

Making progress at Victoria Park Tunnel



1. Victoria Park Tunnel: construction began within Victoria Park in the first week of April 2010 - a year ago. Now: all tunnel walls are completed, the roof is on, 80% of the tunnel excavation is complete and over half of the 54 floor slabs are poured. Interior fit out is underway.

Motorway: shoulder widening through St Marys Bay has been completed and traffic lanes shifted. Construction to widen the motorway by one lane in each direction is now in the centre.

2. St Marys Bay acoustic barrier: the transparent barrier will be completed in May. Behind the barrier, the Beaumont Street to Point Erin walkway is finished, ready for landscaping.

3. Tank building: three large water tanks will be housed in a building taking shape off Wilkins Street (off Franklin Road) at the southern end of the project. These are the 'deluge' tanks to hold treated stormwater collected from the tunnel.

The water would be used to deluge the tunnel in case of a fire. The necessarily utilitarian building will be "softened" by wooden panelling on the outside walls and landscaped.

4. Fanshawe St interchange: the motorway off ramp is open in its final layout, with a left-turn-only lane to Beaumont Street. Taking shape is the on ramp, being reconfigured to accommodate the three northbound lanes emerging from the tunnel and a peak-time-only northbound lane.

5. Tunnel electrical and mechanical fit-out: as sections of the tunnel floor and roof are completed, work is started to waterproof the roof and install fire lining within the tunnel. Next comes the electrical and mechanical fit-out, which includes lighting, fire protection and communication systems and will continue for most of this year. As an example of what's involved, there will be 1200 lights inside the tunnel, requiring 25km of cabling.

6. Jacobs Ladder footbridge: attracting interest at Z Pier on Westhaven Drive is the pier that will support the seaward end of this footbridge across the motorway. The pier will include a lift and staircase to provide access to the bridge. The bridge will be completed in early 2012.

7. Rob Roy Hotel: Freemans Bay's historic landmark pub has returned successfully to its original location in a reversal of last year's slow crawl up Franklin Road, out of way of tunnel construction. Back home, it is settling on its new foundations before being refurbished for a new life.

8. Campbell Free Kindergarten: restoration of the historic building will be completed this month. Approximately a third of the floor space will be used to house standby communications and electrical equipment for the tunnel. The remainder, including the original classrooms, will be returned to Auckland Council for community use.

VPT in the community

Helping out

The Victoria Park Tunnel team has embarked on a number of local community improvements that would normally be outside the scope of a nationally important infrastructure construction project.

Freemans Bay School

The Victoria Park Alliance and Cook Street Placemakers provided paint and brushes to paint a temporary fence erected by the project between the school and the motorway.



Workers volunteered their own time and suppliers to the project donated materials to undertake a number of small improvement projects at the school. Here, they put finishing touches to a new footpath to keep small feet going to and from the adventure playground dry.



The team has also provided mulch and plants for the school's gardens, fixed drainage and potholes in the carpark, and repaired and replaced guttering.

Also, old wharf timbers excavated from the tunnel trench under Victoria Park have been given to the school to use in the landscaping of its new classroom block.

Cleaning up the Waitemata Harbour

The Victoria Park Alliance team - again supported by its suppliers and Auckland Council - removed 10 very large blocks of concrete from the sea at Westhaven. This removed an eyesore that had annoyed local residents and fishers for more than 30 years.

Others who contributed to the night-time operation were Auckland Council, Auckland & Waikato Cranes, Fletchers Plant Yard, Andrews Civil, Resource Search Limited, Warren Fowler, Fortress Fastener, D C Weld and Hirepool.



Jacobs Ladder steps

The Victoria Park Alliance, temporarily removed the bottom section of the Jacobs Ladder staircase, an important and historic pedestrian link. The alliance has worked with Auckland Council to agree a full replacement of the structure - built to today's building code standards and with stronger materials.

Our contact details

For general enquiries, or to contact the NZ Transport Agency please check our website www.nzta.govt.nz or email us at info@nzta.govt.nz

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Update

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VPT's Urban Design Initiatives



An artist's impression of Victoria Park after reinstatement, which begins this month.

The nationally important Victoria Park Tunnel project includes urban design and landscaping initiatives that will leave the western fringe of the Auckland CBD a more vibrant, walkable place to live and work.

The initiatives include upgrading pedestrian routes, reinstating Victoria Park on top of the tunnel, and creating public spaces and places that make them more attractive for people. Also:

- Art has been incorporated in the designs of the essentially utilitarian transport infrastructure - including motorway barriers, tunnel egress structures, and retaining walls.
- The historic connection between land and sea in St Marys Bay will be restored by a sculptural foot bridge over the motorway.
- A new public plaza in front of the Rob Roy Hotel will turn a previously bleak and unattractive place into a vibrant meeting place at the confluence of the CBD's Victoria Quarter, Freemans Bay and Ponsonby.

