Brief: Mass Transit corridors and Futureproofing for Light Rail

Introduction
Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM) is a joint initiative between Wellington City Council (WCC), Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and the NZ Transport Agency. It is taking a fresh look at the transport system to ensure it supports how we want our city to look, feel and function. Further details on the programme are available at:
http://www.getwellymoving.co.nz/about/

This brief sets out the work required to test the current assumptions for the mass transit route through the central city and determine the steps that would be needed to futureproof a route for a possible upgrade to light rail transit (LRT) within the Ngauranga to Airport corridor, as part of the LGWM initiative.

Background
The Wellington Public Transport Spine Study (PTSS) was completed in 2013. It investigated the feasibility of a large number of different routes and modes for creating a high-quality 'PT spine' between the Railway Station and Newtown/Kilbirnie, and arrived at a short-list of three options: bus priority, bus rapid transit (BRT) and LRT.

The PTSS concluded that the preferred PT Spine route should run from the Railway Station to the Basin Reserve via the Golden Mile, with branches to Kilbirnie town centre and the Regional Hospital. It also identified BRT as the preferred mode on the PT Spine route.

Following community consultation, the Regional Transport Committee (RTC) agreed in March 2014 to progress BRT detailed planning and design. In doing so, the RTC also agreed that physical infrastructure along the core spine corridor should, where practical, be designed in a manner that does not prohibit the future transport development of the corridor, including for LRT.

GWRC, WCC and the Transport Agency agreed to work together to develop an Indicative Business Case (IBC) for BRT to provide clarity on the option to be taken forward for detailed design. The IBC was completed in July 2015. It considered a range of options for BRT, focusing on the physical infrastructure (road space and intersection priority, and stop/station infrastructure). The economic case concluded that two options had the best economic performance (bus lanes in targeted locations, 24/7; and bus lanes along the entire route, 24/7). The recommendation from the IBC was that these options be carried forward to a detailed business case (DBC).

That further work is now being undertaken as part of LGWM. This has included an assessment of possible treatment options for BRT on the PT spine, under low, medium and high levels of BRT treatment. This work is also considering the potential future convertibility of BRT to LRT on the PT spine, and the steps that would be needed to futureproof the route for that possibility.

Some stakeholders have questioned whether futureproofing should be confined to the PT spine route, and whether the PT Spine route determined in the PTSS is the best route for LRT.

In 2018 the bus network will be changed to deliver a simpler, more frequent and flexible service. Details of the changes are outlined on the following webpages:
https://www.metlink.org.nz/greater-transport-greater-wellington/2018-a-new-bus-network-for-wellington-city/

Outcomes sought
LGWM is seeking consultancy assistance to:

1. Review the assumptions and criteria used to evaluate the route options within the PTSS. Consider whether they are still fit for purpose and recommend any changes.

2. Taking any changes from item 1 into account, re-assess the preferred corridor for a mass transit spine. If an alternative route(s) to the PTSS spine is preferred, identify this in a concept plan.

3. If LRT was introduced as a new mode through central Wellington at some point in the future, consider whether this would alter the mass-transit route preferred in item 2. If necessary, consider any consequential implications for bus-based PT routes from the potential introduction of LRT.

4. Taking into account the Opus technical notes for BRT prepared for LGWM, identify what level of future-proofing would be most appropriate along the preferred route(s), taking into account:
    - The range of possible future options for mass transit along this corridor
    - The testing of scenarios in LGWM
    - The emerging preference for high, medium or low level of service for bus priority measures
    - The indicative cost and timing of any physical future-proofing measures
    - Any planning measures (i.e. designation) that may be required
    - Disruption to existing/future bus services, land uses, and utilities from conversion at a later date
    - Whether any proposed interventions in LGWM would foreclose or impede future mass transit options.

5. Provide technical advice to input to the LGWM scenario testing, to assist in calculating the future demand for mass transit along the preferred route(s) and considering this against the capacity of the proposed bus system. Provide advice on any potential additional measures to increase capacity (if required).

Notes:
- The focus of this study is the Wellington central railway station to the eastern suburbs of Wellington and the Airport
- Stakeholder groups are to be involved in the assessment in 2 ways: (a) through initial contact to understand their views and potential alternative route options: (b) through informal feedback updates on progress with the assessment
- In determining the preferred mass transit route(s) consideration should be given to the potential to achieve key outcomes such as reliability, capacity, and customer attractiveness, and to stimulate urban re-development (and value uplift) in adjacent land areas, and recently updated growth projections

Outputs
The outputs of this work should be:
- Technical notes and a summary report outlining the investigations undertaken and the recommendations.
- Technical advice to the LGWM team.

Timescale
This work is to be completed by 31 August 2017.