vivian Street between Willis and Victoria Streets.”

Abel Smith Street is being closed at Willis Street to reduce the number of streets intersecting at this point on Willis Street. The closure will assist in traffic flows along both Willis Street and the new Bypass.

Works on Abel Smith Street include a pocket park, incorporating a raised brick-paved area with bench seats, lights and plant boxes including the planting of four mature *Kunzea ericoides* (Kanuka) trees and nearly 100 *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* (maidenhair vine) as ground cover.

ENDS

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About the Wellington Inner City Bypass

- The Wellington Inner City Bypass will provide a safer, more efficient route between the southern and eastern suburbs and the northern gateway to Wellington. It will re-route cross-city traffic away from Ghuznee Street and the heart of the inner city and Cuba Street area.
- The northbound section is a one-way, two-lane road at ground level, with dedicated turning lanes and a 50km/h speed limit (until just past the Willis Street intersection, heading north, where the speed limit will increase to 80km/h and the road will be gradually lowered beneath Vivian Street). Existing roads will be altered and redefined, and 700 metres of new road will be constructed along with 1080 metres of new footpath and cycleway.
- A total of 23 heritage buildings are to be preserved as part of the project at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million. Of these, five will remain in place and 18 relocated and restored, with one taken down and reconstructed using materials still in good condition.
- Buildings of similar age and style will be kept together, preserved and restored with their original orientation and access maintained wherever possible. A historic precinct will be created adjoining Footscray Avenue for those we have to move.
- Transit will install three new sets of traffic signals, build a new motorway on-ramp at Willis/Abel Smith Streets and move the current motorway off-ramp from Ghuznee Street to Vivian Street. A new link between Cuba Street and Willis Street will also be created.
- Wellington City Council's Te Aro Stormwater main will start at the Taranaki St end of Arthur St, progress along the northern side of Arthur St, across Cuba St and along the route of the bypass until Willis Street, where the main has been laid up Palmer Street to Te Aro Park.
- Construction of the bypass is expected to be completed mid 2007.



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SH1 Inner City Bypass northbound route opens

After two years of construction, the northbound route of the new SH1 Wellington Inner City Bypass will open at 6am on Thursday 28 December 2006.

“The road will be opened using a ‘rolling’ process – the intersections will be opened one after the other working back from Willis Street, taking approximately 5-10 minutes,” said Transit NZ Project Manager Jonnette Adams.

“At this time, the traffic signals will be phased to allow public to drive on the new route for the first time, including going through the 150 metre long trough structure,” she said.

The new road layout will be easy to follow but motorists should take care as there are new traffic signals at the Cuba, Victoria and Willis Street intersections. New signs and road markings will be in place to guide them along the new route.

The cross streets of Buckle, Cuba, Victoria and Willis Streets are all affected by the new SH1 Inner City Bypass route.

New road layouts will be implemented in each of these streets. The new Bypass road name between Cuba Street and Willis Street is Karo Drive.

Please see attached text for details at each intersection.

ENDS

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New northbound route for through traffic

The new northbound route of the SH1 Wellington Inner City Bypass will open at 6am on Thursday 28th December 2006.

Prior to the opening, temporary signage will be used to inform road users of the changes. The new road layout will be easy to follow but please take care as there will be new traffic signals at the Cuba, Victoria, and Willis Street intersections. New signs and road markings will be in place to guide you along the new route.

Buckle Street/Taranaki Street intersection

You may already have noticed some differences on Buckle Street. There are four lanes on Buckle Street at the Taranaki Street intersection – one each side dedicated for left or right turns onto Taranaki Street and the two middle lanes to take traffic straight across the intersection onto the widened Arthur Street. Arthur Street businesses will be accessed via their own service lane, adjacent to the straight through lanes.

