Comments on the
Draft Report and Decision of the Board of Enquiry
into the New Zealand Transport Agency
Waterview Connection Proposal

I have not read every word of the Draft Report and Decision but have discovered several minor
errors and one material omission.

1. A few typos and errors:::

p. 54 [para 162] ~ the heading for the next section has been included as part of the last line.
e.g. “7.3 Issues about Economics” is a sub-section header which should be in bold and
positioned between paragraphs [162] and [163] – see the previous such heading “7.2
Traffic and Transport” on page 33 between paras [87] and [88].

p. 108 [para 397] ~ the quoted description of the “Eden-Albert local board” is in error on
two counts:
- the correct name is Albert-Eden Local Board (correct order & each word capitalised)
- the extent of the Board area is wrongly-described – perhaps the witness was relying
on a draft ward boundary map which was amended in the final decision of the Local
Government Commission [see attached map] – Oakley Creek is not the western
boundary – Albert-Eden includes all of Waterview (up to a kilometre west of the
Creek); less relevant but incorrect is the reference to Ellerslie in the east – the
Southern Motorway forms the eastern boundary so Green Lane is the relevant suburb
when describing the eastern extremity of the Board area. The witness compounds this
error by referring to Waterview as part of the Whau Board area which is obviously
incorrect, though it is true to say that parts of their Ward will be affected.

p. 299 [para 1162] ~ one missing word: “… which we refer to in a subsequent section …”

p. 305 [para 1180] ~ who or what is EMS? There should be a readily accessible list of acronyms
used in the document, especially of less commonly used ones

p. 305 [para 1181] questionable statement: “the thrust of the case at the southern portal did not
involve suggestions that the stack be separated from the buildings”. True, most submitters
simply accepted that all the functions would be combined at the southern portal – but not all (see my
comments below).

2. A material omission

In my supplementary submission, presented orally on Friday 11th March, I talked about separating
the different functions of the southern portal building – in particular the control-office function from
the mechanical plant function. I know that at least one other submitter raised this issue, but this
point of submission has not, as far as I can see, been acknowledged or addressed in the Draft
Report & Decision.

Whether any issue raised by a submitter is accepted or not, I believe it is incumbent on the Panel to
respond to each and every one, i.e. for every single proposition raised during the hearing the Panel
should either indicate its acceptance (whether partial or complete) or rejection, generally with an explanation why. I was not allowed to read all of my written statement that I was talking to that day, so for completeness I incorporate the relevant paragraph just below, and attach a copy of the full five-page document to this emailed comment - there was also a simplified A4 line map of the Southern Portal area which I produced copies of for the Panel but I cannot now find the original.

I am not attempting to relitigate the point nor adding any new information or argument. I simply ask that the Panel re-read this paragraph and respond appropriately.

At the time I made my submission [in October 2010] the Southern portal building did not include the administration function which was to be located near the Waterview portal. As this is a significant change made after submissions closed, I feel entitled to comment on this aspect now. I am adamantly opposed to locating an office function anywhere in the park. There is no particular reason to do so – it could be located almost anywhere (conceivably even at the NZTA office in Queen Street) since the monitoring function will be performed by staff using computers and monitors displaying data transmitted from sensors and cameras in the tunnel and its approaches. There is some logic in being near one of the portals to allow staff to enter the tunnel if and when required, but not so close that park space will be taken to make way for it. A suitable domestic scale building could just as easily fit between the houses along Hendon Avenue, using details and finishes designed to blend into its surroundings. Car parking for both administration and machine hall staff should also be outside the park so that the only vehicles in the park would be those with an actual need to be there e.g. delivering or removing equipment or consumables to the machine hall entrance.

[see also the attached map which was presented to the hearing – the proposed relocation of the control building and car park has been highlighted in yellow on this copy].

Rather than asking the Panel to make a substantial 11th hour change to their decisions relating to the Southern Portal Buildings, I request that the relevant decisions and conditions be modified (made more flexible) by allowing for alternative solutions which could include placing the control and office functions (and associated car parking) outside the park. As I understand there is to be an Outline Plan of Works process, the final decision should not at this stage be tightly constrained to a location within the park.

Yours faithfully
Graeme Easte

2 attachments:
1. Map of Albert-Eden Local Board area (PDF)
Further to my written submission [dated 14/10/10] and supplementary submission [17/12/2010].

