

## Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable Car
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<b>1. Contact Details</b>			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
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<b>*First name</b>	Joanna		
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<b>2. Please provide your comments on this application</b>
If you need more space, please attach additional pages. Please include your name, page numbers and the project name on the additional pages.

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

**Thank you for your invitation to provide written comments on the application for referral of the Queenstown Cable Car Project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. This application was reviewed by elected members delegated to participate in the fast-track process and teams across the Otago Regional Council (Council). Please see below comments on this application.**

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**Query 1 - Competing Applications**

**Any applications that have been lodged with the Council that would be a competing application or applications if a substantive application for the project were lodged. If no such applications exist, please provide written confirmation.**

**Response:** ORC confirms it is not aware of any competing applications.

**Query 2 – Existing Resource Consents**

**In relation to projects seeking approval of a resource consent under section 42(4)(a) of the Act, whether there any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) could apply, if the project were to be applied for as a resource consent under the RMA. If no such consents exist, please provide written confirmation.**

**Response:**

ORC confirms there are no existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) could apply if the project were to be applied for as a resource consent under the RMA.

**Other Matters**

Please find attached the additional comments on the referral application from ORC in Appendix 1. These comments reflect ORC's feedback on the referral application and outline several matters to be addressed in a substantive application.

# Appendix 1 - ORC Referral Application Comments

## Introduction

The referral application was circulated to relevant teams in ORC, who have provided the following comments.

### 1. Transport comments

The proposal aligns with some of the objectives of ORC's Strategic and Policy Framework. However, further detail will be required through the substantive application to fully assess the proposal's alignment to ORC's framework. Areas that require further details and assessment are:

#### 1.1 Strategic Alignment

- a) A more comprehensive assessment of the proposal's alignment to the Otago and Queenstown transport strategic framework. This includes:
  - i. Otago Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 (RPTP);
  - ii. Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (ORPS);
  - iii. Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2021-2031 (2034 Mid Term Review) (RLTP);
  - iv. Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (QPTBC); and
  - v. National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD).
- b) An assessment of the proposal's alignment to the Otago Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 (RPTP), including how the proposal integrates with the existing and planned bus network aspirations for urban Queenstown.
- c) Whether the proposal replaces the need for bus services along State Highway 6A.
- d) Case-studies or other benchmarking demonstrating the demand and operating capacity of existing operational mass-transit cable car systems to understand whether the proposal can provide the required capacity.
- e) The proposed operating model and how this aligns with the preferred option from the Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (QPTBC)<sup>1</sup>.
- f) An evaluation of station locations against best-practice network design principles.
- g) Further detail on how the proposal meets the NPS-UD definition of a Rapid Transit Service.
- h) Further information

#### 1.2 Safety, Resilience and Access

- a) An assessment of how the proposal would support the needs of transport disadvantaged people, including the proposed hours of operation.
- b) An assessment of the proposal's resilience to natural hazards and climate change.
- c) How isolated or remote stations will be managed to ensure personal safety.
- d) Comments on any opportunities to improve travel times and reduce congestion.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.orc.govt.nz/media/rasnp1qg/queenstown-public-transport-business-case-final-2024.pdf>

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### 1.3 Costs

- a) How the proposal provides value for money for the public given the lack of information regarding fares and expected subsidies, or whether the proposal allows for competition in the delivery of services.
- b) The potential operating costs and what co-funding or subsidies would be required from NZTA and ORC.

## 2. Science comments

### 2.1 Key management actions:

- a) The applicant may want to consider the below in their application:
  - Undertaking dedicated field surveys using suitably qualified personnel at the appropriate time of year for lizards, terrestrial invertebrates, and plants. Such surveys would better guide ecological management actions to ensure adverse effects are kept to a minimum. Effects management resulting from these surveys could include avoiding important habitat, habitat restoration, and mitigation translocation into suitable areas.
  - Avoiding works during the breeding season of birds, particularly for Threatened, At Risk and protected species.
  - Avoiding works on naturally uncommon ecosystems, including seepages and braided rivers that are both Endangered nationally. Careful planning will be needed as some construction is near braided rivers, with this ecosystem being highly dynamic by nature.
  - Avoiding works on or near wetlands, of which some types identified have suffered large reductions in extent and condition.
  - Methods to enhance habitat and the development and implementation of a lizard management plan.
  - Avoiding works that will cause disturbance during the breeding season of birds, particularly for Threatened, At Risk and protected species. The timing of the breeding season depends on the species and their habitats. For example, the New Zealand Birds Online website (<https://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>) and the relevant literature (e.g., Notornis, New Zealand Journal of Ecology) may assist with gaining a better understanding of the breeding season and their habitats for each affected species. Moreover, consultation with a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist with knowledge of the bird species in the area would provide relevant onsite advice specific to the proposal.

### 2.2 Wetlands:

Approximately eleven cable car towers are proposed in proximity (10m-100m) to identified natural inland wetlands. Earthworks associated with tower construction may temporarily alter wetland hydrology, with potential drainage occurring during excavation. While backfilling is expected to restore the water table, there remains a risk of longer-term changes to soil hydrology. Based on this,

the following should be considered for the substantive application and when works are occurring (should approval be granted):

- a) Avoidance of wetland impacts which can be achieved through comprehensive planning, precise wetland mapping, and consideration of alternative tower locations, ideally guided by the Effects Management Hierarchy framework outlined in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM 2020).
- b) Contractors must be clearly informed of wetland boundaries and instructed to avoid driving through or near these areas (exclusion zones can be established to avoid tramping and discharges etc).
- c) For the towers located within 10 metres of a wetland the applicant should consider:
  - One pre-construction and at least two post-construction monitoring visits. This monitoring should include assessment of wetland condition (vegetation and soil) as an indicator of hydrological change.
  - Should monitoring identify adverse effects, a comprehensive wetland restoration plan must be developed and implemented.

2.3 The following areas of the application should be considered for the substantive stage:

- a) There is a heavy reliance on desktop assessment in the referral application. The technical report acknowledges that targeted surveys (including wetlands, lizards, invertebrates) are still required. This limits certainty of the information provided. It is recommended that field verification is undertaken to assist the studies for any substantive application.
- b) While the report states overall ecological effects will be “very low,” it could better quantify residual risk after mitigation.
- c) Wetland Section: There is good identification of risks within the wetland section however this could be strengthened by specifying contingency measures if hydrological changes persist despite restoration.

### **3. Consent Comments**

- a) Additional consents may be required that were not assessed by the applicant. This includes the creation of bores (trenching) and consent to construct a dam and to dam water.
- b) In the station context studies document (Appendix 3, page 13), a dam and bridge to access helipads is shown across what is described as a flow path gully. It is unclear whether the applicant has considered the consenting requirements for this dam (including the need for any building consent), or whether they intend to assess any effects associated with the dam, should consent be required.

### **4. Policy comments**

- a) A detailed assessment of the proposal against the Otago Regional Policy Statement (ORPS) and proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (pORPS) has not been provided. This assessment will be required at the substantive application stage. ORC considers that particular attention should be given to the definition of nationally or regionally significant infrastructure, and the provisions relating to infrastructure, transport, freshwater,

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landscapes, ecology, natural hazards, and wāhi tūpuna values given these are key matters within our scope of assessments.

## **5. Natural Hazard comments**

- a) Assessments are based largely on review of existing natural hazards data (e.g. regional-scale mapping, and analysis completed for nearby sites), but preliminary site inspections have been completed for key areas.
- b) We have an overview of geological conditions and have identified the key natural hazards which may be present at the location of each station along the proposed cable car route – depending on location, these hazards include liquefaction, slope instability (landslide/rockfall/debris flow), and flooding.
- c) The assessment identifies the key natural hazard constraints which will need to be considered further during the detailed design phases of this project. The assessment provides initial comments on the scope of work which may be required to further assess or mitigate these hazard risks.

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All sections of this form with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC)		
<b>*First name</b>	Fiona		
<b>*Last name</b>	Blight		
<b>Postal address</b>	74 Shotover Street, Queenstown, Otago, 9300		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	s 9(2)(a)
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
<p><b><u>Summary of QLDC Comments</u></b></p> <p>A cable car that is part of the public transport solution for Queenstown is not fanciful. However, realistically there is only one opportunity for a public transport cable car system, and it is vital that any system advanced is the right one and in the right location.</p> <p>QLDC is supportive of public transport systems that extend the planned and approved transport improvements programme that is in place. Extensions to the public transport network is a key part of the Regional Deal. The opportunity to expand the public transport network is supported where that expansion supplements the existing network and any planned and approved improvements to it.</p> <p>QLDC is unable to confirm that this public transport cable car project is the right one and would have regionally (or nationally) significant benefits (in terms of the FTAA<sup>1</sup> referral criteria). This is because the application does not provide sufficient information to demonstrate its feasibility and long-term viability with certainty. QLDC considers the timing of this referral application may be premature, and</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Fast Track Approvals Act 2024.

more appropriate in future when the project can demonstrate it can be delivered on through providing the information and evidence to show it has resolved the following –

- Buy in and Approval to operate a Public Transport System –

- This cable car proposal has not been identified as a priority project in any regional or local plans including the QLDC Spatial Plan.
- QLDC understands that the Public Transport Authority, in this case Otago Regional Council (ORC), is yet to provide the necessary approval.
- The NZTA funding pathway is not resolved, with clear consideration of governance and contractual arrangements.
- Full agreement from the QLDC and ORC and other required agencies that this is the cable car public transport solution for Queenstown is required.

**Note:** *without the above three things the question is raised as to whether the project constitutes public transport, and therefore the benefits that come with that can be realised, which is paramount to its feasibility.*

- How the stations will genuinely capture walk up patronage – currently a number of the stations are isolated away from surrounding urban walk-up catchments (and no future urban areas are proposed under the QLDC spatial plan in these areas), and no park or kiss and ride are currently proposed.
- How the cable car system will supplement and work with the wider public transport network – not replace it as suggested in the application (which is a concern given the narrow linear nature of the cable car servicing a specific area of Queenstown only, and the isolated nature of some stations).

**Note:** *There is opportunity for realignment of the route and stations to better capture existing and future walk-up urban catchments in line with the QLDC Spatial Plan, better integration to supplement the existing public transport network, and not impact on key council reserves as discussed further below. The ability to explore such opportunities for this project could be lost if this project is referred in its current form to the substantive application stage, because the current form and scope would then be set in place (albeit with the referral application containing two route options in the Frankton area).*

- It can physically be constructed, operated and maintained –

- Private land and public landowner approvals have not yet been secured – what property mechanisms are proposed to secure the required property rights long term? Noting that the applicant is not a Requiring Authority and would not be able to rely on designation powers or the Public Works Act that would typically be used by Government for similar projects.
- Some of the public land approvals require approval by QLDC Full Council (elected members) and public notification processes outside the control of the FTAA. QLDC will need to comply with its statutory obligations under the LGA.