Arthur Street/Cuba Street intersection

There are two lanes at the Cuba Street intersection and traffic may turn left or right onto Cuba Street at the intersection. The traffic signals here will incorporate a separate phase for cyclists to cross diagonally from the cycleway on the northern side of Arthur Street to that on the southern side of Karo Drive.

Karo Drive/Victoria Street intersection

Between Cuba Street and Victoria Street, Karo Drive will increase to four lanes. One will be a dedicated free left-turn, the two centre lanes will be for traffic moving straight ahead and the right-hand lane will also go straight across Willis Street but will be for traffic intending to turn right onto Willis Street at the next intersection.

Karo Drive/Willis Street

There will be three lanes at the intersection with Willis Street. The right-hand lane will be for traffic turning onto Willis Street. The left-hand lane will be for traffic either turning left up Abel Smith Street or going straight onto the motorway on-ramp north. The centre lane is for straight ahead to the motorway on-ramps only.

Cross city traffic – take care at the new intersections

Cross city traffic will encounter new intersections on Cuba, Victoria and Willis/Abel Smith Streets. There are also changes to the existing Taranaki Street intersection. All motorists, pedestrians and cyclists who currently use these existing roads may wish to familiarise themselves with the new road layout at each intersection and to plan their future route once the northbound lanes are open.

Taranaki Street/Arthur Street intersection

Traffic traveling towards the city on Taranaki Street will be able to either turn left onto Arthur Street or continue straight on towards the harbour and city. For traffic heading from the city there will be three lanes at this intersection. The left-hand lane will be for traffic traveling straight ahead towards the southern suburbs, and the centre and right-hand lanes will be for traffic turning onto the widened Arthur Street.

Cuba Street/Karo Drive intersection

Upper Cuba Street remains a tow-way inner city street. Traffic from the Webb Street end will be able to either continue along Cuba Street towards the city or turn left onto Karo Drive. Traffic traveling from the city will either continue towards Webb Street or turn right onto Karo Drive.

Victoria Street/Karo Drive intersection

Victoria Street will be widened to create an additional right-hand lane before the Abel Smith Street intersection. The right-hand lane will be for traffic turning onto Karo Drive, which will merge into either the right-hand lane for turning onto Willis Street or the centre lane for continuing onto the motorway on-ramp. The centre lane will be for traffic either turning right onto Karo Drive or continuing on Victoria Street. The left-hand lane will be for traffic continuing on Victoria Street.

Abel Smith Street/ Karo Drive intersection

One of the more significant changes for the inner city streets will be the new pocket park created on the one-way section of Abel Smith Street between Willis Street and Victoria Street.

Once Karo Drive opens this section of Abel Smith Street will become a cul-de-sac entered from Victoria Street, however, pedestrians and cyclists will still be able to walk through from Willis Street.

This means that those who currently use this road as a thoroughfare will need to continue along Willis Street, turn right onto Ghuznee Street until Vivian Street changes are complete (at the end of January 2007), right again onto Victoria Street, along to its intersection with Abel Smith Street and continue their journey as normal.

Once the new southbound section of the bypass is open, these motorists will be able to use Vivian Street instead of Ghuznee Street, before turning onto Victoria Street.

Willis Street/Karo Drive intersection

Willis Street will have three lanes at the new intersection. The left-turn lane will be for traffic either turning left up Abel Smith Street (towards The Terrace) or onto the new motorway on-ramp to travel north. The centre lane will be for turning north onto the new motorway on-ramp or continuing on Willis Street and the right-hand lane will be for continuing on Willis Street only.



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Walk the Bypass

Members of the public who have been wondering what has been happening inside the construction site for the past two years will have an opportunity to Walk the Bypass at public open days planned for the weekend of 16 and 17 December. being run by local Wellington Rotary Clubs.

The site will be open between 10am and 3pm, giving members of the public a once in a lifetime opportunity to walk through the new trough structure which forms part of the new northbound route of the SH1 Wellington Inner City Bypass. Public can enter from Cuba, Victoria and Willis Streets.

