

Cambridge Connections - Frequently Asked Questions

What's happening now?

Why is the bridge location off the table?

There is no doubt another bridge will be needed in the longer term. However, on reflection and following this current round of feedback, it is clear that a lot more work has to be done on a proposed bridge location. As of April 2024, we will be proceeding with a business case for the funding of more detailed investigations, but we will not be promoting a future bridge location at this point in time.

We will still proceed with developing plans but will do so with a view to understanding all our options with more evidence to help guide us.

Why has feedback been extended to May?

We still want people to have their say on the other measures being proposed, which include traffic signals, improved walking and cycling and passenger transport. We have extended the timeframe to **5pm on Friday, May 24**. Everyone can have their say, including anyone who has already submitted feedback, or those wishing to make changes in their thinking.

What are we doing to ease traffic issues in Cambridge?

While growth continues in Cambridge, parts of the transport network are coming under increased pressure. There is a lot of work being done on cycleways, public transport, road, and safety improvements to ease pressure and to provide safer connections for all road users.

Continued investment into busy intersections and localised improvements, such as lane widening, road calming, safer pedestrian access points and safe pathways for cyclists continue to be a priority.

Are there any short/mid-term projects that can be done?

Yes. The Waipā Transport Strategy outlines how, as a district, we are working towards an integrated, safe, and sustainable transport system.

While the long-term focus is on a third bridge, there is a lot of work being done on cycleways, public transport, road corridors, and safety improvements to reach those targets.

Projects	Project details
Cambridge pathway	<p>Council received funding from NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi through the Transport Choices Package that's included in the Climate Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Up to \$10.4 million has been funded as part of the government investing \$350 million to create greater transport choices for people across New Zealand.</p> <p>Find more information about the Cambridge pathway.</p>
Hamilton to Cambridge section of Te Awa River Ride	<p>In 2021 the project has received two major funding contributions of \$2.95M from NZ</p>

	Transport Agency Waka Kotahi and a \$2.84M investment managed by the Provincial Development Unit.
Cambridge Corridor Road Works	Infrastructure for new developments and future growth. The project has a range of roading upgrades, which includes extending the Hamilton Road Cycleway, connecting new subdivisions to Cambridge Road, the addition of a 3-metre shared walking and cycling path, signalised pedestrian crossing and new bus shelters.
Victoria Street Bridge repainting and maintenance	In 2023 the Victoria Street Bridge underwent repainting and repairs to small sections of the bridge and the replacement of some rivets and bolts. The work was critical to maintaining and future-proofing the historical asset, to keep it performing as it was designed to do for the next 20 years. Find more information about the Victoria Street Bridge repainting and maintenance.
Intersection and corridor improvements	Investment into busy intersections to provide safer connections for all road users. Lane widening, road calming and safer pedestrian access points and safe pathways for cyclists.
Public Transport	Six single and two double electric buses will be introduced along with an increased frequency in trips. Electric buses are a critical component of WRC's work to make the public transport network net carbon neutral from 2025 to 2050. Preparations for Waipā include establishing two new charging facilities on Waipā District Council land in Kihikihi and Leamington to ensure the buses are charged and ready each day.

Business case and funding

What is the main purpose of the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi business case?

To identify future transport needs for Cambridge in the short and long term and secure government funding to help pay for these. A third bridge is expected to be part of this plan.

Without government funding, the cost of transport improvements and a bridge would be unaffordable for Waipā ratepayers. It is important to note ALL ratepayers across the district – not just those in Cambridge – would be required to fund improvements through rates.

What traffic modelling does the project use?

The detailed traffic modelling uses the Waikato Regional Transport Model (WRTM) and a 2055 scenario of population and jobs generating traffic on the road network. This modelling work was completed in 2023 and shows us how well the options could deliver on solving our transport

challenges for Cambridge. The traffic modelling provides evidence to help support future transport investments and it is the traffic model used to assess all major roading projects across the region.

The business case website shows some traffic data gathered from bluetooth vehicle tracking in early 2022. This is a snapshot of traffic origins and destinations at that time, but it is not used to inform any of the proposed transport improvement options.

The WRTM allows integrated planning of land use and transport proposals to be analysed and possible changes to policies to be evaluated. The WRTM can help with:

- Forecasting future traffic volumes for investment and maintenance;
- Alternative land use policy analysis and spatial planning;
- Testing the merits of alternative transport networks (including road and public transport);
- Calculation of future benefits for economic evaluation of transport projects; and
- Providing inputs into other tools to undertake more detailed intersection or urban modelling analyses.

Why is this business case taking longer than the original planned 12 months to complete?

A combination of factors has impacted the timeline. The principal delay has been in waiting for the latest futureproof land use, population, and employment projections data. This data is needed to make sure the traffic modelling is reliable.

How long will it take to finalise the business case and get started?

Once the business case has been endorsed by Council, it will go to NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi for endorsement of the project and funding further investigations.

Our business case will be one of dozens that NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi will consider, with councils across the country also regularly submitting similar requests for transport funding.

We may not have a definitive answer from NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi until late 2024.

How far along the process are you and what are the next steps?

The business case is the first step in a lengthy process. The preferred option considered how traffic currently moves through, identified transport issues and is a concept of a possible solution.

