CITY RAIL LINK: FOURTH MONITORING REPORT ON PROGRESS AGAINST THRESHOLDS

The fourth monitoring report provides an update on Auckland rail patronage growth.

Background

On 28 June 2013, the Prime Minister announced the government’s commitment to a joint business case for the City Rail Link in 2017 and to providing its share of funding for a construction start in 2020.

The Prime Minister also stated that the government would consider an earlier business case and construction start date if it becomes clear that Auckland’s CBD employment and rail patronage hit thresholds faster than current rates of growth suggest. The two thresholds are:

- an increase in Auckland CBD employment of 25 percent over the February 2012 estimate (the baseline), which is half of the increase to 2021 predicted in the 2012 City Centre Future Access Study; and
- rail patronage is on track to hit 20 million trips a year well before 2020.

This report updates on progress against the rail patronage threshold. The data on CBD employment growth is produced annually and will next be available towards the end of 2015 when Statistics New Zealand publishes its latest estimates. The previous monitoring report found CBD employment had increased by 2.8 percent in relation to the 25 percent threshold.

Rail patronage

Auckland Transport’s Public Transport Monthly Patronage Report for June 2015 shows rail patronage of 13.9 million trips for the year to June 2015, compared to 11.4 million trips for the previous year. This is an increase of 2.5 million trips or 22 percent.

Rail patronage has shown strong growth over the last two years and, if this growth can be sustained, the rail system is likely to reach 20 million trips well before 2020. However, given current patronage of 13.9 million is 6.1 million trips below the threshold and the variability in results since 2010, at least another year’s growth will be needed to confirm this result.

Assessment

The most recent figure for CBD employment shows 100,750 employees, compared to the 25 percent growth threshold of 122,528 employees.

Rail patronage for the year to June 2015 was 13.9 million trips compared to the threshold of 20 million trips well before 2020.

While the rail patronage threshold appears likely to be met if current growth is maintained, CBD employment remains some way from reaching the threshold for considering an earlier business case and construction start date for the City Rail Link.