- The cable car routes traverse QLDC designations<sup>2</sup> where approval from QLDC under RMA<sup>3</sup> section 176 can only be given if the cable car doesn't prevent or hinder the public community use authorised by the designation – this approval sits outside the control of the FTAA and there is not enough information in the application to provide comfort that the cable car will not hinder or prevent QLDC's designated public community uses.
- A Funding pathway is agreed or secured to construct, operate and maintain the cable car –
  - The application places heavy reliance on currently unsecured public funding from QLDC, (ORC), and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).
  - Ongoing maintenance and operating costs for the cable car network are not detailed, representing a significant gap in assessing long-term economic feasibility – costs that are likely to be very significant in scale and ones that shouldn't fall on a small ratepayer base.
  - Should public funding not be secured the application states the alternative is to construct, operate and maintain a private commercial system heavily reliant on customer patronage. This would not constitute a public transport system and there is lack of information on:
    - how a private cable car would integrate physically with the public transport network.
    - what occurs if patronage doesn't meet the financial demands? Will the District be left with a private "white elephant" defunct cable car system?
    - how a private cable car would be regionally significant.

QLDC has commissioned two peer reviews to support its comments –

- An economic peer review by Market Economics (attached as **Appendix A**).
- A transport peer review by Mott MacDonald – which supplements the inhouse expert comment provided by Councils Property and Infrastructure team (attached as **Appendix B**).

QLDC's economic peer review states that the economic assessments provided with the application make conceivable cases that regionally significant benefits can be delivered by the Queenstown Cable Car, but the scale, certainty, and feasibility of these benefits are not robustly demonstrated and rely on unsubstantiated claims and assumptions.

QLDC's transport peer review highlights information gaps as set out above.

Three other technical memorandum are attached to this written comment in **Appendices C, D and E**.

Also attached to this written comment in **Appendices F, G and H** are Elected Member statements from QLDC elected Councillors. When the FTAA legislation was introduced, QLDC sought clarification from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)/Ministry for the Environment (MfE) on expectations on

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<sup>2</sup> QLDC notes this applies to any designation of another Requiring Authority as well.

<sup>3</sup> Resource Management Act 1991.

from whom within a local authority could Comments under section 17 and section 53 FTAA come from (i.e. was the expectation that comments would be technical ones from officers and / or comments from Elected Members). The advice provided back to QLDC was that it was its choice regarding technical officer and / or Elected Member statements. QLDC has chosen to provide technical officer comments and expert peer reviews (as necessary) and separately has provided the opportunity for its Elected Members to provide a separate Elected Member Statement on a project as they have been elected by the community to have views on matters that affect the community.

### **Foreword**

The following and attached appendices constitutes QLDC written comments made in response to the invitation from the Minister under section 17(1)(a) and (3)(a) and (b) of the Act in relation to the application for referral of the Queenstown Cable Car (QCC) project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA or Act).

Within the sub-sections below, QLDC also responds to the specific request made to QLDC under section 20 of the FTAA, which asks “whether the Council considers the project would have significant regional or national benefits, and in that context, whether the Council has any high-level comments on the project’s alignment with any respective plans, policies or strategies”.

### **S17(3)(a) - Competing Applications**

QLDC is not aware of any applications that have been lodged with it that would be competing applications if a substantive application for the project were lodged.

### **S17(3)(b) - Existing resource consents to which Sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the Resource Management Act 1991 would apply**

QLDC is not aware of any existing resource consents relevant to this site or proposal where 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI would apply.

### **S17(1)(a) - Additional Comments**

In providing written comment on the referral application, QLDC has considered the requirements set out in Sections 3, 10, 11, 13, 17, 21 and 22 of the Act.

### **Consultation**

Consultation with QLDC prior to lodging the referral application is mandatory. Engagement to date with QLDC staff has been at an officer level, insufficient, and it is emphasised that no formal approvals of investment, ownership, partnership, servicing, or infrastructure agreements exist, nor are currently being progressed formally with QLDC.

### **QLDC Technical Memorandum and Peer Reviews attached to these comments**

QLDC has prepared the following technical memorandum from its expert internal staff which form part of QLDC comments on this application, and these have been used to inform the comments below:

- Transport, three-waters servicing, and other infrastructure matters – expert from Councils Property and Infrastructure team (attached as **Appendix C**).
- Council Property matters – expert from Councils Property and Infrastructure team (attached as **Appendix D**).
- Council Parks and Reserves matters - expert from Councils Community Services team (attached as **Appendix E**).

QLDC commissioned independent expert peer reviews which form part of QLDC comments on this application, and these have been used to inform the comments below –

- Review of Economic Assessments for Queenstown Cable Car Fast Track Application – prepared for QLDC by Market Economics (attached as **Appendix A**).
  - This report includes comments addressing the Economic Assessment prepared by ECPC Limited and Economic Assessment prepared by Property Economics, as well as the Transport Assessment prepared by ARC Advisory NZ.
- Review of Transport Assessment for Queenstown Cable Car Fast Track Application – prepared for QLDC by Mott MacDonald (attached as **Appendix B**).
  - This report includes comments with respect to the Transport Assessment prepared by ARC Advisory NZ and Planning Report prepared by Town Planning Group.

As stated in the Summary of QLDC Comments **Appendices F, G and H** contain Elected Member Statements which also form part of QLDC’s comment on this application.

**Does Council consider the project would have significant regional or national benefits?**

In conclusion, QLDC is unable to confirm that this public transport cable car project is the right one and would have regionally (or nationally) significant benefits (in terms of the FTAA referral criteria). This is because the application does not provide sufficient information to demonstrate its feasibility with certainty, including whether the Cable Car routes are in the correct location.

QLDC considers the timing of this referral application may be premature, and more appropriate in future when the project can demonstrate it can be delivered through providing the information and evidence to show it has resolved the number of information gaps and concerns raised in the below comments, and the supporting technical memorandum and peer reviews. These gaps and concerns have also been summarised in the Executive Summary above.

As part of the criteria for accepting a referral application, the application must constitute infrastructure or development that would have a significant regional or national benefit. The project constitutes infrastructure. The benefits of the proposal are discussed within the application, which, as assessed at a qualitative level, are broadly plausible and at that qualitative level it is agreed that there is a credible case that the QCC could deliver economic benefits at the required scale. However, the scale and certainty of these benefits are not sufficiently demonstrated in the application, and the feasibility of the project overall is also not sufficiently demonstrated in the application.

Key benefits described in the application rely on unverified counterfactuals, and in particular:

- delayed public transport upgrades to 2039 – this assumption is a critical to the application success;
- minimal quantification – e.g. no methodology on how time is saved or on how land values have been calculated;
- no scenario testing – e.g. no discussion on changes to tourism growth projections, or on alternative partial public transport implementation;
- limited transparency over assumptions – e.g. unsubstantiated calculations and inflated passenger numbers; and
- risk of double counting across benefits (e.g. qualitative benefits claimed), and wider economic effects – e.g. changes in land form, land values, agglomeration productivity and investment around stations.

The above bullet points are further discussed in the attached appendices.

QLDC acknowledges that the proposal responds to an identified transport constraint affecting travel efficiency, network resilience, and potentially broader land use outcomes<sup>4</sup> within Queenstown. However, the economic evidence supporting the application contains notable limitations that affect confidence in the scale and timing of the economic benefits claimed under s22(2)(a)(ii)–(iv) of the FTAA.

In terms of funding, the option of a cable car solution (along with the route and station locations) has been identified through a Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) undertaken by the applicant where the preferred option identified was for a public transport service that supersedes elements of the public transport programme jointly approved by a partnership of QLDC, ORC and NZTA. Unfortunately, the MCA information in the application does not contain the level of detail required to understand the criteria used or the source of all the inputs. QLDC's position is that the Bus Max solution remains as the preferred core public transport solution, while acknowledging the need to supplement (not supersede) it with additional capacity, such as a cable car, given current network limitations. As stated above, an off line public transport option, such as a cable car or similar solution, is not considered to be fanciful. Rather, in this case, its merits, effects and benefits remain highly uncertain due to this application being premature, as evidenced by the level of the many uncertainties and gaps outlined herein in relation to the application information and the basis for the proposal's feasibility. Until these critical gaps are filled QLDC cannot confirm whether this is the right offline public transport solution.

Importantly, there is no written support from the Public Transport Authority (ORC), no NZTA funding pathway, and no clear consideration of governance and contractual arrangements. Subsequently, the question as to whether the project constitutes public transport, and therefore the benefits that come with that can be realised, which is paramount to its feasibility. This is not adequately addressed within the referral application.

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. better accessibility to public transport may enable higher densities in walk up catchments.

QLDC acknowledges that written agreement from landowners (QLDC and private entities) is a requirement for a substantive application not a referral. However, QLDC raises a concern that all property required for this project (70 pages of titles included in the application) is substantial, and for QLDC, land approval is subject to legislative processes outside of the FTAA that require public notification and a decision from Full Council (Elected Members). Legislative processes out of the applicant's control. Given the large volume of landowner approvals required and the uncertainty of being able to obtain them, QLDC considers this is another reason why this referral application is premature.

Ongoing costs of the maintenance and general upkeep associated with the public transport cable car network are not detailed in the application and this is considered a critical and significant oversight and is fundamental to consideration of long-term economic feasibility of any referral application that must manage ongoing costs appropriately to ensure success. These costs are likely to be very significant in scale. Should this project be considered public transport, these costs would fall upon the relevant local authorities (and NZTA) which could detract from their ability to fund other planned transport infrastructure upgrades. It is important that these costs are not passed to local ratepayers without significant consideration of the implications of that on the already highly overburdened small ratepayer base within the Queenstown community. In this regard, it is important to consider the Queenstown transport network in a holistic manner and how it is funded operationally and for Capex investment, and the project should not detract from the ability for any supplementary solutions or improvements. The impact of ongoing maintenance and operational costs on the community, if the community are ultimately required to fund the ongoing operation of the proposed Cable Car, should not be underestimated for a proposal such as this with no guarantees of ticket revenue to cover such significant operational and maintenance costs. As no reasonable information has been provided in the application relating to this QLDC consider the referral application is premature.

Accordingly, while the project may contribute to addressing identified transport constraints and has theoretically plausible pathways to providing economic benefit, the current evidence base provided in the application is considered insufficient to demonstrate at a quantifiable (not qualitative) level the extent to which the proposal meets the statutory tests under s22(2)(a)(ii)–(iv) of the FTAA.

