

Q&A

Nelsusts Answers to Commonly Asked Questions about Road Congestion

1. Congestion is Bad Now we've got to do something about it

- a. Well its only bad outside of school holidays. During school holidays it all but disappears. Why are so many children driven to school when none used to be? If we can make it safe and attractive for kids to get to school under their own steam it is better for the child socially, educationally and physically. It is also better for the parent not always having to accompany their child all the way to school. And of course it eliminates a major source of road congestion. So lets have all the wider footpaths as shared paths that children can ride on, segregated cycle paths where there are no wide footpaths and have them all well linked up.

2. Its obvious that if roads are congested you need more roads

- a. Actually more roads mean more cars and you are back to square one. The M25 London ring road was built to solve congestion and was immediately gridlocked upon opening: people made investment decisions based on the new road - they moved their businesses and housing out of London. Building road capacity to solve congestion is a dog chasing its tail as Auckland is belatedly realising. Obama's deputy secretary for transport acknowledges this when he says "building more roads to ease congestion is like loosening you belt to solve obesity" What is missing is giving people enticing alternatives to car commuting.

3. Traffic is Bad Now, its only going to get Worse

- a. Nelson has had record regional population growth, yet NCC traffic counts show flat to declining traffic since 2006, well before the global financial crisis.
 - i. Trends:
 1. Aging Population:NCC says virtually all of future population growth will be in the over 65's with their low incidence of peak hour driving.
 2. Kids getting drivers licenses later or not at all - more interested in being connected than buying cars
 3. Working from home increased 14% between the 2006 and 2013 census here
 4. Trips to work by bus increased 72%, the actual numbers are still small numbers still but big trend change, 9% increase in active mode travel (walking biking), 42% increase in electric bike and motorcycle travel yet car commuting decreased as a proportion.
 5. More two way traffic - what the 2010-11 Arterial Study found was that even if traffic did increase, congestion wouldn't; The flow would become more two-way - i.e. instead of just into Nelson in the morning and out in the afternoon, it would be in and out in the morning and in and out in the afternoon.

4. Getting Trucks off Rocks Road Necessary to Improve Iconic Waterfront

- a. If you look at the glorious Oriental Parade in Wellington, all of the good part of it is on the seaward side of the parked cars: the road is not great. We can do our own oriental parade here with a really generous esplanade on the seaward side of parked cars. Width is critical, the original 4m wide was marginal, the 2.9m current width is really not generous: it can be made wider like Connolly's "wharf" fishing platform just with a few legs into the sea floor, without needing to extend the sea wall. And we can and should increase the seaward carparking wherever possible to create a buffer. Some of this seaward carparking could be for vendors selling ice-creams, coffee, fishing gear, togs and towels. And some of the carparking buffer lane could be amenity seating areas and big raised beds for large trees.

- 5. Putting Trucks onto the Southern Link is the only way to get trucks off Rocks Rd**
- a. Log barging would get 35,000 of the most intimidating trucks at the same time reducing double handling of logs and freeing up valuable port land for more productive uses than storing logs. It could be zero cost though selling the valuable Port land for more productive uses and use the unused South Eastern side of Rabbit island for the barge depot.
 - b. Smaller delivery trucks and every campervan in the country would still use Rocks Road
- 6. Building the Southern Link would mean Rocks Road would become a quiet route**
- a. The 2010-11 Arterial Study was specifically asked this question and they found that Rocks Road would continue to be a busy road carrying 65 to 80% of its current traffic even if the S.link was ever built. Its never going to be safe for unconfident riders biking around there with every campervan in the region going around there with the drivers gaping at the view.
- 7. The Southern Link Needs to be built for “Resilience” (to natural disasters)**
- a. We already have 2 routes through Nelson, we’ve already got one spare for emergencies.
The Southern Link route was blocked in 4 places at the same time as Rocks Road was blocked during heavy rainfall in December 2011. The bottom of St Vincent St is already in a region marked on planning maps as an inundation zone whereas Rocks Road isn’t on an inundation zone. The Rocks Road Esplanade / shared path would be higher than the road and project out past the sea wall with the chain-link fence on a plinth some 300mm high so the chainlink fence meets current codes. These things combined could stop waves from breaking over the road during storms.
- 8. Traffic Congestion is Hampering Nelson’s Economy**
- a. This is not what the arterial study found - to quote from the final report “*Whilst Option B (Southern Link) does provide additional capacity for a marginal increase in costs when compared to Option A, the social and environmental consequences of realising that additional capacity are significant. The consequences may be able to be justified if the current network was reaching capacity and the economic wellbeing of the city was being affected. However, the current forecasts show that this is simply not the case and the additional capacity will not be required over the modelled time period (25 years).*” p27 2nd paragraph Stage 4 report of the Arterial Study.
There are things we can do to reduce our road congestion to the minimal levels it is at school holiday times. And reduce the summer visitor congestion by building a generous shared path around Rocks Rd and providing a frequent beach-bus to connect the city to the beach.
- 9. We Need an Efficient Transport Corridor**
- a. Whatever else the Southern Link might be, an efficient route to the port it is not. It is the best part of a kilometre longer from the Annesbrook roundabout to the Port gates and rather than being on the flat it involves grinding up over the Bishopdale hill. And whereas there is only 1 set of lights or roundabouts between Annesbrook and the Port gates going via Rocks Rd, the Southern Link route would involve at least 4 sets of lights or to the port (Toi-Toi, Gloucester, Halifax and QE2 Drive)
- 10. Its Been Planned Since the 60s, we just need to get on with it.**
- a. A lot of things we did in the 60’s now looks not just old fashioned but plain dumb. We used to think it was a great idea for everyone to smoke cigarettes in cars with their kids, we used to cover our apples with DDT and we used to give people suffering mental illness frontal lobotomies. We need this century’s solutions to this century’s problems.