*Introduction and General Comments:*

As I made clear in my written submission I remain fundamentally opposed to the Western Ring Route (WRR) concept in principle, but am resigned to the inevitability of its completion through the construction of the Waterview Connection.

I believe that to some extent the applicant is “trying it on” – offering less mitigation in their proposal than was discussed with Council and the community during the extensive consultation phase. I speak with some experience, having worked with various community groups to oppose or seek improvements to several SH20 projects since the mid 90s when the Western Ring Road strategy did not exist and the Hillsborough section which opened last year was no more than a concept. My submission is that the mitigations contained within The Proposal are to be considered as a “bottom-line” offer by the applicant and that the final decision should require a higher standard than this starting point.

Given that this is a project driven by regional and even national priorities, and which will be of little if any benefit to the communities through which it will pass, it is entirely appropriate to consider a fairly high level of mitigation. Such measures may be expensive in dollar terms but would cost only a tiny fraction of the budget for such a massive project. I have been pleased to hear comments from members indicating that the Board of Enquiry is at least receptive to this approach.

I am also pleased to hear active discussion of the principle of ensuring that as much as possible of the mitigations are put in place before the project commences or at an early stage in construction.

*My particular points:*

1. **Southern Ventilation Building, Administration Building, and Vent Stack**

The very large above ground building in the centre of Allen Wood Reserve is one part of The Proposal which is utterly unacceptable – especially since it was sprung upon us all at the last moment and bears no relationship to anything that was consulted on. All possible steps should be taken to find an alternative solution. I am pleased to see that there is near universal acceptance of Option 3 which would largely bury the southern building, accepting that it cannot be fully concealed and that the vent stack will be close by in any case.

At the time I made my submission the Southern portal building did not include the administration function which was to be located near the Waterview portal. As this is a significant change made after submissions closed, I feel entitled to comment on this aspect now. I am adamantly opposed to locating an office function anywhere in the park. There is no particular reason to do so – it could be located almost anywhere (conceivably even at the NZTA office in Queen Street) since the monitoring function will be performed by staff using computers and monitors displaying data transmitted from sensors and cameras in the tunnel and its approaches. There is some logic in being near one of the portals to allow staff to enter
the tunnel if and when required, but not so close that park space will be taken to make way for it. A suitable domestic scale building could just as easily fit between the houses along Hendon Avenue, using details and finishes designed to blend into its surroundings. Car parking for both administration and machine hall staff should also be outside the park so that the only vehicles in the park would be those with an actual need to be there e.g. delivering or removing equipment or consumables to the machine hall entrance.

There seems to be some confusion about what Option 3 will do – it not only buries much of the building, it moves it significantly to the East. By moving the effective portal some 70-80 metres to the East the above ground structures can be moved away from one of the narrowest points in the park (more or less South of Stewart Road) where the publicly accessible green space on either side would be quite constricted regardless of the design of the building. Avoiding such a tight pinch point is important as it would substantially maintain the significant continuity of green space along Oakley Creek. There is 3.5km of continuous park land extending from New North Road up to May Road, via Alan Wood Reserve, Underwood Park, Walmsley Park and War Memorial Park, albeit there are three roads to cross over. I am very familiar with this having designed a walking network linking all these parks in 1993 and worked on the construction of the 1.6km main path through Allen Wood Park itself in 1998.

Option 3 (or some variant of it) allows the residual above-ground buildings and the vent stack to be located to the east of one of the wider parts of the park – i.e. the segment between the alignments of Stewart and Rangeview Roads, where Oakley Creek deviates up to 190 metres south of the pinch point. Rather than being isolated from the rest of the park as in the proposed design, this large wedge of land would remain more integrated with green space to the north and to the west. Most importantly, the walking/cycling path connecting north-south across the park in this area can also be made much more direct – important not only to reduce the distance to be walked/cycled but also to make the layout of the paths more “legible” to users (a simple and logical layout with minimal detours around obstacles is preferable to having to resort to a plethora of way finding signs).

To emphasise - this is a bottom line condition for the community – the impact of the building on the park must be minimised and this requires that the bulk of it must be underground.

2. Northern Ventilation and Vent Stack

The argument for burying the Southern building because of concern for the integrity of the park clearly does not apply to the northern building. However, in order to reduce its bulk, as much as reasonably practicable should be buried beneath the surface. I note that some submitters call for the whole building to be buried, but quite apart from its impracticality (the building will need to have a significant service entry at minimum) I see no particular need for this, providing the above-ground structures are of a scale and design that fits the neighbourhood.