**In context of regional or national benefits, does the Project align with any respective plans, policies or strategies?**

Queenstown Lakes Strategic Documents

Growth issues for the Queenstown Lakes District are well documented within the QLDC Spatial Plan, its supporting documents, and other strategic strategy documents. A public transport system that operates offline to the roading network is supported, providing it will supplement the existing, planned and approved public transport network, and the Spatial Plan programme of interventions to manage growth. Recently, Council officers have begun to better understand more strategic level inputs to the districts transport networks – particularly NZTA's Strategic Network Plan for the Whakatipu Basin and the Regional Deal discussions around transport. QLDC's perspective is that an offline public transport system should:

- Connect with priority growth areas under the spatial plan.

- Connect with and into areas that will be intensified.
- Be affordable (similar to the current bus fare level).

Presently, this proposal excludes wider catchment areas around the Queenstown Town Centre and suburbs such as Fernhill, Lakeview, Arthurs Point, and the areas along Frankton Road between the CBD and Frankton. As stated earlier this public transport cable car proposed stations in isolated locations that are not in areas identified for growth in the current Spatial Plan. QLDC generally fund minor public transport related infrastructure (i.e. bus stops and shelters) but cannot, nor is it expected to, financially support the major levels of project interventions that would be required for this offline public transport solution or any future expansion of it. Details of funding, particularly expectations of tolls, levies, and rates are currently missing from the application.

#### Proposed District Plan (PDP)

##### *Chapter 3, Strategic Direction*

The Strategic Direction chapter of the PDP sets out the overall strategic direction for the management of growth, land use, and development in a manner that ensures sustainable management of the Queenstown Lakes District's special qualities, which includes '*compact and connected settlements that encourage public transport, biking and walking*'.

QLDC acknowledges that the proposal would generally align with this strategic direction if confirmed as public transport and if located in appropriate locations within the District's settlements (as noted earlier there are stations proposed that are more isolated from current and future planned urban areas). Although this chapter does not explicitly refer to transport, a key strategic objective is: '*Urban growth is managed in a strategic and integrated manner*' which is to be achieved through the following:

- a. promote a compact, well designed and integrated urban form;*
- b. build on historical urban settlement patterns;*
- c. achieve a built environment that provides desirable, healthy and safe places to live, work and play;*
- d. minimise the natural hazard risk, taking into account the predicted effects of climate change;*
- e. protect the District's rural landscapes from sporadic and sprawling urban development;*
- f. ensure a mix of housing opportunities including access to housing that is more affordable for residents to live in;*
- g. contain a high quality network of open spaces and community facilities; and*
- h. be integrated with existing, and proposed infrastructure and appropriately manage effects on that infrastructure.*

While there are clear instances of alignment between the proposal and the above objective, further information that addresses the information gaps identified throughout these comments is necessary to confirm the proposal achieves the strategic direction of the PDP.

#### *Chapter 4, Urban Development*

This chapter encourages *'A compact, integrated and well-designed urban form within the Urban Growth Boundaries that: is coordinated with the efficient provision, use and operation of infrastructure and services'*

Several relevant objectives are assessed within the application, although uncertainties remain for this project regarding the unrealised potential of an offline public transport system, specifically in terms of the route alignment and stations being close to existing and emerging urban areas, which the Queenstown Hill Station, Lake Johnston Station, Ferry Hill Station are not. . There is opportunity for realignment of the route and stations to better capture existing and future walk-up urban catchments in line with the QLDC Spatial Plan, and better integration to supplement the existing public transport network. The ability to explore such opportunities for this project could be lost if this project is referred in its current form to the substantive application stage, because the current form and scope would then be set in place and could not be amended in scope (route and station locations) for a substantive application.

The proposal otherwise traverses a large number of differing land types and zones within the PDP, being the High Density Residential, Informal Recreation, Rural, Local Shopping Centre, Road, Lower Density Residential Suburban (Option A for Airport Station only), Airport (Option B for Airport Station only), Quail Rise Special Zone (ODP), Medium Density Residential, Wakatipu Basin Rural Amenity, Large Lot Residential A, Te Pūtahi Ladies Mile, Community Purpose, Frankton Flats Special Zone A, Frankton Flats Special Zone B. A number of District Plan rules within these zones will be breached by this project, but that, along with the assessment of the proposal against the objectives and policies of the District Plan (strategic, district wide and zones) is a matter for a substantive application should this project be referred and a substantive application made. The critical strategic objectives and policies of the District Plan have been addressed above and further in the sections below (as relevant).

#### **Further Comment on Application Information Gaps and Resulting Issues for QLDC**

Unless indicated otherwise, the below comments draw from the technical memorandum and peer reviews attached as appendices to these comments.

##### **Land Acquisition**

The application traverses a significant number of landholdings, including public, private, and Crown owned land, encompassing land designated in the QLDC District Plan for infrastructure and transport, and land reserved for recreation. A list of affected Records of Title is provided with the application, which is approximately 70 pages in length. Presently, QLDC is not aware of any existing agreements nor active formal discussions on the acquisition of this land, and certainly no agreements have been made with QLDC.

Agreement from landowners, including QLDC, to use land (or airspace above land) for this project is outside the control of the FTAA process. The application gives no information on how the applicant is proposing to acquire the necessary land for the project or agreements for use of land impacted by this proposal. QLDC notes the applicant is not a Requiring Authority and would not be able to rely on

designation powers that would typically be used by Government agencies/Councils for similar projects, nor can the applicant rely on powers of the Public Works Act.

Within the identified landholdings, property administered by QLDC is identified, comprising freehold titles, a Local Purpose Transport Reserve, and various Community and Recreation Reserves. Whilst the FTAA does provide direction on achieving concession for use of reserve land, this is contingent on written agreement from the local authority, being QLDC. Subsequently, any pathway to enable access to QLDC land will materially involve decisions of the Full Council. There may also need to be public notification processes undertaken as well as required by the Local Government Act.

Further, QLDC is the Requiring Authority of several designations on land the project seeks to pass through (land and airspace). Approval from QLDC under RMA section 176 can only be given if the cable car proposal doesn't prevent or hinder the public community use authorised by the designation – this approval sits outside the control of the FTAA and there is not enough information in the application to provide comfort that the cable car will not hinder or prevent QLDC's designated public community uses at this point.

The QLDC reserve network is heavily relied upon to deliver this project, with several stations located within Reserve Land. The reliance of the proposal on the reserve network places a burden on public land set aside for community sport, recreation or beautification which the application has not sufficiently addressed.

#### Transport

QLDC is supportive of the concept of an offline public transport system to extend the planned and approved transport improvements programme. Critically, an offline system should supplement planned upgrades, not replace. The proposal as it stands does not adequately present an offline system that QLDC can support because of the lack of information in the application to provide certainty of integration, feasibility and long-term viability.

A cable car offline public transport system is not a new concept to QLDC and has been explored in detail previously as a viable option. However, it is acknowledged that there will realistically be one chance to implement such a system, therefore it is important that the eventually approved system and network is the right one and is as optimised as possible to ensure any benefits or positive effects are realised.

Key concerns with this proposal relate to the number of isolated stations with limited catchments, with several proposed stations not servicing major trip attractors or population bases (Ferry Hill, Quail Rise, Frankton North, Queenstown Hill, and Lake Johnston Station) or not serving as efficient points of interchange. In this regard, it is considered the proposal does not maximise its potential and weakens its effectiveness. A greater focus on the station locations and integration with both existing and proposed public transport networks is critical in enabling an assessment of the transport effects. In addition, the stations are largely located on the periphery of planned urban development, creating restricted catchments and potentially hindering modal shift.

The operational capacity within the ECPC Limited report provided with the application identifies a maximum of up to 3000 passengers per hour, in each direction. However, it is unlikely that these numbers will be realised by the proposal or if they are it will be for very limited hours during the day. Users (from the airport) will likely prefer to travel within their groups, due to comfortability and security reasons, or the number of users within a cabin may reduce due to luggage or snow gear associated with visitors arriving from the airport.

Additionally, the demand for use is not sufficiently explored as part of the application. It is reasonable to consider that visitors to the area are generally not seeking to be confined to those catchments that the proposal serves. For example, visitors may, and currently do, defer in many instances to a rental vehicle to enable exploration of the wider Queenstown Lakes area, including ski-fields, the Wanaka and Upper Clutha environs and major attractions near the area such as Milford Sound, Aoraki Mt Cook et cetera. Greater consideration should be given to the necessary modal shift and how this can be facilitated, either through integration with existing and future public transport networks (including the Bus Max programme), park and ride facilities, or similar.

QLDC also has concerns regarding the functional height of the cable car infrastructure in relation to public roads. The application does not provide any cross-section details or non-station tower location details or longitudinal cable sag curves demonstrating that the cable car infrastructure can co-exist within the existing or proposed amended road environments whilst still providing a safe and efficient road network. This includes appropriate height clearances above roads and other QLDC infrastructure (i.e. sports fields at QEC where the proposed 5.8m clearance is considered to be inadequate). The current information is deficient in this area. There is also concern regarding the low clearance height for the cable car above public roads which will have an impact on the ability of higher heavy vehicles being able to safely navigate the road.

#### Noise

The application includes an acoustic assessment prepared by Marshall Day. The high-level conclusions of this assessment state that there is a risk that both construction and operational noise will exceed noise limits in terms of the District Plan and section 16 RMA. Operational noise focuses on noise around the stations, including in terms of cable car operation. Other operational noise is focused on recreational users below the cable car along the top of Queenstown Hill, Lake Johnston and Ferry Hill. QLDC notes that the proposed cable car route through the airport, Frankton Flats and Ladies Mile area will traverse above/near to urban areas including where dwellings are located, and the noise assessment currently contains little if any information on any noise that will be generated as cable cars traverse across pylon structures.

#### Infrastructure and Servicing

An infrastructure assessment has been provided with the application outlining how stations would be serviced for potable water, firefighting, wastewater, and stormwater. Several stations (Airport, Frankton Bus Hub, Queenstown, Frankton North, Five Mile) are expected to place low demand on Council networks and are located near existing infrastructure, with no immediate concerns raised.

Other stations fall outside of the serviced network areas and present more complex servicing needs: Lake Johnson, Queenstown Hill, and Ferry Hill. Lower Shotover and Ladies Mile depend on future Ladies Mile three-waters infrastructure; and Quail Rise is feasible for potable/wastewater connections but again presents an unquantified demand. Solid waste and refuse effects are not assessed, and construction/operational waste management would be required.

Servicing feasibility is further constrained where stations fall outside approved Council servicing areas, meaning reticulated solutions cannot yet be confirmed. Additional matters include the absence of route protection detail across private land. Overall, while some stations appear serviceable subject to design and developer funding, others require future network extensions and quantified demand before feasibility could be supported.

Alignment with existing and proposed infrastructure is not explicitly demonstrated within the application, with no cross sections provided demonstrating how the proposed stations and cable car features will interact with existing roads and associated structures, towers, power facilities, built form, or existing underground infrastructure.

