



Victoria Park Tunnel

October 2009

Auckland City's first road tunnel project gets underway

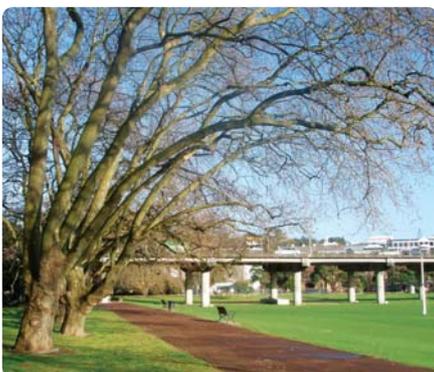
... Welcome to the first edition of the Victoria Park Tunnel newsletter. It aims to keep you informed about developments during the project and to let you know what's coming up.

Project background

The Victoria Park Tunnel is a significant and ambitious project, the first RoNS (Roads of National Significance) project to kick off, as identified in the government's policy statement. It completes the final link in the central Auckland motorway network, aiming to unlock the capacity of the Central Motorway Improvement projects undertaken over the last few years.

The project will reduce traffic congestion through Victoria Park viaduct and St Marys Bay, and involves the construction of a 440m cut and cover tunnel as well as widening of the motorway through St Marys Bay. The tunnel, adjacent to the existing viaduct, will provide three northbound lanes, while the motorway through St Marys Bay will accommodate five traffic lanes each way and a shoulder bus lane.

The existing viaduct will be slightly modified to carry two southbound lanes and a lane each for SH16 and the port traffic respectively.



Making it all happen

The Victoria Park Alliance is the team responsible for making this project happen, with the ambitious target of completing the project before the 2011 Rugby World Cup, two years sooner than originally planned. The team consists of **NZ Transport Agency, Fletcher, Beca, Higgins and Parsons Brinckerhoff**. With the move to our site office in Beaumont Street we have started in earnest and are pressing hard to get things moving along.

Our vision:



Our vision is to create a quicker journey through the park area, in record time, with the least fuss for the community and the most gain for the region.

We aim to do this through enhanced community relationships, fostering innovation and using the best possible people for the job. We're striving for an injury free project that results in quality, value-for-money outcomes.

On the environmental front, we're determined to go beyond compliance to excellence. We understand that large motorway construction projects can result in frustration and delays for motorists, and we undertake to have open, regular communication with everyone involved and implement efficient traffic management operations.

We also aim to create opportunities for small and medium businesses in the area to provide products and services, supporting local community businesses wherever possible.



A team of around 30 excited project team members set up office in mid August - the team has now grown to over 60 people.

Current priorities

The team is currently managing a range of complex details including major service relocations, building good stakeholder relations and finalising management plans. Some of the most interesting and challenging aspects of this project involve the relocation of the historic Birdcage building and the popular skate park in Victoria Park - and planning is well underway for these (see Skate Park update on page 4).

Community drop in sessions get a thumbs up

After years of planning, the start of this fast-tracked project has been welcomed by the St. Marys Bay and Victoria Park area communities, after years of uncertainty about when the project would happen.

The Victoria Park Tunnel Community Drop In sessions held on the 29th and 31st of August were well attended, with around 135 members of the public or residents stopping by to find out more about the project and give their feedback.

Many of those who attended live and work in the Victoria Park and St Marys and Freemans Bay areas, and they were very positive about the project. They saw it as 'long overdue' and, while understanding that there may be some inconvenience during construction, they were appreciative of the fast-tracked schedule and some community benefits such as a new pedestrian overbridge linking St Marys Bay to Westhaven.



Stakeholder Liaison Manager Darren Utting explains some of the heritage issues in the Victoria Park area.

Project overview and timings

As part of the government's economic stimulus, the Alliance has been directed to commence work as soon as possible.

The current phase - the Early Works Phase - is to establish the site compounds in the wider project area, and to start construction of the northern section of the project through St Marys Bay. This work will entail widening the motorway by one lane in each direction along the St Marys Bay section up to the Harbour Bridge.

All lanes on the motorway should remain open while this work is done.

Commencing with the early works will maximise the efficiency of the construction period and help ensure the project can be completed at the scheduled time.

The tunnel construction will begin around April next year and we plan to complete well ahead of original schedule in early 2012. While all roads and motorway on and off ramps will generally remain open

throughout the project, some pedestrian routes will be affected during construction. New paths and improved connections will be established on completion, including the footbridge across the motorway into Westhaven and bus lanes.

The graphic below shows the scope of the project and how the motorway lanes will work once the project is complete.



Managing construction effects

The project team is aware that a project of this size could have a high nuisance value in terms of construction noise, vibration and traffic issues, but we are committed to working with our community neighbours to minimise the effects of those issues.