I am pleased to see that the applicant has accepted my argument (in common with others) that the building should be “designed with a series of setbacks to “break up” the façade into segments of similar dimensions and proportions to neighbouring houses.” However, I am disturbed that their designers want to make the building stand out from rather than fit in with its neighbours. I agree that the building should not be dishonest and pretend to be a house – but there are features of domestic architecture that can be borrowed – e.g. weatherboard or brick cladding, pitched roof forms, etc., which echo the detailing of neighbouring houses.

One of the silliest things we have heard from design experts is that it is imperative on grounds of “design integrity” to have the stack which vents the fumes located right next to the building.
from which the fumes originate. As others have pointed out, this “form follows function” integrity may be one perfectly valid consideration, but it does not trump all other considerations such as making this intrusive structure as acceptable as possible to a reluctant community. Others having made this point well, I simply add my voice to theirs in support.

If this argument is accepted, then we can consider the location of the vent stack separately from that of the buildings. This is very important to the Waterview Primary School, just over the fence from the proposed stack location, and the wider Waterview Community. I have no psychological qualifications, but it is not rocket science to see that the looming presence of the chimney, will affect perceptions of the area and most significantly self-perceptions of those who live nearby. The desire to move the stacks away from the school cannot be underestimated — beyond the air quality issues there is a well founded fear that the dominance of the stack (whatever its final appearance) will have an oppressive effect on the morale of the school and its community which could have a very real impact on the school’s enrolment and viability. The vent stack by definition cannot be hidden, but reasonable efforts should be made to set it at some remove from the school and the community.

In my original submission, but more particularly in my supplementary submission, I proposed moving the vent stack north of Herdman Street. My rationale was based on an understanding from NZTA that moving it to the eastern side of the tunnels was almost impossible — given that there was insufficient clearance to cross above the tunnels and that constructing a “U-bend” under the tunnels would involve very complex engineering — whereas the northward shift required a straight tube. I note that the NZTA costing of my proposal, which they called Option 3, did not take account of that part of my proposal which would move the inlet plenum and fan room northwards (closer to the portal), thereby reducing the length of the tube to the base of the stack. Such a move of the fan room would also reduce the length of tube required for Option 2 (running obliquely under the tunnels) by about a third and hence its cost but would have minimal effect on Option 1 (which crosses more nearly at right angles to the tunnels). I do not accept that Option 3 would threaten the large pohutukawa since it would barely impinge on a small part of the drip line, but it would be contingent on the agreement of the school to have the tube constructed under a strip of their site as suggested on my diagram.

However, I concede that this proposal has no support from the residents of Waterview so I endorse the eastern shift, i.e. either Option 1 or Option 2, which we are now told are possible. The residents would clearly prefer Option 2 but I understand it is not finding favour because it lies outside the draft designation boundary. I cannot understand why the boundary cannot be varied if necessary. I understand that its location on the BP site raises difficulties — but then has anybody actually asked BP if they would agree? The BP service station was ferociously opposed by the local community when it was established about 15 years ago so the company might feel it can redeem itself with locals by enabling a community benefit at little or no cost to itself. Might it not be possible for the Board to approve the Eastward shift of the Vent Stack but allow for two alternative locations (i.e. Option 1 or Option 2), subject to the result of negotiations with BP. I believe that other large projects have been granted subject to conditions which allow for such flexibility in appropriate circumstances.

In addition, I urge the Board not to be influenced by the Unitec submission about their blessed bridge. They have been pushing this proposal off and on for at least the last 12 years but it has no support from the community who oppose it both because of the impact on the Oakley Creek valley and also because of its wider traffic impacts which could not possibly be confined to the Unitec Campus. Given the extreme unlikeliness of it ever happening, this proposal should not affect the Board’s consideration of vent stack options.
3. Vent Stack Design

The vent stacks cannot be wished away or hidden. If we cannot hide them then let us try making a virtue of them. Some effort should be put into designing these tall structures to complement the surrounding environment as well as possible (more than just minimizing their unattractiveness) as has been done for many other tunnels around the world.