"The new heritage precinct, where many of the restored buildings now sit, will also be open for the first time," said Transit NZ Project Manager Jonnette Adams.

"Minister of Transport Hon Annette King and Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast will unveil the new road signs for both the precinct and the new Bypass road at 1.00pm on Saturday 16 December at the Cuba Street end," she said.

Local Wellington Rotary Clubs have combined to organise food and drink stalls on-site with entry being by gold coin donation. All proceeds will go to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.

The northbound route will be opened to traffic on Thursday 28th December 2006.

www.wicb.co.nz

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Wellington Inner City Bypass Frequently asked questions December 2006

The following questions are often asked by the community about the bypass. If you require any further information, please contact the Inner City Bypass office - telephone 04 803 4140, email innercity.bypass@transit.govt.nz, webpage www.wicb.co.nz, or drop in and see us at 81 Abel Smith Street, Wellington.

Q Isn't the bypass really just a motorway through the middle of the city?

A The bypass isn't a motorway - it mostly uses existing streets and requires just 700 metres of new road. It will be 50km/h, two lanes wide, at ground level and with intersections (except for the approach to the Terrace Tunnel northbound where it is 80km/h and is gradually lowered beneath Vivian Street). The current bypass design is very different to the original 1960s motorway scheme.



Q Won't the bypass just encourage more people to use the roads, creating more traffic?

A There is a misconception that the bypass will markedly increase the number of vehicles travelling through Te Aro.

Te Aro already contains two pairs of one-way, two lane arterial roads traversing Ghuznee Street, Vivian Street and Taranaki Street. Traffic will simply be rerouted on to a more direct pair of streets, and only 700 metres of new road will be built.

Southbound motorists will use the length of Vivian Street instead of zigzagging through the city. Northbound motorists will no longer crisscross Taranaki and Vivian Streets. Instead, they will travel up Buckle and Arthur Streets and use the new 700m extension from the end of Arthur Street to the Terrace Tunnel.

It's also important to note that the number of vehicles travelling through the area is constrained. This is due to capacity restrictions around the central business district, and at The Terrace and Mount Victoria tunnels - the Mount Victoria Tunnel is only two lanes wide, and the Terrace Tunnel only three lanes wide. This will still be the case.



Q When will it be built?

A Construction began in January 2005 by Fulton Hogan and is expected to be completed mid 2007.

Q. Is the Inner City Bypass a long-term transport solution for Wellington City traffic needs?

A We recognise that the Inner City Bypass is not the ultimate solution to Wellington's traffic problems. However we expect it to be a long-term solution, because it is a critical part of the balanced overall strategy (*Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy*) that integrates public transport, road and cycling needs.

As part of this overall strategy we expect this project to have a very long life span - as much as 20 years in our cost estimates.



Q Were the community and stakeholders consulted?

A Absolutely. A survey in 2001 showed the majority of Wellingtonians and those who live in the greater Wellington region support it. Over the years, more than 34 different routes have been considered by many people with the present route was agreed to be the best solution.

In many cases, people who are opposed to the bypass have been unclear on the facts or have been misinformed, particularly regarding the benefits about opening up pedestrian-friendly access in the Cuba/Te Aro areas, easing of traffic congestion, funding for the project, and most significantly, the restoration of heritage buildings in the Te Aro area.

Transit is committed to open consultation with affected and interested people for all proposed state highway projects.

Following the decision in 1994 to look at medium-term options for the Inner City Bypass, Transit developed and implemented a consultation strategy to ensure people were informed of the project and provided with opportunities to discuss their interests and concerns. This consultation assisted Transit during the development of the Bypass and helped maximise public benefits from it.