Noise and vibration management

The Alliance team has made contact with residents potentially affected, particularly by the work along St Marys Bay, to install equipment to monitor noise and/or vibration levels on their properties.

Mitigation measures such as temporary noise walls and scheduling construction for certain times or days are commonly used on projects like this one. These will be employed as appropriate; however our primary tool is early notification and regular communication with residents on a one-to-one basis throughout the project.

There will be permanent noise barriers erected along the motorway as part of the scope of this project, and for many dwellings alongside the motorway these should reduce traffic noise from its current level once the project is complete.

Traffic management

Maintaining traffic flows on the local roads and the motorway during this project will be a challenge, but it is one the Alliance plans to meet with minimum fuss and disruption to the community.

We do this by staging construction and reducing lanes where necessary to coincide with times of lower traffic flows, such as at night or over weekends. Throughout the project, journey times will be monitored and bus services will continue largely as normal. Traffic diversions will be in place at times in the Victoria Park area but will not impact significantly on journey times - and there will be no road closures during the day. The use of local and residential side roads will be avoided as much as possible.

Environmental management

The Alliance team has erosion and sediment control measures in place to minimise environmental disturbance. These measures include staging work and stabilising an area as soon as work is complete, installing perimeter controls and daily dust monitoring and control.

To protect the marine environment, new stormwater treatment will be installed as part of the project scope. This will significantly improve the current stormwater situation.

Historical land use and reclamation has resulted in some contaminated soil in the area. While the contamination is not deemed to be serious, regular soil and groundwater monitoring will be undertaken and contaminated materials will be separated and disposed of properly.

Pedestrian flows

The pedestrian footpath through St Marys Bay reserve will be closed at times during construction. Footpaths will remain open on one side of the road in all areas around Victoria Park. An iconic pedestrian footbridge across the motorway from Jacob's Ladder into Westhaven is being designed as part of the scope of this project. Look out for a feature on the footbridge in the next edition of this newsletter.





New skate park to replace existing facility

During October, the Victoria Park Alliance will be taking over the western end of Victoria Park to set up a project site compound and commence some early work such as digging test pits to look at ground conditions in the area. We will be removing the skate park and adjacent toilet at this time as part of the work.

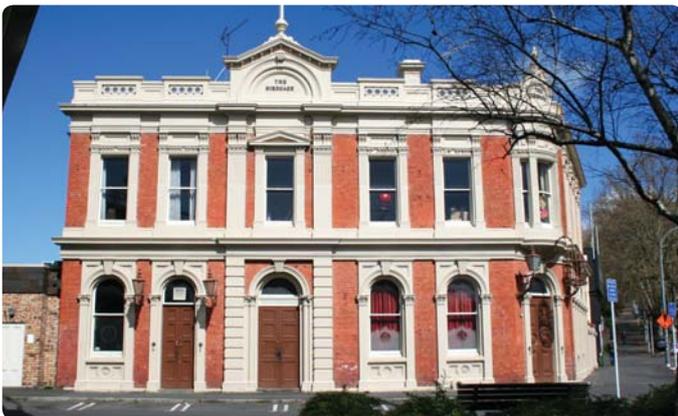
We are working with Auckland City Council to agree a replacement facility,

as there is a need for a good quality city-wide skate park to be provided somewhere within the park. A skate park advisory group with representatives from both skating and BMX user groups has been established and we are consulting with them during the process to come up with a suitable design and location.

Timing for the replacement skate park cannot be confirmed at this stage and will

depend on the outcome of these discussions as well as the consenting process.

The Victoria Park Alliance team and the council are keen to minimise the time period during which there is no skate facility in Victoria Park. We are investigating a number of options including a temporary smaller facility within the park as an interim measure until the design of the new skate park is finalised.



Moving the Birdcage

One of the most interesting aspects of the Victoria Park Tunnel Project is moving the historic Birdcage building on the corner of Victoria Street and Franklin Road. Built as the Rob Roy Hotel in 1886, this building was originally situated on the waterfront prior to the reclamation of Freemans Bay and is an important heritage icon.

Before work on the tunnel can begin, the Birdcage will be carefully lifted and moved to a new location 30m up the road.

While its permanent home has yet to be decided, members of the community who are passionate about this building and its context can be assured the Birdcage will stay in the area and will be preserved for many generations to come.

Archaeology

The Birdcage isn't the only historically significant aspect of this project. Pā sites occupied the headlands where the Pt Erin

swimming pools and the Victory Christian Church are now situated, and Freemans Bay was one of the earliest areas for European settlement in Auckland. As Victoria Park is reclaimed land, it is possible that historical artefacts may be uncovered during excavation in this area.

In consultation with Iwi and the Historic Places Trust, Accidental Discovery Protocols have been developed, and an archaeologist will be overseeing all work in historically sensitive areas.

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