Once the business case is complete and endorsed by Council, it will go to NZ Transport Agency to endorse funding a further investigation. This investigation will include community consultation, iwi consultation, engineering design, foundation investigations, cultural and environmental impact assessments.

Council does not have funding for this next level of investigation, and it is dependent on getting agreement to the overall Cambridge Connections programme and Government support.

The options explained

What is the difference between widening key routes for more car traffic and optimising key routes for public transport, walking, and cycling?

As we continue to grow and develop, we need to take a holistic approach which considers not only transport infrastructure, but includes access to walking and cycling, public transport, intersection and corridor improvements and parking management.

Vehicles will still be part of the transport solution, but we also need to prioritise low carbon solutions, improve people's access and mobility and support community and stakeholder aspirations.

Why is a bridge in town recommended over a bridge in a 'green fields' location out of town?

Recent traffic survey data and modelling of future traffic patterns show that the majority of trips are to destinations in town. A bridge out of town will not easily cater for these trips and the Shakespeare Street route would become increasingly congested, effectively requiring a doubling of the width of two existing bridges and approach roads.

Does this proposal mean that there will be a note on my property's LIM?

No. This is just a preliminary proposal, and no formal decision has been made. There is no requirement for there to be a note on your LIM.

Cambridge third bridge

Will Cambridge get a third bridge?

The Waipā Transport Strategy has already formally confirmed the need for a third bridge once the historic high-level Victoria Bridge can no longer carry vehicles.

A business case is being written with a concept plan of a possible option to see if there is an appetite for government to fund a project of this size. Before anything progresses, we will need to secure funding.

At the end of this business case process, the Cambridge Connections recommendations will give us a clearer picture of when and where a bridge would need to be constructed, and how it would help to solve transport issues as our town continues to grow.

This is expected to be at least another 20 years away in terms of construction, dependent on funding and community support.

What we know about the Victoria Bridge

The historic high-level Victoria Bridge is 117 years old and is expected to have 20-25 years left before it can no longer carry vehicles. While it will be possible to keep it open, it will be increasingly expensive and less reliable.

A structural assessment of the Victoria Bridge showed that it is performing as it was designed and should continue to do so for at least 20 years. Maintenance and minor repairs will continue to be addressed but there are limitations around major changes, due to the bridge's heritage status.

The Victoria Bridge has a heritage classification, is highly valued by our community and is an important structure to retain. The future of Victoria Bridge will be a key part of recommendations coming from the Cambridge Connections project.

So, does the current preferred option mean this is a precise location of a new bridge?

No. The preferred option shows us a general area where the bridge will deliver the most benefits. But there is still plenty of investigation to be done to make sure it connects to the surrounding streets and intersections to integrate traffic seamlessly.

Why can't Council just buy land and start construction now?

The decision on transport improvements, new services and where a third bridge would go will have a huge impact on Cambridge long-term, including on neighbouring residents and businesses. It needs a thorough investigation.

A third bridge location would require Council to designate land, meaning the land would be zoned for future road use. A lot of land would be needed and once designated, Council would likely be required to borrow money to buy that land, even though the bridge will be some years away. A designation may also require existing road corridors to be widened, forcing Council to buy further land from residents or businesses, some of whom may not wish to sell.

What will a third bridge mean for ratepayers? How much of an increase?

At this stage costs are unknown but early estimates suggest that a third bridge would cost upwards of \$200 million.

That figure is also dependent on other route enhancements and market factors. The impact on ratepayers across the district will depend on what funding can be sourced from NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi. The cost of another bridge while substantial, will be just one part of a much bigger programme to make sure Cambridge has a good transport system long term.

Other improvements like new intersections, walking and cycling paths and services like passenger transport will have a higher cost over time. Future operating and maintenance costs also need to be taken into account.

What will happen if Waipā District Council doesn't get the funding it is requesting from this business case process?

Our business case will include various levels of transport system enhancement with a programme of work that covers short, medium, and long-term needs. Ongoing discussions with NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi are being held to ensure that investment opportunities for subsidised funding and partnership opportunities are maximised, while ensuring that impact on rates is kept in check.

Can the Victoria bridge be added on to, so more traffic can cross the river instead of a new bridge?

While it is possible to strengthen the 117-year-old bridge to take more traffic, it would be complex, and it would significantly alter the bridge. The bridge has heritage recognition as a Category 1 historic place, meaning it should be kept close to its original design. There may be options to keep the bridge partly open to traffic, but ideally, we will not rely on it as an essential traffic link.

What about on and off ramps? Why can't some be built around the golf course, taking people straight to Hamilton instead of going through Cambridge?

This option was considered, but modelling showed only a small number of motorists would use it, because it would be a significantly longer route. Modelling showed most drivers would prefer to take the existing route through town to the expressway.

Could this project end up on the government's fast track system and not need public consultation at all?

A bridge which is needed in 20+ years does not appear to fit the legislation of needing to be fast tracked. We have time to examine the options, complete detailed investigations, consult with the community and find a solution that meets the transport needs of our community in the long term.

Next steps

Where to from here?

The next steps will be to:

- Complete this initial feedback phase, which closes on Friday, May 24.
- Analyse the feedback and close the loop with the community.
- Prepare the funding business case to submit to the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi.
- Wait for the decision on whether or not the business case is endorsed.
- If funding is received, undertake consultation with the community on funding further investigations as part of a future Long Term Plan.