

CITY UNDERGROUND RAIL LOOP PROPOSED FOR AUCKLAND

AN underground loop railway line with three stations under the central business district of Auckland is recommended by a four-man technical committee headed by the chairman of the Auckland Regional Authority, Mr E. A. Flynn. Set up following an agreement between the authority, the government, and the Auckland City Council in February 1968, the committee released its report on 9 June 1969. It was also recommended that the southern terminal should be at Manurewa, 14.4 miles from the present Auckland station, instead of Puhinui, 11.4 miles; and the northern terminal at Sturgess Road, 15.9 miles (just beyond Henderson), instead of New Lynn, 8.7 miles, as recommended by American consultants in 1965.

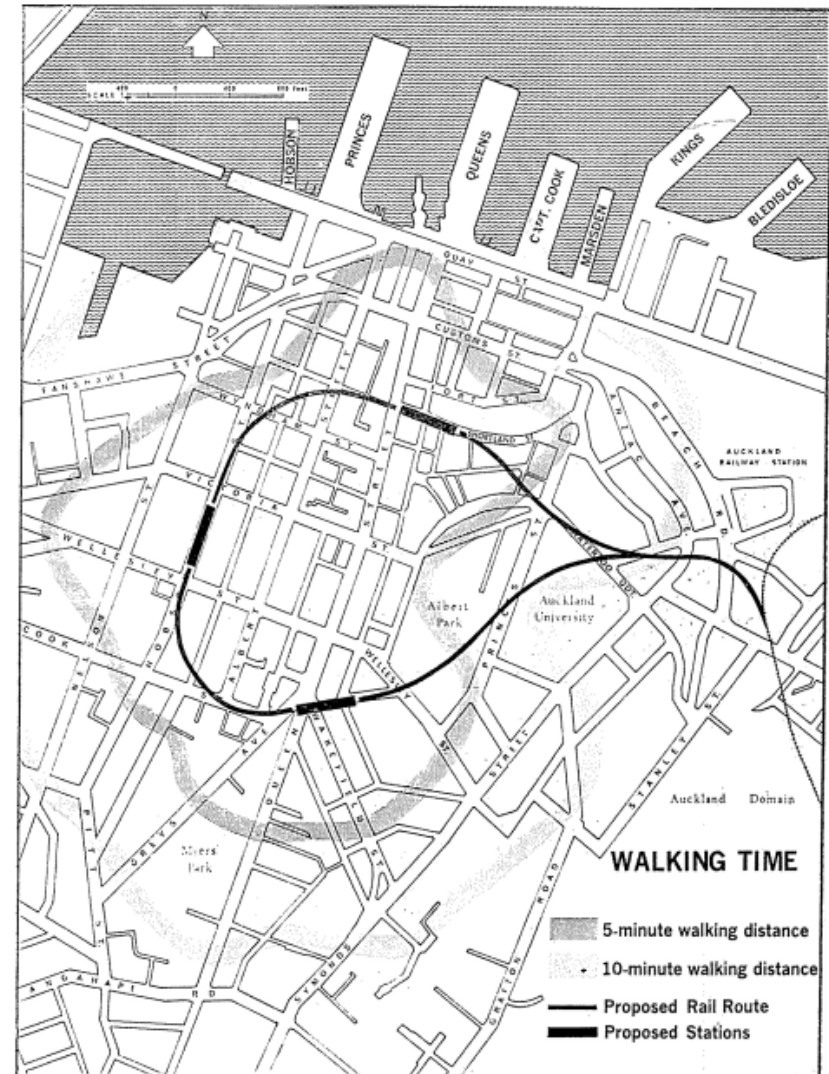
The stations on the single-track inner city loop, on which all trains would proceed in a clockwise direction, would be near the Town Hall, to serve the upper portion of the business district together with theatres, library, civic centre, parking buildings, the Technical Institute, and the University; beneath Hobson Street for an interchange at the proposed City Council bus station with bus routes to the North Shore; and, beneath Shortland Street to serve the downtown development and the major part of the main shopping area. The choice of a loop arrangement, instead of the earlier proposal of a double line beneath Customs Street and Queen Street to a dead-end station, was found to have operating advantages and a higher capacity for peak traffic. Its location was also chosen so that most of the tunnelling required would be in sandstone, making the use of a tunnelling machine an economic proposition. The route would avoid the high cost of land acquisition in Customs Street, and made it possible to bring additional lines into the loop system at a later date.

The committee, comprising representatives of the Auckland Regional Authority,

the Auckland City Council, the Ministry of Works, and the Railways Department, expressed concern that, if the present 3ft 6in. gauge track were used, there would be limits on the speed and acceleration of passenger trains. The possibility of building a separate railway of wider gauge for rapid transit trains was considered, but as this required a large amount of detailed engineering investigation, it was recommended that a new committee of people from the same organisations should be formed to study the feasibility and probable cost of a wider-gauge system.

Concerning the routes outside the inner city area, the report says the committee undertook a planning study of a rapid transit route on the presumption that no railway already existed. This study revealed that a route selected on this basis would vary very little from the one already existing. All level crossings, however, would need to be eliminated.

The report is based generally on an assumption that the system as proposed would be running by the mid-1970s. A 4½-mile extension from Manurewa to Papakura would, however, be needed by 1980, and it was recommended that provision be



From a diagram released by the Auckland Regional Authority

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After crossing Beach Road, this single-track loop, 2 miles long, would be completely in tunnel. Electric trains from Manurewa and Henderson would all traverse the loop in a clockwise direction. Almost all the central city area would be within five minutes walking time of one or other of the underground stations.



Photograph: N.Z. Railways Publicity

A typical Auckland suburban train in 1968, near Glen Innes, headed by "Da" 1410.

made in the planning for the ultimate construction of a branch line from a point near Papatoetoe due east to the International Airport.

The "Rapid Rail" scheme was the subject of a two-day symposium arranged by the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institution of Engineers for 15 and 16 August 1969, when papers were presented by many people who had been associated with the planning of passenger transport systems for the Auckland urban area. The Proceedings of this Symposium are reviewed elsewhere in these pages.

The Auckland Regional Authority and City Council both believe that it is the responsibility of the Government to upgrade the Auckland suburban railway lines and provide a satisfactory passenger rail transit system, and that the Government must be prepared to provide its own finance for this purpose. Government, however, approved the scheme only with the reservation that the people of Auckland, through the Auckland Regional Authority, provide and service the capital cost of the whole scheme, and also meet any operating losses.

Pointing to the sharp contrast between this proposal and Government's former practice in accepting full financial responsibility for the electrification of Wellington's suburban railway services some years ago, the Authority and the Council rejected the proposal as entirely unacceptable to the people of Auckland. The Mayor of Auckland, Mr D. M. Robinson, has said Aucklanders will have to meet their share of capital costs as taxpayers, but not as ratepayers, "as they did some years ago for improved suburban railway services in Wellington. As taxpayers they will have to pay their share of the cost of providing similar services in any other city or town where the need is proved, and accepted by Government."

Here, at the close of 1969, the matter appears to rest. Discussions between the Auckland authorities and Government continue, but it seems that little real progress, apart from further technical investigation and planning, will be achieved until Government receives the report of the Carter Committee on Urban Passenger Transport early in 1970.



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Block courtesy N.Z. Railways

On the North Auckland line, west of Newmarket, a Waitakere-Auckland suburban train stands at the island-platform Mt. Albert station built in 1966 in conjunction with the Morningside-Avondale duplication scheme.