#### Landscape and Amenity

The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Amenity Effects assessment prepared by Brown NZ Limited, concluding that the project is 'largely acceptable from a landscape standpoint', although several recommendations are made for an emphasis on architectural detailing reflective of each station's location and context, as well as consideration of materials and colours for the cabins themselves.

QLDC has not sought a peer review for this referral stage.

QLDC acknowledges that the implementation of an offline rapid transit system will be concomitant with effects on landscape and amenity. This requires careful consideration when considering development in the form of a cable car system and particularly when it is proposed to traverse sensitive landscapes including Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs) in the Queenstown Lakes District and add significantly to the attraction of tourism and associated benefits to the District and wider New Zealand. QLDC would strongly suggest that any expert landscape evidence for a substantive application be independently peer reviewed to fully and appropriately understand both the effects of any identified mitigation measures and potential for additional measures. If QLDC were the regulator and decision maker in this instance, it would certainly require expert and independent peer reviews to consider landscape effects of such a significant proposal on sensitive landscapes.

#### Urban Design

The application is accompanied by an Urban Design assessment prepared by Jasmox, identifying potential adverse effects related to the height of the stations/cabins, amenity values including privacy and outlook, and shadowing and daylight admission, with positive effects largely pertaining to high level benefits associated with connectivity, urban renewal, functionality or urban environments, which

are noted to *'[go] somewhat to offset potential localised and relatively minimal adverse amenity effects on existing residential properties'*.

QLDC has not sought a peer review for this referral stage.

The implementation of a cable car system and associated stations will necessitate reasonably significant infrastructure within established urban areas and adverse effects relevant to urban design will be unavoidable. The provided planning report notes that *'While localised visual and amenity impacts will occur around specific stations, these are minor, short-term, and offset by the Project's contribution to connectivity, public realm quality, and sustainable urban growth.'* It is not apparent that these effects will be minor, nor short term, and QLDC recommend consideration be given to those properties nearest the proposed stations and near the cableway and passing cable cars proposed. QLDC would strongly suggest that any expert urban design evidence for a substantive application be independently peer reviewed to completely understand both the effects of any identified mitigation measures and potential for additional measures.


**Managers signoff**



Fiona Blight

Manager Resource Consents Planning and Development  
Queenstown Lakes District Council

30 January 2026



# Review of Economic Assessments for Queenstown Cable Car Fast Track Application

29 January 2026

m.e  
consulting



# Review of Economic Assessments for Queenstown Cable Car Fast Track Application

## Prepared for



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# 1 Introduction

Market Economics (ME) have been commissioned by Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) to provide a peer review of the economic evidence submitted in support of Southern Infrastructure Limited's application to construct and operate the proposed Queenstown Cable Car (QCC). This application seeks referral under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). The purpose of this review is to evaluate whether the applicant's economic evidence is robust, supported by evidence and proportionate to the scale of the project.

This peer review does not re-perform the applicant's modelling or develop a standalone economic appraisal. Instead, it tests the reliability of the evidence base of the applicant at this referral stage. The economic reports seek to address three statutory questions under s 22(2) of the FTAA.

- Whether the project delivers regionally or nationally significant infrastructure s 22(2)(a)(ii).
- Whether it increases the supply of housing / contributes to a well-functioning urban environment s 22(2)(a)(iii).
- Whether it delivers significant economic benefits s 22(2)(a)(iv).

This review has examined three of the applicant's reports.

- Report 13 – Economic Assessment by ECPC Limited (28 October 2025)
- Report 14 – Economics Assessment by Property Economics (October 2025)
- Report 15 – Transport Assessment by Arc Advisory Aotearoa (22 October 2025)

Each report is reviewed individually and then assessed collectively for cross-cutting issues, including the validity of key assumptions and consistency of approach. The review aims to provide QLDC with a clear understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, risks and limitations of the applicant's economic case at this stage of the Fast-track process.

# 2 Report 13 – Economic Assessment by ECPC

## 2.1 Summary

The ECPC report considers transport effects, tourism-related benefits, wider economic impacts and the project’s alignment with the FTAA economic criteria. Four categories of economic effects are identified.

- A. **Direct Construction and Operation of the QCC.** GDP and employment will be associated with the Capex and Opex. Detailed quantification of these effects is deferred to the Property Economics report. (The stated cost in the report of \$400bn is an error.)
- B. **Transport Effects.** Travel time savings, improved reliability and the potential to defer or change planned investments for SH6A and the bus network. These effects rely on the transport analysis provided by Arc Advisory.
- C. **International Tourism Effects.** Removal of a transport constraint is argued to unlock “unmet demand” for Queenstown, generating tourism GDP-related benefits.
- D. **Wider Economic Benefits.** Changes in urban form, land values, agglomeration productivity and investment around stations.

The ECPC report distinguishes between:

- “Incremental benefits” (B, C, D) – defined as those over and above the counterfactual; and
- “GDP contribution” (A + B + C + D) – which includes economic activity associated with building and operating the project. (This is not the same as net public benefit.)

A critical assumption is that the public transport improvements identified in the Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (2024)<sup>1</sup> are delayed until 2039, resulting in prolonged congestion on SH6A in the counterfactual. The QCC is assumed to be operational by 2029, providing “offline” transport between the Airport, Frankton and the town centre.

## 2.2 Economic Effects

Effect A is deferred to the Property Economics report. We review that report in Section 3.

### 2.2.1 Effect B – Transport Effects

The ECPC asserts that the QCC will lower transport costs, offer travel time and reliability benefits, and may defer the public costs required to upgrade the road and bus network. Each year the project is deferred is considered to provide a saving equivalent to the annual cost of funds, estimated to sit between \$6m and \$15m annually (i.e., the cost of borrowing \$200m - \$500m).

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<sup>1</sup> [Queenstown Public Transport Business Case](#) – Otago Regional Council (2024)

Another reported benefit is the option to learn from the cable car's construction and operation. Earlier studies are referred to but not referenced explicitly. The value of options is to be considered for subsequent project phases.

### ***ME Comment***

- Transport costs becoming lower is neither quantified nor explained. The role of prospective cable car ticket pricing on welfare and demand is ignored, too.
- The claim that QCC allows deferral or cancellation of \$200-\$500m investment is significant, though the figures have no reference. There is no explicit lifecycle comparison of the options, no schedule or indication of which works are assumed to be deferred or modelling of city-wide network performance under QCC vs bus investment strategies. This needs to be treated as a qualitative strategic benefit.
- The deferral of public costs ignores the costs imposed by delay and negative effects of policy inertia. It is fair to assume the planned public infrastructure projects would also have a positive net effect, so ignoring them is overly simplistic.
- The reported benefit of learning from the cable car's construction and operation is not explained. Other studies are referred to but not referenced. It is difficult to evaluate the value of learnings using the detail provided in the report (at this stage). This is liable to be small.

## **2.2.2 Effect C – International Tourism**

Tourism benefits the economy beyond direct visitor spending. The ECPC notes that visitor demand in Queenstown is growing, and SH6A will become a binding constraint very soon. The existing transport corridor will be unable to carry the number of visitors projected over the coming years, making it responsible for foregone spending. It is also anecdotally responsible for reducing current visitor spending relative to what would otherwise be achievable. This is also alluded to in the Queenstown Business Case (2020).<sup>2</sup>

### ***ME Comment***

- The mechanisms by which these benefits might be realised are plausible in principle, but unsubstantiated in the report.
- No data is provided to show that visitors cancel, shorten or avoid trips because of congestion. Nor is there evidence that spending is reduced. Visitors may simply spend the same amount in other parts of the district or not change spending patterns at all. Data sources do exist to address these questions, but are not used to make the argument here.
- It is unclear how many visitors actually require travelling into the town centre and whether this is representative of the high-value tourism segment. More analysis into other visitor journeys that are affected by the congestion might be expected with the next stage of application.
- Airports are commonly located on city fringes and moderate travel times are typical. This is not contextualised.

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<sup>2</sup> [Queenstown Business Case](#) – Waka Kotahi (2020)

- The QLDC visitor growth projection being below historic averages and below a single global tourism forecast is cited as implying that local infrastructure will constrain tourist growth in Queenstown. Those forecasts are themselves heavily assumption driven and opaque<sup>3</sup>. Many possible factors can explain the divergence between the forecasts such as
  - Macroeconomic drivers in key markets;
  - Exchange rates;
  - Destination marketing;
  - Evolving preferences for different types of tourism; and
  - Airline fares.
- The line at the end of paragraph 33, “*Note, importantly, this is not less tourism GDP than at present but rather less tourism GDP than can be reasonably expected.*” does not make sense, especially considering the claims above that traffic suppresses spending.
- GDP in the district has increased, but per capita GDP growth has been lower in Queenstown Lakes than New Zealand over the past 2 decades (12% vs 21%).<sup>4</sup> Tourism is a large contributor to GDP, but the extent to which its growth is required to make the region richer is questionable. Growing visitor numbers crudely is unlikely to be the answer.

### 2.2.3 Effect D – Wider Economic Effects

The ECPC report asserts that QCC would generate a range of wider economic effects beyond transport and tourism. These include:

- Releasing transport constraints limiting housing development in the Eastern Corridor;
- Increasing accessibility and thereby improving land values, rents and development feasibility;
- Generating agglomeration benefits;
- Stimulating commercial development around stations; and
- Improving town centre amenity by reducing congestion, parking pressure and safety risk, while providing an additional travel option.

ECPC states that 34% of the 30-year new housing projections is apparently subject to transport constraints that either bus upgrades or QCC could alleviate. The Alonso-Muth-Mills (AMM) model is referenced to justify links between accessibility and land values.

It is suggested that some future housing developments are “semi-dependent” on QCC, though they would still progress in the absence of QCC following SH6A upgrades. The section concludes that the wider effects contribute positively to the economic elements of the FTAA requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> I haven’t been able to open the link used in footnote #3 of the report. However, the QLDC website suggests these are just historic extrapolations + some International Visitor Survey forecasts. These don’t seem to have been released since 2019 so are very old. Sensible forecasts would be updated after the Covid-19 pandemic period.

<sup>4</sup> [Regional Economic Activity](#) – Infometrics. If you take growth in the years to 2019, it is roughly parity between New Zealand and Queenstown.