Transit also carried out extensive consultation with people directly affected by the Bypass as part of the assessment of environmental effects from 1994-1996. The general public, tenants, neighbourhood groups, tangata whenua, environmental interest groups, cycle groups, schools, businesses and the NZ Historic Places Trust were included in this consultation. Brochures were distributed to the ratepayers in Te Aro and made available to other interested groups. Public meetings, open houses and other forums took place to give people the opportunity to ask questions about the project. Consequently, Transit has progressively modified the bypass route to take into consideration the concerns expressed.

Since the Environment Court hearing in 1999, Transit has continued to work with interested and affected parties and is continuing to do so throughout the development and construction of the project.

Q What will happen to Ghuznee Street?

A Ghuznee Street will no longer be a main arterial route through the city. It's currently overloaded, narrow and used by increasing numbers of pedestrians.

Ghuznee Street will return to being a two-way city street, meaning it will be significantly less congested. This will help free up traffic in the inner city and ease pedestrian routes.

Q Won't the Bypass destroy an important heritage area of the city?

A Quite the opposite. The bypass will help to preserve the important heritage area of the city. All the heritage houses in the path of the bypass will be restored. Further information on these houses and what's happening to them is available on the Transit website – www.wicb.co.nz

Q What will happen to the heritage buildings once they're restored?

A Currently, the heritage buildings being restored along the route are owned by the Crown (managed by Transit) and the Wellington City Council.

Full restoration work will be carried out on the exteriors of these houses to bring them back to their original condition as much as possible. The interiors will be prepared for occupation by future owners to a level that will enable new owners to complete internal work to their own tastes.

Transit and Wellington City Council have not yet decided on the future use of the buildings but they are likely to be sold or leased.



Q What impact will it have on local schools?

A There are four schools in the vicinity of the project: Moriah School, Mount Cook School, Te Aro School and Te Aro Preschool. Access and safety will either not be affected, or in some cases will be improved.

None of these schools directly front the bypass route and Transit has talked with each to hear their feedback and concerns.

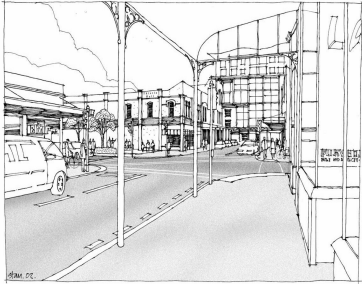
The route includes pedestrian controlled intersections to help children cross the Bypass. To further enhance safety the speed limit is 50km/h and includes a new cycleway and footpath.

Q Why do we need the bypass?

A There are many reasons, including that:

- It will be a safer and more efficient way to get around and across town
- There will be fewer delays to people travelling across and through the city
- It will facilitate and support better public transport routes
- It will provide pedestrians and cyclists with a better route
- It will help preserve the heritage of the area

"The worth of the project is not to be measured just in one benefit (such as time savings). It is made up of a combination of inter-related benefits ranging from relief of traffic congestion in the Terrace Tunnel, to better pedestrian environment in Ghuznee Street and elsewhere, to preservation of heritage buildings, and to the reduction of traffic flow along the waterfront. The bypass proposal therefore need to be regarded as part of the overall traffic network providing benefits throughout rather than focusing on localised 'benefits' or perceived disadvantages to Te Aro." Environment Court Decision September 1998.

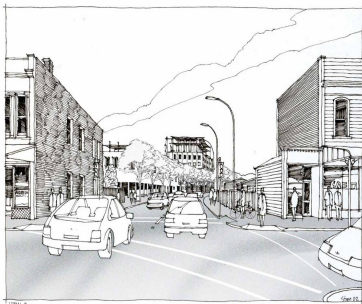


Q Will there be disruption to the community or motorists during construction?

A As with any construction project, there are likely to be some temporary effects on the neighbouring areas during construction, including noise and dust. Transit has placed rigorous conditions on the contractors building the bypass to ensure these effects are minimised.

Q How many vehicles will use it?

A About 35,000 individual motorists, taxi, truck and public passenger transport drivers each day use this main arterial route – just under 18,000 vehicles per day in each direction.