- Lighting and art under the Victoria Park Viaduct which, together with a narrower Union Street, will make it feel safer and more pleasant to walk this way to and from the CBD.
- A walkway alongside the motorway through St Marys Bay will provide a new recreational and commuting route from Beaumont Street to Pt Erin, protected by the transparent noise wall.

The initiatives are additional to the preservation, as part of the Victoria Park Tunnel project, of the heritage Campbell Free Kindergarten and Rob Roy Hotel.

They are consistent with the NZ Transport Agency's commitment, as a signatory to the NZ Urban Design Protocol, to planning for and promoting quality urban design in its infrastructure projects.

Also, the NZTA is legally required to deliver on the designation conditions for the project that are set out in the Auckland City District Plan. In the case of the Victoria Park Tunnel project, there are very specific requirements in terms of urban design.

Tunnel speeds to early opening

The Victoria Park Tunnel will open to two lanes of northbound traffic in November, three months early. The entire project, including the third tunnel lane, will be completed in March 2012, compared to the originally planned finish in mid-2012.

The early finish was announced by Minister of Transport Steven Joyce during a site visit. He praised the hard work and innovation by the VPT construction team to achieve the significant reduction in construction time.

The Victoria Park Tunnel will be the first of the Government's seven roads of national significance to be completed, and will remove the last major traffic bottleneck on the Auckland Harbour Bridge and Newmarket.

Wellington St on ramp closed again

The on ramp, which was closed for three months last year with significant improvements to peak-time traffic flows on the motorway and no major impacts on the central Auckland road network, has closed again.

It closed on May 2 so that the existing on ramp can be removed, a new on ramp built and the approach to the tunnel completed. When the on ramp re-opens in November, the tunnel will open to two lanes of traffic.

More information about the closure is at www.vicparktunnel.co.nz

This project is being delivered under an alliance agreement. For further information visit: www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/victoria-park-tunnel/

Urban design: bringing all the elements together

Here in New Zealand, as overseas, there is a growing focus on ensuring that transport infrastructure goes beyond providing better vehicle movement, to also supporting our social and environmental well being.

The urban design initiatives included in the Victoria Park Tunnel project are specifically about improving the connectivity and amenity of the local area so that it functions better for people.

Warren and Mahoney principal and consultant architect to the project, John Coop, says essentially a tunnel is a tunnel. "It must be safe to use and achieve its transport objectives. Therefore the infrastructural elements are essentially industrial and the raw material remains concrete."

However, by recognising the relationship between the infrastructure and its surroundings, the Victoria Park Tunnel project would deliver:

- Two important heritage buildings (the Rob Roy Hotel and Campbell Free Kindergarten) restored for a future life

- New public spaces
- Multiple art projects
- A new skatepark (being designed by Auckland Council)
- Victoria Park, the city's premier open space, reinstated and improved
- The Victoria Quarter (on the western fringe of the CBD) a more vibrant place to live and work.

Art in infrastructure

Iwi artists Lisa Reihana and Henriata Nicholas, collaborating as 'Kupenga Design', have been commissioned to prepare concepts for several projects within the project corridor.

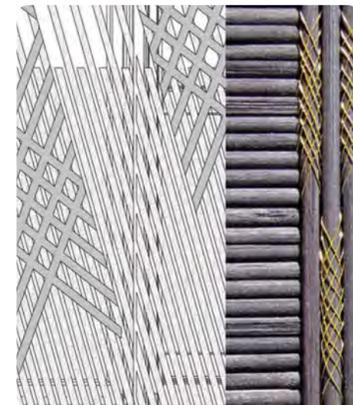
The artists will help to tell the story of the Maori heritage and culture of the area. Their involvement has included designing patterns for the cladding on the Jacobs Ladder

footbridge and tunnel egress structures in Victoria Park.

The cultural significance of the Te To headland (the site of the Victory Christian Church) is recognised by designs incorporated into retaining wall panels, palisade style fencing and the presence of a whakatauki (proverb).

Meanwhile, the columns supporting the viaduct in the public space adjacent to the

Rob Roy Hotel will get a different treatment. In collaboration with Auckland Council, these will be painted as a Public Arts Project. Artist Miriam van Wezel has been selected to develop her column painting scheme called 'the colours of our history', using colourful discs to represent the historic use of colour in Auckland over time from Maori occupation to today's multi-cultural, contemporary setting.