## ***ME Comment***

- The assertion that 34% of future housing supply is transport constrained doesn't have a clear methodological explanation. The report does not show how constrained areas were identified, or considerations of zoning, infrastructure sequencing, or market readiness.
- The applicability of the AMM model in the Queenstown context is questionable. That framework links accessibility to land values in monocentric cities, but Queenstown has numerous features which make it unique. Topography, geology, views, lake frontage, the natural environment, proximity to recreation or other lifestyle factors all have strong influence for certain consumer markets in Queenstown. Distance to the CBD is one of many determinants of value. Applying AMM in a simplified manner risks overstating accessibility-driven land value changes.
- Much of the logic in this section makes sense – that improved accessibility should make the existing housing stock more desirable and thus more development feasible. This is not quantified yet, however.
- The process to quantify agglomeration benefits is well detailed in the literature and official data sources. NZTA provides a thorough framework requiring employment data, sector elasticities and effective job density metrics. None of these are incorporated into the ECPC analysis. The discussion suggests that values are indicative rather than calculated.
- The assessment only considers positive amenity impacts from less traffic on roads and associated reductions in congestion, parking and safety. These should be weighed against any potential negative amenity impacts.

## **2.3 Additional Comments on Report**

### **2.3.1 Counterfactual specification**

The assumed delay of all SH6A upgrades until 2039 is central. This potentially inflates travel time, reliability benefits and unmet demand for tourism. There is no clear reconciliation with NZTA or QLDC intentions or funding processes. Accordingly, the incremental benefits (B – D) are likely overstated relative to more realistic transport investment pathways.

No costs are included anywhere in the ECPC report, nor is there an attempt to be balanced.

### **2.3.2 Transparency and quantification**

The order-of-magnitude benefits table (Table 1), and the associated benefits discussion has effectively no traceable methodology. Some of the benefits are briefly described but in no detail. This prevents any level of informed decision-making. We cannot replicate or stress-test any of this analysis.

### **2.3.3 Wider economic benefits**

Several of the benefits are also discussed qualitatively in the Property Economics report. There is a high risk that various factors are being counted multiple times. There needs to be a unified cost benefit ledger. Claims should be carefully rationalised and, where they are derivative of standard transport benefits, not be added as separate, additional benefits.

The housing-related GDP numbers should not be incremental benefits attributable to QCC without a clear causal chain and explicit counterfactual development scenarios.

### **2.3.4 Other useful areas of analysis**

Other useful areas of analysis that would assist are:

- Calculations of average travel times through the years.
- Quantification of time lost due to travel.
- Estimates of travel time on QCC and associated time saved under different sensitivity assumptions.
- Monetise the cost of this time saved.

Reducing commute times is about the only factor in the wellbeing literature that unequivocally raises wellbeing scores, everywhere in the world, for every sub-demographic and circumstance. This should be emphasised in the rationale.

# 3 Report 14 – Property Economics (PE) Economics Impact Assessment

## 3.1 Summary

The Property Economics (PE) report provides an input–output based economic impact analysis focused on construction and development effects within the Otago regional economy.

The report is a short Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) of the QCC proposal, focussed on the economic injection into the Otago regional economy and associated employment. It is framed around the FTAA s 22(2) criteria for significant infrastructure, housing/well-functioning urban environment and significant economic benefits.

The report highlights infrastructure constraints and challenges linked to population and visitor growth forecasts, including step changes required to change transport modes, and the unfeasibility of SH6A capacity increases from the Queenstown Business Case (2020)<sup>5</sup>. Otago Regional Council have also emphasised the urgency of public transport investment in Queenstown<sup>6</sup>.

## 3.2 Quantified Effects

The EIA uses input-output based multipliers and regional retention assumptions to estimate the impacts of development, construction and some increased spend during development and operation. This is based on Stats NZ input-output tables, scaled for Otago. The \$519m capex is the driver of impacts.

The results are presented as a single point estimate of output and employment over the development period.

### *ME Comment*

The analysis is an economic impact / multiplier study, not an analysis of whether the project will be a net benefit to the region or New Zealand. It estimates how much regional GDP and employment activity may be associated with the project during development, ignoring any welfare or efficiency considerations. The quantified elements are gross activity measures, not net social benefits.

Peak construction employment of 796 is plausible given the project scale but there is no discussion of labour market tightness and whether these workers might be diverted from other Otago or New Zealand projects. Might there be wage effects or crowding out of other infrastructure or private sector construction? Could the

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<sup>5</sup> [Queenstown Business Case](#) – Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (2020)

<sup>6</sup> Page 4 of Property Economics report. From Queenstown Public Transport Business Case 2024:

short-term influx have consequences for rents/house prices or, ironically, traffic in the medium term? There is no consideration of these details.

The employment figures reflect gross job years. Some portion is likely to displace other activity, which is a standard limitation of multiplier analysis, but should be explicitly recognised.

Given the large degree of uncertainty, it is bold to provide single estimates based on one set of input parameters. The absence of scenario analysis limits confidence in the reported values. None of the inputs are explained, either. Testing could be used to show the impact of different capital cost profiles or changes in timing or staging.

### 3.3 Qualitative benefits

A list of qualitative benefits is provided. On this basis, the EIA concludes that the project satisfies the FTAA criteria for significant economic benefits. Many of these are repetitions of the ECPC's wider economic benefits section.

#### *ME Comment*

The project involves specialised cable car systems, which potentially rely on imported technology and offshore engineering. Other costs could be borne overseas, too. The EIA acknowledges this conceptually but provides no details about genuinely local components vs national or international expenditure. It is opaque on all calculations.

# 4 Report 15 – Transport Assessment (Arc Infrastructure Advisory)

## 4.1 Purpose and context

The Arc report outlines the proposed transport system, expected operational performance, integration with the wider network and high-level transport effects. An integrated Transport Assessment is to be completed for the substantive application, which will add detail to these findings.

## 4.2 Description of current problems

There is severe congestion on SH6A between Frankton and Queenstown. The corridor width and geographic constraints limit road widening. Substantial growth in visitors and residents is expected. Summarising the Queenstown Business Case (2020) and Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (2024), it states that a combination of online and offline public transport solutions is needed. There are practical limitations on improving journey times or reliability, and how much mode-shift-related benefits can be achieved in the long run.

### *ME Comment*

A key element of transport efficacy is journey predictability and reliability. Uncertainty is bad. QLDC 2024 Quality of Life Survey results suggest that cost of bus fare, service frequency and reliability prevent more of a shift to bus usage. Looking at the service, accessibility for need is also an issue for 40% of Queenstown-Whakatipu Ward residents, which was more than cited reliability, which conflicts with the factors highlighted by Arc.<sup>7</sup> This is an issue which may also exist for the cable car.

The source of the 2-3% annual increase in passenger numbers isn't provided. The latest report gives a 4% increase in 2024/25 FY from 2023/24, which is reportedly a lower level than the 2023/24 growth rate (which was very high). This would suggest more than 2-3%, though.<sup>8</sup>

The assessment describes a single route to Queenstown from the Airport, other than a 30km detour via Arthurs Point. To get from the Airport to town via Arthurs Point is 22km, adding 15km to the journey from the Airport, but less than 7km for any journeys starting East of the Shotover, making it a more viable alternative for some travellers.

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<sup>7</sup> [2024 Quality of Life Survey](#) – QLDC and Versus

<sup>8</sup> [Transport Network Monitoring Snapshot Report](#) – QLDC (Q1 2025/26)

## 4.3 Positive effects of QCC

- **Capacity:** QCC is said to add capacity approximately equivalent to “two extra lanes” in each direction, alleviating congestion on SH6A and SH6.
- **Journey times:** estimated 22-minute journey between the Airport and CBD (excluding walking/queue time), which is argued to be competitive with car/bus at peak.
- **Reliability:** cable car avoids road congestion, providing more predictable travel times, especially critical for airport trips.
- **Mode shift:** expected reduction in private vehicle demand and bus demand on SH6A, leading to fewer vehicles, less congestion and improved safety.
- **Network optimisation:** potential to reconfigure the bus network into a “spoke and hub” system, redeploying buses from SH6A to other routes and possibly removing Route 5.
- **Resilience:** provides an alternative route when SH6/SH6A are disrupted.
- **Policy alignment:** strong alignment with Policy Statement on Land Transport, Emissions Reduction Plan, regional plans, and Queenstown transport programmes.

ME has no major comments on these effects. Mott MacDonald has been engaged by QLDC separately to comment on transport-specific elements.

## 4.4 Adverse effects

Permanent adverse effects are assessed to be minimal. There is no reallocation of road space, which preserves existing capacity. There would be a potential local impact on Ross Street, but this is considered mitigatable through alternatives. It isn't clear what will cause this effect.

There will be localised traffic and traffic management effects around stations and interfaces with SH6/SH6A.

### *ME Comment*

This seems to assume that most people will walk or cycle to stations. These outcomes might be affected by luggage, weather or even road and terrain gradients at some destinations.

## 4.5 Approach for future Integrated Transport Assessment

A future ITA will undertake more comprehensive modelling and assessments on the pertinent aspects of the proposal.

## 4.6 Additional ME comments

### 4.6.1 Level of detail

The current assessment is largely descriptive and qualitative. The directional conclusions regarding capacity, reliability and mode shift are all sensible at this stage.

As with the economic reports, no sensitivity analysis is presented around lower patronage, slower growth, fare structures, or different public transport investment.

#### **4.6.2 Integration with economic reports**

This report is the main basis for the ECPC's transport benefits and real-options claims, but there is no clear specification of the counterfactual and project cases. Other data such as explicit volumes, passenger expenditure or speeds are also missing, which would be required for a more comprehensive economic analysis.

#### **4.6.3 Treatment of future public transport upgrades**

The report acknowledges ongoing investments as well as funding constraints and delivery risks for some of the programme elements. There is no development of scenario-based network futures, however. This is particularly relevant given the ECPC's counterfactual assumption of a delay until 2039. How this aligns with assumptions in the Arc assessment is unclear.

#### **4.6.4 Definitions and ambiguity**

The presentation of the travel time has no underpinning explanation or calculations, so it is difficult to scrutinise. The extent of variability and what constitutes the base time are not explained – I assume this is a long-term average. Peak times are also not defined.

#### **4.6.5 Growth Forecasts**

The forecast growth is for the whole of QLDC, including Wānaka, Hāwea and Luggate, which are places much less directly impacted by the SH6 issues.

#### **4.6.6 Travel mode substitutability**

It is unclear to what extent all travel into Queenstown is substitutable for cable car. For example, some travellers or workers might need a rental vehicle. Being a tourist in Queenstown without one could be restrictive, constraining movements to the walking catchment + tour operations.