Q How much noise will the bypass generate?

A Transit will be restricting noise levels to keep them to a minimum on the new stretch of road. This will be achieved with quieter road surfacing the length of the new road, extensive planting and with new specifically designed fences installed between the new road and the new Tonks Grove.

The road level will also be lowered between the Terrace Tunnel and Willis Street, and an acoustic barrier constructed. This will absorb a lot of the noise having a significant impact on reducing potential noise through this area.



Q. What about air pollution?

The bypass is forecast to reduce carbon monoxide levels in the Te Aro area by reducing the number of turns state highway traffic must undertake to travel the road. Carbon monoxide levels are predicted to be well below Ministry for the Environment guidelines. Greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide, are also forecast to decrease.

Q How will it affect public transport?

A The bypass will provide the opportunity for public transport to be improved in a number of ways. It will:

- Move commuter traffic away from the inner city, giving buses more space and less traffic to contend with
- Reduce public transport delays, particularly along Taranaki and Ghuznee Streets which will no longer be main arterial roads

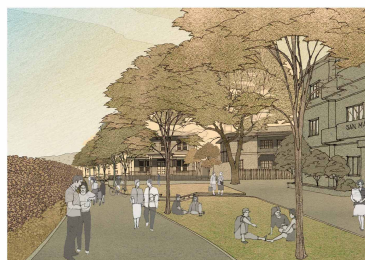
The Bypass will also relieve pressure in a number of other areas, allowing the development of other public transport schemes as detailed in the Wellington Regional Council Land Transport Strategy. These include:

- Enhanced traffic management to improve pedestrian and vehicle flows
- Improved bus priority through CBD traffic
- Enhanced bus/rail interchange
- Improved pedestrian links to the CBD

And for those who like to cycle or walk around town or to work, it will provide us with a shared pedestrian/cycle pathway the length of the new route.

Q Will there be any parking along the new northbound section of the bypass route?

A No, there will be no parking on the new northbound section of the bypass route.



Q What is happening to parking on Vivian Street?

A From Cuba Street to Kent and Cambridge Terrace, there will be no parking on the south side of Vivian Street. All existing parking on the north side will remain. From Willis Street to Cuba Street, there will be no parking on the north side of Vivian Street, but some additional parking will be added to the South side.

Q What is happening to parking on Ghuznee Street?

A Ghuznee Street is being returned to a two way inner city street with additional parking, loading zones, taxi and bus stops all being added. The existing clearways will be removed.



Q What is happening to parking on Arthur Street?

A Currently there is very little parking available on Arthur Street. A new 'slip lane' will be created from the old Arthur Street, and new parking spaces will be provided on the south side between the various access ways, from (approximately) 11 Arthur Street, westward.

OVERVIEW OF THE INNER CITY BYPASS

The start of work on the Wellington Inner City Bypass was seen as something of a milestone for the city, when you consider there had been 34 different routes proposed during the past 40 years.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with affected and interested people including: the general public, tenants, neighbourhood groups, tangata whenua, environmental interest groups, cycle groups, schools, businesses and the Historic Places Trust.

The bypass project is now well underway and what Transit are building is a two-laned, 50km/h bypass road for northbound traffic, from the end of Buckle Street, sweeping along the line of Arthur Street and Tonks Avenue, across Cuba Street and Victoria Street, and then curving across Willis Street. From here, the new bypass road moves down through cut slopes into a concrete trough that takes traffic beneath upper Vivian Street. The trough structure opens out into the approach leading to the Terrace Tunnel.

The Bypass project is forecasted to cost \$40 million and is due for completion in mid-2007.

Site security was initially a major concern due to the threat of sabotage from a group of vocal activists. Ten protestors were arrested when they chained themselves to the former Correspondence School building prior to its demolition in January 2005. Security guards are on the bypass site 24-hours a day to ensure there are no more security threats.

