



Cobham Drive to Buckle Street transport improvements

Public engagement

The historic environment – a story of change

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Mt Victoria Tunnel

When the plan of Wellington was compiled in 1840, it created 1100 'town acres'. Parcels of land in the eastern suburbs were bought and allocated in the 1840s and 1850s.

The arrival of roads, tram access and, later, the tram tunnel all helped to encourage settlement and growth in the suburbs east of the Mt Victoria ridge.

James Crawford, a large landowner at Seatoun, suggested a tramline to Seatoun. His plans included a tunnel through Mt Victoria, with trams running to Kilbirnie and on to Seatoun. The plan became a reality when Wellington's second tunnel, the Hataitai Tram Tunnel (now the Pirie Street bus tunnel), opened on 16 April 1907.

Increases in road traffic soon created the need for easier and faster road access from the eastern suburbs to the CBD. Having been suggested as early as 1909, Mt Victoria Tunnel opened in 1931.



The Hataitai street grid

Originally traffic from Mt Victoria Tunnel passed through Hataitai Village and along Moxham Avenue. Ruahine Street was built after the tunnel was opened allowing the increasing traffic volumes to bypass Hataitai's main street.



1880s Subdivision of land parcels

1880s-1907 Further subdivision of larger parcels with street grid constructed on flat land

1907 Excavation of bus tunnel and connection to city centre by tramway

1931 Construction of vehicular tunnel and creation of Ruahine Street bypassing Hataitai village to connect eastern suburbs to city centre

The transport connection

While Mt Victoria Tunnel has always been an iconic entrance to and exit from Wellington city, issues of traffic congestion and connections for pedestrians and cyclists have been apparent for many years.

In 1995 light-coloured plastic panels were installed to improve the tunnel's sub-standard lighting. The current plans propose another step that recognises the complex urban environment of Mt Victoria Tunnel and Hataitai.



1980s view over Kilbirnie township (now Hataitai) towards Lyall Bay. Moxham Road in red



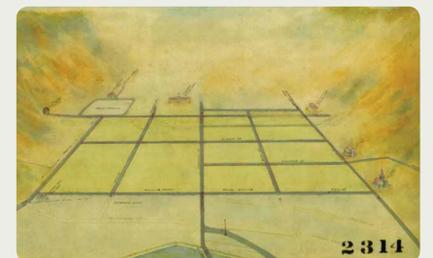
1928 Looking over Hataitai towards Kilbirnie and Lyall Bay. Moxham Avenue in red.



Mt Victoria Tunnel eastern exit 1930



Kilbirnie Hotel (corner Wellington Road and Kilbirnie Crescent) circa 1900. Bourke's dam is in the foreground, with bare hills in the background showing the limited extent of housing in Kilbirnie at this time. The hotel was at the southern end of the township, the adjoining land would not be subdivided until 1901. At back left is the Kilbirnie Recreation Reserve on the foreshore, not yet reclaimed. Burton Bros, Wellington city Archives, 2006/7.



Te Aro area showing proposed new traffic tunnel through Mt Victoria, 1923. Drawn by Leslie Atkinson of the City Engineer's Department, this perspective view shows the main traffic routes within the Te Aro area related to the proposed new traffic tunnel through Mt Victoria. A tunnel was proposed as early as 1909 but it was not constructed until the late 1920s. The route was recommended by an Access Commission established by the city council to investigate how to provide rapid access to the western and eastern suburbs. Wellington City Archives, 00237:12:7.