## 5 Conclusions

- The narrative of need is coherent and supported by contextual evidence. Severe congestion, limited corridor capacity and strong growth forecasts demonstrate a need for investment in alternative public transport options.
- QLDC recognise the need for investment, hence the planned upgrades and references to the problems in the Queenstown Business Case (2020) and Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (2024). The economic analysis should consider whether this is the best solution, or indeed an options appraisal of the potential configurations.
- The scale and certainty of economic benefits are much less robust than the case for intervention. They rely on unverified counterfactuals and an incomplete consideration of all elements of the problem.
- In some ways, the analysis is proportionate for this stage of the application, but it prevents a full understanding of all the effects. None of the effects are fully considered.
- For QLDC, the key issue is not whether the QCC can generate benefits, but how much confidence can be placed on the magnitude and timing of benefits. It seems likely that there would be benefits from the project, though not what these would be relative to costs or alternative interventions.
- Given the level of public interest and potential contention in this project – and potential alternative options – the economics should be more diligent and compelling. It is clear that all sides have not been considered equally. The reports are too high level to weigh meaningfully.
- I acknowledge the potential benefits, but I do not consider it possible to determine whether there are *significant* economic benefits (in terms of s22 of the FTAA) at this stage.

# Appendix: Reviewers' CVs

**Gregory Akehurst**

Director

BA/BCom (Geography and Economics)

- Email Address: s 9(2)(a)
- Mobile Number: s 9(2)(a)
- Location: Auckland

## Professional Experience

- 2001 – 2025: Director, Market Economics Ltd
- 1996 – 2001: Senior Analyst, McDermott Fairgray Ltd.

Greg is a founding Director of Market Economics and has 30 years' experience consulting to a wide range of sectors in both the New Zealand and Australian markets. His experience covers assessment of market structure, size and change for development clients, economic impact assessment for commercial and government clients, as well as strategic policy, social infrastructure and amenity studies carried out for local councils. He has developed models to assess community needs and assess allocation networks set up to meet those needs. Greg leads 20-30 projects annually and has given expert witness evidence in local government hearings, before the EPA, the Environment Court and provided affidavits as an expert for the High Court.

Greg headed the team investigating the Canterbury Earthquake Rebuilds, labour force, materials and temporary housing requirements for government. In recent years he has led studies into infrastructure projects, Air Quality Impact modelling, as well as sector studies (Marine Industry, Quarrying and the aggregate sector and Construction). These studies draw together all aspects of inputs, to present central and local government with comprehensive assessments on economies' growth and change. Greg has also specialised in assessing Council funding mechanisms – in particular Development Contributions and Financial Contributions for both Councils and the development sector.

Greg authored the Guidebook for Growth Councils that needed to carry out non-residential land capacity and demand assessments to meet their obligations under the National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (NPS-UDC). He was Auckland Council's chief economic witness with respect to Business Land in the Unitary Plan Hearings and led a number of projects around the country investigating business land requirements under the NPS for high growth Councils (Auckland, Future Proof, Queenstown). Greg has also carried out numerous economic studies in support of Fast Track applications under the COVID-19 FT Bill and the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024. Greg is currently the independent expert on the Development Agreements Committee for Waikato District Council.

s 9(2)(a)

## Relevant Areas of Expertise

Spatial and Economic Analysis and Modelling | Input-Output Modelling | Urban and Regional Economics | Skills and Labour Force Modelling | Economic Growth Modelling | Supply and Demand Analysis | Sectoral and Specialist Market Analysis | Demand Analysis and Forecasting | Economic Impact Assessment | Policy Analysis and Advice | Infrastructure Funding and Investment | Local Government Funding | Resource Management | Strategic Advice | Peer Review

Greg has successfully completed a range of economic assessments with the following Recent projects showing the breadth of relevant experience.

- Pakiri consent renewals – economic effects assessment (consent assessment, council hearings)
- Brookby Quarry Stage 1. Economic assessment to support Expansion, Environment Court
- Drury Quarry. Economic assessment and Council hearing
- Hunua Quarry Consent application. Economic assessment and Council hearing
- Waingaro Quarry Consent application. Economic assessment
- Kings Quarry FT application – Economic Assessment
- Drury Metropolitan Centre – Economic Impact Assessment and Council Hearing
- Drury Metropolitan Centre – Development Contributions Assessment
- Ryman Healthcare Pukekohe – Development Contributions Assessment, Council Hearing
- Retirement Village Association – DC Assessment nationwide for 20+ Councils
- Wetland Provisions of NES for Freshwater – Economic Assessment of Aggregate loss for regions
- West Coast Coal – Peer review of Economic Assessment
- Waihi North Gold Mine – Peer Review of Economic Impact Assessment for Fast Track
- Martha Mine expansion – Economic peer review assessment
- Industrial Land Demand – Matamata Industrial land demand, private sector client
- NPS-UDC – Guidebook author for Business Land Assessment approach
- NPS – UDC – HBDA for Future Proof, Tauranga, Queenstown Lakes, Dunedin City
- NPS-UD HBDA assessment for Future Proof, oversee others.
- Marine Industry Assessment – Cracker Bay development, Wynyard Quarter
- Selwyn District – PC 73, assessment and critique of HBA prepared for SDC in support of development
- Lincoln Residential Development – Residential Demand modelling, Council evidence
- Ohoka PC 31 – Demand modelling, HBA critique, Council evidence for developer
- Auckland Prison EIA – Fast track economic assessment for Auckland Prison, Department of Corrections
- Dunedin Heritage Protections – Assess economic impacts of adding 146 properties to heritage protection list
- Waimanawa Estate Warkworth – Retail Demand assessment and economic impact assessment incl. council evidence
- Waerenga and Rangiriri Solar FT – Peer review of economic impacts for EPA
- Hamilton City Development Contributions Growth Model
- Peacocke Structure Plan – Economic Review and evidence for HCC
- Development Contributions High Court Affidavit – in support of Hamilton City DC Policy CIV-2020-419-202
- Ravenswood Economic Impact Peer Review – Infinity Holdings, overturned Hearing Panel Verdict.
- Other Fast Track Assessments:
  - Drury Metropolitan Centre
  - Haldon Solar
  - Karori Metlife Care Village

- Mill Road Stage 1
- Park City
- Opunake Solar Farm
- Summerset Rotorua Village
- Summerset Half Moon Bay
- Tauranga Crossing PC 33 – Demand assessment and centre assessment, Council Evidence
- NZTA Silverdale PPC 103 – Financial Contributions potential, Council evidence
- NZTA Cambridge to Piarere Economic Impact Assessment – Council evidence
- Development Contributions – High Court Affidavit, Developers vs North Shore City Council.

# Tom Harris

Senior Consultant

MSc (Economics)

BSc (Economics)

- s 9(2)(a)
- Location: Wanaka

## Professional Experience

*2023 to date*

2021 – 2023

2019 – 2021

2018 – 2019

*Senior Consultant – Market Economics*

Economist – Department of Education (UK)

Fast Stream Assistant Economist – Department of Education (UK)

Economic Scholar – University of Exeter

Tom joined Market Economics from the UK Civil Service in 2023 where he worked as an economist across a challenging portfolio of projects and sectors. During the Covid-19 pandemic he was the principal analyst in the Department for Education modelling the pandemic's impacts on Children's Social Care. His other roles included leading on graduate outcomes analysis, supporting high-profile national policy implementation, being embedded in the permanent secretary's office, and working closely with external academics and stakeholders.

Tom taught undergraduate macroeconomics at The University of Exeter and completed a part-time master's alongside his work in the UK Civil Service. Using his access to novel administrative governmental datasets, he authored research into topics which included comparing the scarring effect on early-career earnings of graduating during the Covid-19 years with the Global Financial Crisis, and assessing whether prospective university students could be nudged into making better application choices. Tom has extensive experience working with senior officials and politicians to guide policy- and decision-making with analysis. As a proficient and interested coder, Tom has written a book on the R programming language and published open-source software packages to aid data analysis.

Tom has founded and runs Good with Data, a charity that connects analytical professionals to third sector organisations, enabling charities to benefit from pro bono expertise and for analysts to contribute their time towards meaningful causes productively.

## Areas of Expertise

Econometrics | Game Theory | Empirical Industrial Organisation | Mathematical and Algorithmic Modelling | Machine (Statistical) Learning Models | Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods | Public Economics | Economic Appraisal | Sectoral Analysis | Cost Benefit Analysis | Demand Analysis and Forecasting | Policy Analysis and Advice | Business Cases | Project Management

Tom has successfully completed a range of economic assessments with the following recent projects showing the breadth of relevant experience.

- Brookby Quarry Stage 3. Economic assessment to support Fast-Track Application.
- Lochaburn Quarry. Fast Track Eligibility Assessment.
- National Aggregate Sufficiency. Research for Aggregate Quarry Association into inter-regional dependence for aggregate and national supply sufficiency.
- Haldon Solar Farm. Economic Impact Assessment.
- Waerenga and Rangiriri Solar Farms. Peer reviews of economic assessments.
- Opunake and Carterton Solar Farms – Economic Impact Assessments.
- Dunedin Heritage Protections. Economic Impact Assessment for Dunedin City Council focussing on development feasibility and regression analysis of property price impacts.
- Auckland Prison. Economic Impact Assessment for the Department of Corrections.
- Hamilton WISE model to developer contributions modelling.
- Waihi Gold Mine extension. Economic Assessment and Peer Review of Applicant's assessments for Hauraki District Council.
- Fergurson and Bledisloe Wharfs Extensions. Fast Track Economic Impact Assessment for the Ports of Auckland.
- Forecasting the price path of Greenshell Mussels. VAR and ARIMA forecasting methods for NZTE.
- Dirtworks consent. Fast Track Economic Analysis.
- Taylorville Resource Park. Economic Impact Assessment.
- Timaru Showgrounds retail park configuration and liquor store, economic effects.
- Auckland Developer Contributions, assessment of economic equity impacts.
- Queenstown Lakes District impact of Airbnb and short-term rental accommodation on property prices and rents.
- Auckland Council Plan Change 78, Plan Change 79 analysis for Council.

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<b>Project:</b>	Queenstown Cable Car – FTA Review		
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Sid Scull	<b>Date:</b>	29 January 2026
<b>Approved by:</b>	Matthew Hinton	<b>Checked by:</b>	Andrew Foy
<b>Client</b>	Queenstown Lakes District Council		
<b>Subject:</b>	Review of Referral Application		

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## 1 Introduction

Southern Infrastructure Limited (SIL) are seeking to construct and operate the Queenstown Cable Car (QCC) between Queenstown Airport, Queenstown town centre, and Ladies Mile. An application for referral has been made via the Fast Track Approvals Act (FTAA) to obtain the necessary statutory approvals. The Referral Application was accepted by the Minister for Infrastructure in December 2025.

This document provides a review of the Referral Application in relation to the transport benefits and impacts of the QCC proposal.

## 2 Scope of Review

The review focuses on assessing the transport merits, integration, and overall robustness of the QCC proposal, with particular attention to the following key themes:

- Transport network benefits for QLDC and the wider Queenstown community – including how these benefits differ for tourists versus local residents.
- The validity and scale of the transport benefits claimed by the applicant – evaluating whether the stated benefits are credible and supported by evidence.
- Integration of the proposal with the existing and planned public transport network – assessing connectivity, service duplication, and network efficiency.
- Comparative benefits of the Frankton–Ladies Mile route options (Option A vs Option B) – considering accessibility, catchment, and network performance.
- Areas requiring further information for the Substantive Application – identifying gaps in the current Referral Application that limit full assessment of impacts and benefits.