I believe that a design team which includes artistic and design input alongside the engineers from the inception will produce the most satisfactory income, in contrast to calling in an artist after the engineers have done their bit. An excellent local example of such collaboration is the work of sculptor Virginia King with technical experts to design the amazing Rewarewera Bridge at New Lynn.

I seek a condition that the final design of these critical landscape elements must be to the satisfaction of the successor to the Urban Design Panel under the Auckland Council.

4. SH20 Shared Path

I request that this facility be acknowledged as a shared path rather than as a cycleway as it will be used by pedestrians as well as cyclists. This is to ensure that it is designed to support both modes – for example paths built only with cyclists in mind may have long looping ramps to achieve grade separation at bridges (creating detours of up to 100 metres) whereas pedestrians prefer the most direct route possible which may involve stairs or sharp zigzags unsuitable for cyclists – in such cases we need to provide both ramps and stairs.

The Proposal includes an extension of the SH20-Hillsborough shared path through to the southern tunnel portal where it just stops in the middle of Allen Wood Reserve. NZTA’s own design guide includes provision for multi-modal provision in all highway corridors and this is presumed to include cyclists and pedestrians. The fact that this particular motorway disappears underground for a while should not release NZTA from its own self-imposed requirement. So, therefore, the shared path should extend to connect ultimately with the existing North Western path. At an absolute minimum it should be extended through to New North Road as part of The Proposal, but preferably further west, bridging across the railway to connect with Harbut Reserve (heading north) and Blockhouse Bay Road (heading west).

5. Saint Lukes Interchange

Improvements to the Saint Lukes interchange do not appear in The Proposal despite increased traffic flows through the interchange as a direct result of this project. For example, Point Chevalier residents desiring to access the Waterview tunnels will be encouraged to connect via the Saint Lukes interchange which is already overloaded at peak hours. NZTA officials reassure us that the interchange can be upgraded within the existing designation and that it may indeed happen independently of and before The Proposal.

To ensure that this actually occurs I would strongly suggest a condition requiring that the capacity of the Saint Lukes interchange be upgraded to resolve capacity issues no later than the opening of the motorway tunnels.

6. Open Space Effects

The Proposal will have significant effects on access by the local community to open space. Although NZTA has an avowed policy of “like-for-like” replacement of areas taken for the project, and claims to be providing equitable replacement, it appears that on balance there
may be an overall diminution in quality of the open space. For example at the northern end the reconstituted Waterview Reserve will be of similar size to the existing park but dominated by the adjacent interchange which will have significant negative visual, aural and air quality effects. To a lesser extent this will also apply to open space near the trenched motorway between the southern tunnel portals and Richardson Road.

It will be tricky finding a solution without removing more houses, but further consideration needs to be given to improving the quantum, quality and layout of open space. Hopefully ongoing negotiations between Council and NZTA on open space replacement will bear fruit before the hearing – otherwise there may need to be some imposed conditions to address shortcomings in The Proposal.

In addition, where open space is being lost in one location, convenient access to other parks becomes critical. There were several pedestrian/cycling bridges in earlier versions of the project that do not appear in The Proposal as notified. I would like to see some at least of these key links reinstated, in particular the upgraded bridge across the Oakley Creek ravine which would greatly improve the connection between Heron Park and Waterview to the west and Phyllis Reserve and Owairaka to the east.

7. Quiet Road Surfaces to be Maintained in Perpetuity

NZTA propose to use “quiet” road surfaces throughout the project, as they have on the adjoining SH20 Hillsborough project. This will be particularly critical on the long elevated ramps of the expanded Waterview Interchange which are high above nearby houses and where it would more difficult to install effective noise walls and thus it is crucial to minimise vehicle noise at source.

For this reason I request a condition that makes it quite clear that these ramps in particular be maintained with a high quality low noise surface in perpetuity.

Graeme Easte
A) 80m Cut + Cover:
- allows better connection from Methuan to Murray Halberg Park/Oniraka School.
- separates cycleway from vehicle access to park/building.
- allows building to move southeast out of narrow section of park for more open space on cut + cover and bridge.

B) Relocate Control Building:
- opens up more open space in park
- provides sound buffer to Hendon shops
- keeps vehicles and parking out of park

C) Relocate Storm Water Pond:
- allows area of open space near existing park entrance off 172 Methuan Road.

Sketch Plan showing proposed changes at Southern Portal with Relocated Control Building Highlighted