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New Zealand Infrastructure Commission

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### **Penlink Now Team's Infrastructure Strategy Submission**

This is the submission of the Penlink Now Team. We, along with the majority of the community we represent, believe that Penlink should be built as a 4-lane road and bridge, with dedicated lanes for public transport. Currently the Penlink project is to be built as a 2-lane road with walking and cycling lanes, future-proofed for 2 extra lanes. With the projected cost of Penlink doubling from \$411m to \$830m, there is the opportunity before construction commences, for the short-listed construction consortia to be instructed to investigate the delivery of a 4-lane or the dynamic laning of 3 lanes for Penlink, either option within the projected \$830m cost.

By way of background, while the majority of Whangaparaoa is zoned for single households, the reality is developers are buying up multiple sites, which allow for higher density. There are sections along Penlink and on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula that should be zoned to allow for more high-density housing.

Whangaparaoa Road is a long, mainly narrow road that does not have the capacity or width to allow for a dedicated public transport lane. The successful implementation of a dynamic 3-lane has resolved congestion along Whangaparaoa Road, however it is already showing signs of strain. It is the policy of both Central Government and Auckland Council and its subsidiary Auckland Transport ("AT"), to proactively get people to use public transport in preference to cars, with walking and cycling options to be encouraged. AT has acknowledged that without a dedicated bus lane, public transport on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula will not be efficient. Penlink with 4-lanes would provide that efficiency and allow for the possibility of light rail in the future.

The land is already purchased for four lanes with walking and cycling capability, so to construct only two lanes is short-sighted. AT has said that to put on an express bus to the Hibiscus Coast Bus Station at Silverdale is not feasible, as there is no room for a dedicated bus lane on Whangaparaoa Road. The consequence of this will be that commuters will continue to drive their cars to Silverdale, instead of taking the up to seventy minutes bus ride, as their car ride can be done in just fifteen minutes.

The purpose of building Penlink is to significantly reduce traffic in the Silverdale area, leaving it free for both the commercial and industrial employment zone and local community traffic and also to relieve congestion on the Silverdale Northern Motorway interchange. If Penlink does not include a dedicated bus lane, commuters will not use public transport and will drive their vehicles across Penlink, content to pay the toll as they can enjoy commuting driving time savings of up to fifteen minutes, as they head south on the Northern Motorway to work, or worse, still continue to drive their vehicles to Silverdale adding to the congestion there. All of this points to an urgent need for Penlink to be 4-lanes from the start. Not just a south-facing ramp, as currently planned, but a north-facing ramp as well, are essential requirements at the Penlink Northern Motorway interchange. This is because of the forecast rapid population growth in the Penlink catchment area, including Dairy Flat with over 30,000 new dwellings planned and the planned employment hub at Dairy Flat providing jobs for 10,000 people. Both north and south-facing ramps are required right at the start of the Penlink development if we are to avoid

severe congestion in the future between the Oteha Valley and Silverdale section of the Northern Motorway.

We also believe that the overall Penlink development should allow for the extension of the Northern Busway from the current Albany Bus Station to at least the Penlink Northern Motorway interchange. Allowance should also be made at the same time, for a bus station at Stillwater and a terminus at the New World Whangaparaoa Penlink on and off ramps. Providing for these will take pressure off the motorway system in the future.

While Penlink is being constructed, the disruption on the Whangaparaoa end of the Hibiscus Coast will be considerable. Therefore it is short-sighted to put our community under such inconvenience twice when it can be done once. The land that Penlink is being built on also contains soils that are difficult to work with. If Penlink is built with 4 lanes from the start then the environmental issues associated with the project need only be dealt with once.

It is important that all avenues be explored at this critical time. While 4-lane Penlink with walking and cycling and a dedicated bus way is our preference, there is the option of the dynamic laning of 3 lanes. Undoubtedly this may be an even more expensive option due to the cost of the technology needed to implement it. Maintenance costs might also be considerable, as we have seen with the present 3-dynamic lane trial on Whangaparaoa Road. Light rail is an excellent option for Penlink, as it does not require the road width that other public transport modes require. The most recent plan released for light rail shows it coming up as far as Orewa. We believe it is time for forward-thinking around all Hibiscus Coast transport options for the future.

In this submission, it has been our intention to highlight to the Commission's attention some of our own thinking in relation to a project that has been around for 30-odd years. We are very appreciative of the fact that Penlink's construction will commence shortly. This will facilitate business growth in our region, providing further employment, amongst other economic benefits.

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Chair

Penlink Now Team

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Cc Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport and Marja Lubeck, MP