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We accept no responsibility for the consequences of this document being relied upon by any other party, or being used for any other purpose, or containing any error or omission which is due to an error or omission in data supplied to us by other parties.

This document contains confidential information and proprietary intellectual property. It should not be shown to other parties without consent from us and from the party which commissioned it.

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## 2.1 Review Documents provided by Applicant

The following documents provided by SIL form the basis of this review:

- Transport Assessment – October 2025, Arc Advisory Aotearoa
- Planning Report – October 2025, Town Planning Group
- Economic Assessment – October 2025, ECPC
- Economic Assessment – October 2025, Property Economics
- Survey Plans – October 2025, Patersons

## 2.2 Transport Planning and Investment Context

The following statutory and non-statutory planning and strategy documents were reviewed to understand the transport planning and investment framework in Queenstown:

- Otago Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 (RPTP)
- Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (ORPS)
  - Relevant areas – Energy, Infrastructure and Transport, and Urban Form and development
- Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2021-2031 (2034 Mid Term Review) (RLTP)
- Queenstown Public Transport Business Case (QPTBC)
- National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD)

# 3 Review

This section provides a detailed review of the QCC proposal, evaluating its transport merits, network performance, and alignment with QLDC's wider transport objectives across the key themes outlined below.

### Network Design and Station Locations

A number of the proposed stations (Ferry Hill, Quail Rise, Frankton North, Queenstown Hill, and Lake Johnston Station) do not service major trip attractors or population bases, have limited catchments under the QLDC Proposed District Plan, or do not act as efficient interchange points. This limits the effectiveness and benefits of the proposed QCC system as a public transport service, with the current network design not necessarily meeting the needs of residents and visitors travelling between the airport, town centre, and key growth areas.

The Transport Assessment notes the potential to reduce the number of bus services running along SH6A as the cable car can provide for this demand off-line. This does not recognise the need to continue providing bus services to cater for people travelling to and from destinations or accommodation along SH6A. Under this scenario the connectivity and access for the catchments along SH6A would reduce. There is a risk that reduced bus frequency and services on the corridor will not provide a good level of service for those not served by the QCC system.

Similarly, the proposal suggests that Route 5 could be replaced by the cable car. This would reduce the public transport access for people currently served by Route 5 east of the BP roundabout as the offline service does not integrate as well with existing residential and commercial areas. This impact is greatest under the Route A option. Route 5 operates between approximately 5:45AM and 10:30PM, and the QCC would need to mirror these hours of service as part of the requirements to replace the existing service.

Recommended additional information:

- Further information is required to confirm how isolated stations will be managed to ensure the personal safety of users.
- A more comprehensive bus network and service design to understand how the QCC integrates within a revised public transport network.

### **Operational Capacity**

As stated in the Planning Report, the system can provide a total capacity of up to 3000 passengers per hour per direction. This would be sufficient to meet the capacity requirements of 1,500 people per hour along SH6A and 800 people per hour east of the Shotover Bridge identified in the Queenstown Public Transport Business Case.

However, it is unclear whether this is a realistic operating capacity of the system. Users will likely wish to travel in a single cabin per group and may be reluctant to travel with people they do not know due to personal safety concerns given the confined and isolated nature of the service. People travelling to and from the airport are likely to have bulky luggage, particularly in winter where many visitors will travel with snow gear that may impact on the practical capacity of each cabin and slow boarding times. These factors may reduce the actual capacity of the system below the stated 3,000 people per hour.

### **Demand**

The potential capacity of the system at 3,000 people per hour is significant and could have a material impact in providing for the existing and future travel demand in Queenstown – particularly for journeys currently using SH6A. No demand forecasting has been undertaken as part of the Transport Assessment, and therefore it is difficult to quantify what impact the QCC may have in catering for existing and future travel demand in Queenstown.

A significant proportion (15%)<sup>1</sup> of visitors who arrive in Queenstown via Queenstown Airport chose to hire a rental car as this best serves their transport needs, by facilitating access to ski-fields and other destinations such as Wanaka and Arrowtown. This cable car will not provide a viable alternative for these visitors which will reduce the attractiveness of the QCC as a viable alternative for many visitors.

This should be noted in consideration of the application and confirmation of transport benefits which may not lead to the claimed patronage and traffic reductions.

Recommended additional information:

- Assessment of the proportion of existing and forecast demand that the QCC proposal would cater for, based on key origins and destinations such as Queenstown, the airport, Frankton, and residential areas.

### **Capacity of Stations and Impacts on Surrounding Area**

The types of trips that the QCC would facilitate – to and from the airport, commuter trips to and from Queenstown town centre – will generate peaks in demand, particularly at the airport and Queenstown stations. Although the QCC has a very high frequency, the capacity of each cabin is low, and this may result in significant queuing at stations as people wait to board. If the queues were to exceed the capacity of the station, this may result in queuing on the surrounding streets which may cause safety issues or block footpaths.

It has been noted in the transport assessment that this will form part of the more detailed integrated transport assessment as part of the Substantive Application under the FTAA. However, station sizing, footprint and potential impacts should also be confirmed at this stage.

Recommended additional information:

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 Mode Share of trips to and from Queenstown Airport, *Draft Queenstown Airport Masterplan May 2023*

- Confirmation of the queuing capacity of stations, and the likelihood and impacts of passenger queuing onto the local road network.
- Suggested minimum design standards and performance requirements for station capacity and system adaptability to peak demand flows.

### **Travel Time Reliability**

The QCC would provide an offline transport alternative to SH6A, and as such will have improved travel time reliability over modes or services that use SH6A. It is essentially a congestion-free service and as such travel times would be consistent at all times of day. The proposed travel time for the service is competitive with the off-peak travel time for car trips between Queenstown Airport and town centre at 22 minutes. These benefits would make the service a competitive and attractive alternative in terms of reliability and travel time.

### **Support for Urban Development**

Two route options between Frankton and Ladies Mile are proposed, but neither integrates well with the existing and planned urban development which will limit the attractiveness of the service for people travelling to and from these areas. The proposed station locations are typically on the periphery of planned development areas, creating a one-sided catchment area and restricting the potential number of users. The number of people living and working within a walkable distance from stations is likely to be less than the current bus network. Of the two proposed route options, Route B appears to have the greater integration with the existing and planned urban development. The proximity to surround land use will impact the type of infrastructure required to support access to stations, such as cycle parking, widened footpaths, or public transport connections. The proposal provides the potential for people to use bicycles for the first and last mile of their trip by taking them aboard the QCC service, providing a potential benefit over traditional bus services.

Recommended additional information:

- An evaluation of station locations against best-practice network design principles
- A more comprehensive assessment of the proposal's alignment to the QLDCs transport strategic framework to confirm that it is strategically aligned to QLDC's policies and objectives.
- Assessment of supporting infrastructure to enable access e.g. cycle parking, bus stops, pedestrian realm improvements

### **Route Protection and Ongoing Viability**

While much of the proposal traverse public land, there are locations where private land is required to enable the operation of the QCC. The Planning Report notes that subdivision will be required to secure leasehold, freehold or other property rights for the seven stations, with a proposed operating period of 35 years. While these agreements may create certainty in the ongoing operation of the stations, the form (and likelihood) of private landowner approvals and agreements for the private land that the QCC passes over is not clear. These approvals and agreements will need to endure for the proposed operating period of the QCC.

Recommended additional information:

- Proposed form of private landowner agreements and approvals to provide confidence in the ongoing viability of the QCC service.

### **Traffic Impacts**

The transport assessment suggests that there will be no negative impacts to the general traffic network from the QCC proposal. Although no stations have included Park and Ride facilities, as the system aims to provide a reliable transport alternative, it may generate some informal park and ride behaviour that induces traffic and may have adverse impacts on the network. Potentially impacted locations include those without any existing parking management such as Ferry Hill, Quail Rise, Lower Shotover, Ladies Mile, Airport, and Frankton North.

Recommended additional information:

- Assessment of potential park and ride demand and potential impacts on the transport network

#### **Integration with Electric Bus Hub**

The proposed co-location and integration of the cable car's operation base with the proposed Queenstown electric bus hub will provide benefits in terms of shared infrastructure and other efficiencies. The applicant has identified two potential locations that will need to align with the needs of the proposed bus hub to ensure that these benefits can be realised.

#### **Pedestrian Overpasses**

The proposed pedestrian overpass across SH6 will provide a wider benefit to residents and visitors by allowing safe crossing of the State Highway without interacting with general traffic. It would be of greatest benefit if these crossings were accessible to the general public outside of the operational hours of the QCC service.

## **4 Conclusion and Summary of Further Information Requirements**

The proposal has the potential to be of significant value to the Queenstown community, including:

- Providing a congestion-free alternative to SH6A between Ladies Mile, the airport and Queenstown
- Offering improved travel time reliability for trips along this corridor compared to other transport options
- Providing a high-capacity public transport service that meets some of the needs identified through the Queenstown Public Transport Business Case
- Supporting planned urban development
- Facilitating more walking and cycling trips
- Providing infrastructure efficiencies with the planned Electric Bus Hub
- Providing improved pedestrian access across SH6

This review identifies areas of concern where additional information is recommended relating to network design, operational performance, and user impacts. The following issues have not been addressed through the Referral Application and additional information is required to understand the benefits and impacts of the proposal through the Substantive Application.

- The resilience of the system to natural hazards and climate change, in particular earthquakes and storm events that bring high winds. What is the likelihood of storms or high winds requiring temporary closures of the QCC.
- Further information is required to confirm how isolated stations will be managed to ensure the personal safety of users.
- A more comprehensive bus network and service design to understand how the QCC integrates within a revised public transport network.
- A more comprehensive assessment of the proposal's alignment to the QLDCs transport strategic framework to confirm that it is strategically aligned to QLDC's policies and objectives.
- An evaluation of station locations against best-practice network design principles
- Assessment of the proportion of existing and forecast demand that the QCC proposal would cater for, based on key origins and destinations such as Queenstown, the airport, Frankton, and residential areas.

- Confirmation of the queuing capacity of stations, and the likelihood and impacts of passenger queuing onto the local road network.
- Suggested minimum design standards and performance requirements for station capacity and system adaptability to peak demand flows.
- Assessment of supporting infrastructure to enable access e.g. cycle parking, bus stops, pedestrian realm improvements
- Assessment of potential park and ride demand and potential impacts on the transport network
- Proposed form of private landowner agreements and approvals to provide confidence in the ongoing viability of the QCC service.