A visitor's centre was established early in the project for the use of individuals, school groups, stakeholders, local residents association and any interested party, to provide information about the construction and history of the bypass project. This has been used extensively and has proved popular with those who have visited.

Major components of the project

- ***Trough structure***

A trough structure, up to eight metres deep and 150 metres long, south of the Terrace Tunnel has been built to take northbound traffic under Vivian Street. Transit New Zealand sub-contracted Fulton Hogan Civil for this job. The two-laned, 50km/h road, with controlled intersections, is at street level until the Willis Street intersection. From there, motorists gradually travel downhill, through the trench structure, and uphill into the Terrace Tunnel.

The contractors have been working on the trench and bridge structures and the soil-nailed slopes at either end for the past 2 years. A total of 550 tonne of reinforcing steel and 5000 cubic metres of concrete was needed for the trough. Over 15,000 soil nails will be used to stabilise the slopes of the trench. This element of the project is priced at \$11 million.

- ***Stormwater main***

The stormwater project is priced at \$7million and is a major component of the bypass project.

The laying of a 2.55 metre diameter stormwater main has been completed, starting in Arthur Street. An 130-year-old brick culvert has been replaced with 1.2 metre diameter pipers in the Abel Smith/Willis streets area.

About 180 of the larger pipe sections, each weighing 8 tonne, have been laid along the bypass alignment from Taranaki Street to Willis Street. A further 135 pipe sections have been laid up a tight residential street and into Aro Valley.

Wellington City Council commissioned the work to coincide with the bypass construction in order to reduce disruption to the public. It is part of an ongoing expansion and upgrade of the stormwater system that drains rainwater from the surrounding inner suburbs.

- ***Relocation and demolition***

Demolition of 18 non-heritage buildings was completed last year and six were sold and removed by relocation firms. Two large heritage houses – a former boarding house in Vivian Street and a former obstetrics hospital in Willis Street – were successfully shifted in February and March 2005.

A row of shops, including a once-popular meeting spot for protestors – Bar Bodega – has been relocated 25 metres north on Willis Street. Building contractors will complete restoration work in the next few weeks.

The completion of demolition allowed for the preparation of more complex shifts in the historic Tonks Avenue. Tonks Avenue was one of Wellington's earliest colonial lanes. The Tonks family were big employers in the 1850s. Three of the pre-1900 workers' cottages and two large houses built by the Tonks are among the 18 heritage buildings being relocated and restored. The new Tonks Avenue will include the heritage butcher's shop and the little Freedom bookshop. Two other shops from across Cuba Street are also to be relocated to this cluster on the western side of the road. A further building, 270 Cuba Street, was in such poor condition that it could not be relocated. Reputedly, the original Tonks' family homestead it has been completely rebuilt to the original design.

Relocation of the Tonks heritage buildings started in July 2005. The Historic Places Trust, and many other interested stakeholders, considered that the Environment Court rulings requiring Transit to relocate and refurbish 18 heritage buildings and facilitate the archaeological investigation would have long-term benefits for Te Aro. The buildings that have been restored may not have been if not for the Bypass project. Some would no doubt have been demolished to make way for apartments and townhouses.

For further information on the heritage houses and their history, you can visit Transit's website **www.wicb.co.nz**

- ***Roading and landscaping***

Once the houses were relocated, the stormwater main put through, and the trough structure and new Vivian Street bridge built, it was time to build the road. This part of the project has been relatively straightforward.

The roading component includes construction of 700 metres of new road and upgrading 400 metres of existing road between the Basin Reserve and Terrace Tunnel. The new road from Cuba Street to Willis Street has been named 'Karo Drive' following a Wellington City Council competition for local schools.

The new route incorporates a 1km footpath and cycleway and extensive landscaping including more than 150 new trees.

In a first for Wellington, low noise surfacing, called WhispA, has been used on the road through the trench structure.