CITY RAIL LINK: SECOND MONITORING REPORT ON PROGRESS AGAINST THRESHOLDS

The second monitoring report provides an update on Auckland rail patronage growth in relation to the thresholds announced by the Prime Minister on 28 June 2013, for the government to consider an earlier start date for construction of the City Rail Link.

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. Data on CBD employment growth are produced annually and will next be available towards the end of 2014 when Statistics New Zealand publishes its latest estimates. The previous monitoring report found CBD employment had increased by 2.1 percent in relation to the 25 percent threshold.

Rail patronage

Auckland Transport’s Public Transport Monthly Patronage Report for June 2014 shows rail patronage of 11.4 million trips for the year to June 2014, compared to 10 million trips for the previous year. This is an increase of 1.4 million trips or 13.9 percent.

Assessment

Growth of 1.4 million trips for the year to June 2014 is the highest annual growth in Auckland rail patronage achieved to date.

If growth continues at 1.4 million trips per year, annual patronage would hit 20 million trips around 2019/20. We expect patronage growth to continue at a similar rate as for the year to June 2014 until around 2017/18, as the full electric train fleet comes into service and the new bus network is rolled out. After 2017/18, we expect the rate of patronage growth to slow and at this stage do not anticipate it is likely that the threshold of 20 million trips well before 2020 will be met.