Better Connections

VPT is an opportunity to improve the way our communities alongside the motorway connect. Some new connections will be created as part of the project and existing connections will be improved. They include:

- Rebuilding the historic Jacobs Ladder stairway, popular with recreational walkers and commuters heading to work in the CBD
- Building a foot bridge across the motorway from Jacobs Ladder to Westhaven Drive, thus restoring the connection between land and sea in St Marys Bay
- Building a paved walkway from Beaumont Street past the Victory Christian Church to Pt Erin, protected for most of the way by the transparent noise wall through St Marys Bay

- Improving the pedestrian and cycling connection from Westhaven Drive to the Beaumont St/Fanshawe St intersection
- Improving the pedestrian connection between Freemans Bay and the CBD via a new plaza in front of the Rob Roy Hotel, lighting and artwork under the Victoria Park Viaduct and narrowing Union Street
- Improving the connections to Victoria Park, including a pedestrian crossing over Victoria Street West from the Rob Roy Plaza and new footpaths from Beaumont Street to the park's central ring route
- Improving connections within Victoria Park, including a covered path directly under the viaduct from Victoria Street to the corner of Beaumont and Fanshawe Streets
- Upgraded footpaths beside the park, along Beaumont and Victoria Streets.



The design of the Jacobs Ladder footbridge

This bridge will be bold and artistic as a result of collaborative input from architects, landscape architects, engineers, iwi artists, safety specialists and traffic managers.

Warren and Mahoney principal John Coop says rather than being a "big floodlit icon", it will be appropriate to its location, work with the natural landform and will be sensitive to the residential community that overlooks the motorway to the harbour.

"It will be a simple, sculptural form achieved by architects and engineers working together to improve on what would otherwise have been a utilitarian structure at this important location, at the entrance to the Auckland CBD.

The design of the Rob Roy Plaza

VPT has provided an opportunity to re-think and redesign the formerly bleak space in front of the Rob Roy Hotel at the junction of Franklin Road and Victoria and Union Streets.

"That has been further enriched through collaboration with iwi artists Lisa Reihana and Henriata Nicholas."

He says the design uses art in abstract and contemporary ways to relate the bridge to its cultural and physical context. "It will be a place

in its own right, a place where people want to go and to take their visitors to, for the experience and the views."

The truss of the bridge will be erected this winter and the bridge will be opened in early 2012.



It will include areas of planting, trees, seating, lighting and spill-out space in front of the Rob Roy, which is almost certainly going to include a new hospitality business - for example, a cafe, bar or restaurant - on the ground floor.

Landscape architect Peter Whiting of Boffa Miskell says the plaza will be a more vibrant public space that serves as a meeting place as

well as a much improved connection at the confluence of Freemans Bay, Ponsonby and the CBD.

"The Rob Roy building itself will act as a grand bookend to one of the long vistas through Victoria Park."



How Victoria Park will be reinstated

Victoria Park is being restored on top of the tunnel, with work due to start this autumn. At the same time, some facilities in the park will be reinstated and improved.

A total of 150 specimen trees and shrubs will be planted, including six large London Plane trees to reinstate the historic central ring of trees.

The design of the tunnel egress structures

Two emergency egress structures have been designed to fit into the park landscape. As well as providing stair access to and from the tunnel, they will house electrical and mechanical services to operate the tunnel. They will also house important tunnel services including electrical equipment, drainage systems and fire service controls.

The egress structures are critical to the safe operation of the tunnel. In an emergency people will leave their cars and make their way to the stairs via a pressurised egress passage behind the tunnel's western wall.

Other features of the reinstatement will be new paths, a new permanent skatepark, drinking fountains, picnic benches, public toilets and bike stands.

Boffa Miskell landscape architect Peter Whiting says the reinstatement will open up the western end of the park and restoration of the Campbell Free Kindergarten building would add another attraction for people.

Over the entire project, approximately 44,000 plants would be used in landscaping.

They are essentially utilitarian, concrete structures that will be transformed by innovative design into distinctive park features.

The southern egress structure

Due to its prominent location next to Victoria Street, this will form a sculptural element within the park. A back-lit 'art box' facing Victoria Street will display a piece of art developed by Kupenga Design.

Kupenga Design has also developed a kuta (native reed) pattern which cloaks the structure on the other three sides and which will be lit at night.

The northern egress structure

This structure is next to the skatepark being built by Auckland Council on Beaumont Street.

"The planting treatments will become apparent over time. Nikau palms, tree ferns and numerous native specimen trees will emerge behind the noise wall in St Marys Bay to reinforce the significant Pohutakawa lined cliffs. Amenity planting consists of ecologically appropriate species used in bold sweeps in the high speed areas and with more finesse in the pedestrian locations.

It will sit within a hard surface recreational space which can be used for events and can double as parking for emergency vehicles.

As with the southern structure, a kuta pattern will cloak three sides. Holds will be placed around the screen and safety matting at the base so that the structure can also be used for climbing.

The fourth side has a concrete surface which can be used for handball, or incorporated into the design of the permanent skatepark.

At night the structure will be lit by a red light, the same colour as the climbing holds and the rubber matting.