While the benefits of the proposal have the potential to be significant, the feasibility of the QCC and the level to which the proposal would deliver these benefits cannot be confirmed with confidence unless additional supporting assessment and evidence is provided.

### **Qualifications and Experience of the Author**

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#### **Sid Scull**

My name is Sid Scull. I am a Technical Director – Transport Planning, for Mott MacDonald, a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy. I hold a Bachelor of Planning with second-class honours from the University of Auckland and have 14 years' experience in the field of transport planning in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. I have experience in transportation strategy and the investigation and assessment of transport infrastructure. I am Full Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.

My experience relevant to this proposal includes:

- Active Transport Lead for the Northwest Busway project, providing technical advice on station access requirements for people travelling by foot or bicycle.
- Transport Planning Lead for The Sands Town Centre, a 23ha mixed used development in Papamoa. My role involves leading the transport assessment and directing transport modelling to understand the transport infrastructure required to enable the development.
- At my previous employment with AECOM NZ Ltd, I was one of the lead authors of the Transport for Future Urban Growth Programme Business Case in Auckland. I was responsible for assessing proposed transport network improvements to support planned growth areas on the periphery of Auckland.
- I supported the development of the Wakatipu Basin Public Transport Programme Business Case by developing the evidence base that outlined the existing and future transport issues within the Wakatipu Basin.
- I have undertaken numerous transport planning evaluations of proposed infrastructure and development proposals including Redoubt to Mill Road, Wellington Public Transport Spine (airport to rail station), Hill Street intersection, and Auckland Airport.

Although this matter is not before the Environment Court, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses as contained in section 9 of the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I agree to comply with that Code. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. I am satisfied that the matters which I address in this report are within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on information provided by another person or expert. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

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# Technical Memo

<b>To:</b>	QLDC Resource Consent Team
<b>From:</b>	Robert Galvin (Programme Manager Growth Areas, Property & Infrastructure) Richard Powell (Infrastructure Development Engineering Manager) Tony Pickard (Strategy Planning Manager Transport)
<b>Date:</b>	29 January 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024 – s17 Comment Technical Memorandum – Property &amp; Infrastructure Commentary Southern Infrastructure Limited - Queenstown Cable Car (FTRA2505)</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This memorandum provides Property & Infrastructure (P&I) input to inform QLDC’s response to the Expert Panel under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 for the Queenstown Cable Car Fast-Track application by Southern Infrastructure Limited (SIL).
- 1.2. The memorandum addresses transport, three-waters servicing, and other infrastructure and property matters relevant to QLDC’s statutory functions and infrastructure responsibilities. The depth of assessment across these topics reflects the nature of the proposal and the extent of information provided by the applicant.
- 1.3. From a transport perspective, the concept of an off-line public transport system has the potential to inform future strategic transport network planning and extend the planned and approved transport investment programme, if it is appropriately integrated with existing and planned initiatives. However, the proposal as presented does not provide sufficient detail or supporting evidence to enable a recommendation that it represents the appropriate solution or warrants Council support at this stage.
- 1.4. Further consideration of the proposal as a public transport service would require written confirmation of support from Otago Regional Council, as the Public Transport Authority, and clarity on governance, funding, and programme integration. Any off-line system would need to be complementary to, rather than a replacement for, the agreed bus-based public transport programme.
- 1.5. From 3 waters infrastructure servicing perspective, information has been provided indicating that many proposed stations could connect to existing reticulated water, wastewater, and stormwater networks, subject to detailed design, confirmation of demand, and the provision of developer-funded infrastructure where required. For several stations, key matters such as water

demand, wastewater flows, fire-fighting levels of service, and stormwater treatment requirements have not yet been quantified.

- 1.6. Property-related matters, including long-term route protection and landowner implications where proposed corridors traverse private land, are not addressed in sufficient detail to provide certainty regarding the operation or viability of the proposed network.
- 1.7. Overall, the matters set out in this memorandum are intended to inform QLDC's response under section 17 of the Act. They identify issues that would require further evidence, confirmation, and resolution through a substantive application (or subsequent approvals process).

## **2. Qualifications and Experience**

- 2.1. This memorandum has been prepared by three internal experts from the Infrastructure and Property Department (P&I) of Council.
- 2.2. Robert Glavin is the Programme Manager (Growth Areas) in the Strategy and Infrastructure Planning Team of the Property & Infrastructure Department at Queenstown Lakes District Council. He holds an MBA, a Postgraduate Certificate in Business, is a Graduate of the City & Guilds Institute (GCGI) and is a Chartered Member of Engineering New Zealand (CMEngNZ).
- 2.3. Robert has extensive experience in infrastructure programme and project delivery, asset management, procurement, and facilities management. His role involves coordinating growth-related planning processes, integrating multidisciplinary technical inputs, and ensuring alignment with Council's strategic and infrastructure planning frameworks. Robert is not providing technical expert evidence; his contribution relates to the coordination, compilation, and presentation of material prepared by the technical experts Richard Powell and Tony Pickard.
- 2.4. Richard Powell holds a degree in Land Planning and Development from the University of Otago and has 17 years' professional experience in civil engineering, including 15 years working within the Queenstown Lakes District. He is currently employed as the Infrastructure Development Engineering Manager at Queenstown Lakes District Council, a position he has held since 2019. His responsibilities include assessing how proposed developments can be serviced by existing and planned infrastructure, having regard to network capacity, known constraints, and programmed upgrade works.
- 2.5. Tony Pickard holds a BSc (Hons) in Estate Management from Reading University in the United Kingdom and has 20 years' professional experience as a planner, working across consents, policy, statutory advocacy, and infrastructure in New Zealand and overseas. He is currently employed as the Strategy Planning Manager (Transport) at Queenstown Lakes District Council, a position he has held since January 2018, and has been employed by the Council since 2014. His responsibilities include the planning and

investment of QLDC's transport improvements programme. He has been the transport lead for all urban centre master planning, spatial plans, structure plans and complex transport business cases for approximately ten years. Of relevance is his involvement in the Queenstown Transport Business Case and the Queenstown Public Transport Business Case.

- 2.6. This memo has been compiled by Robert Galvin. Robert is the Programme Manager (Growth Areas) in the Strategy and Infrastructure Planning Team of the Property & Infrastructure Department at Queenstown Lakes District Council. He holds an MBA, a Postgraduate Certificate in Business, is a Graduate of the City & Guilds Institute (GCGI) and is a Chartered Member of Engineering New Zealand (CMEngNZ).
- 2.7. Robert has extensive experience in infrastructure programme and project delivery, asset management, procurement, and facilities management. His role involves coordinating growth-related planning processes, integrating multidisciplinary technical inputs, and ensuring alignment with Council's strategic and infrastructure planning frameworks. Robert is not providing technical expert evidence; his contribution relates to the coordination, compilation, and presentation of material prepared by the technical authors.
- 2.8. Each of the technical authors confirms that they have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. The technical commentaries have been prepared in accordance with that Code. Unless stated otherwise, the opinions expressed are within the respective authors' areas of professional expertise, and no material facts have been omitted that might alter or detract from those opinions.

### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1. This memorandum provides P&I input to support QLDC's response to the Expert Panel under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 for the Queenstown Cable Car Fast-Track application.
- 3.2. The memorandum is structured to address:
  - Strategic context relevant to QLDC's role and functions,
  - Transport matters,
  - Three-waters servicing considerations, and
  - Other infrastructure and property matters.
- 3.3. The extent of assessment varies by topic and reflects the nature of the proposal being a referral and the information provided by the applicant. Some infrastructure matters are therefore recorded at a high level and have not been subject to detailed technical assessment.
- 3.4. The matters outlined represent advice intended to inform, rather than determine, QLDC's overall response to the Minister.

### **4. Strategic Context**

- 4.1. QLDC's consideration of the Queenstown Cable Car proposal under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 occurs within the context of Council's statutory functions, adopted strategies, approved programmes, and Long Term Plan commitments across transport, three-waters, and other infrastructure and property portfolios.
- 4.2. While the proposal is framed by the applicant as a public transport initiative, it also has implications for Council-owned infrastructure networks, future servicing commitments, land use, and property interests. These matters fall within QLDC's broader Property & Infrastructure responsibilities and require consideration beyond transport outcomes alone.
- 4.3. For the avoidance of doubt:
- QLDC is not currently engaged in any partnership, agreement, or commitment in relation to this proposed cable car system.
  - QLDC does not operate public transport and does not envisage ownership of, or funding support for, cable car assets.
  - QLDC is agnostic as to the choice of suppliers or operators for any public transport services, noting that public transport governance and service provision sit within the regional framework; and
  - QLDC will consider the role of any off-line public transport solutions through its future strategic transport network planning, rather than through the current proposal alone.
- 4.4. QLDC is not the Public Transport Authority. Decisions relating to the establishment, procurement, and operation of any public transport service sit within the wider regional transport governance framework. No position is expressed in this memorandum on the provider or procurement of the proposed system.
- 4.5. Infrastructure and property considerations raised by the proposal must be assessed in the context of existing network capacity, agreed levels of service, growth sequencing, funding availability, and risk allocation. Where information is incomplete or indicative only, Council's ability to provide assurance is correspondingly limited.
- 4.6. The matters set out in this memorandum, along with the memorandum from the P&I Property and Strategic Transport Planning, should therefore be read as an integrated Property & Infrastructure response, recognising that transport, three-waters servicing, and property considerations may each affect the feasibility, timing, and implementation of the proposal.

## **5. Transport**

### **5.1. Consultation and Status**

- Property & Infrastructure input to date has occurred primarily at an officer level, with engagement focused on transport matters relevant to the proposed off-line public transport scheme.

- No formal approvals of investment, partnership, servicing, or infrastructure agreements are currently being progressed.
- QLDC declined an invitation to submit a joint application to the Infrastructure Commission's pipeline programme.
- A Regional Deal workstream is progressing transport initiatives that may encourage further consideration of off-line public transport systems.

## 5.2. Public Transport Role and Governance

- The application proposes the scheme as a public transport service.
- No written support has been provided by Otago Regional Council in its role as Public Transport Authority.
- No funding support has been identified from NZTA.
- The application refers to direct appointment of the applicant (or its subsidiaries) as a public transport contractor; however, this remains an assumption because the Public Transport Authority has not approved this.
- Confirmation of governance arrangements and public-sector support would be required to inform land-use responses and any future funding considerations.

## 5.3. Relationship to Existing Public Transport Programme

- The proposal is identified by the applicant as a preferred option through a Multi-Criteria Analysis, indicating it would supersede elements of a programme jointly approved already by QLDC, ORC, and NZTA.
- The agreed Bus Max programme is considered by QLDC to remain the preferred public transport programme currently.
- An additional off-line system may be required to supplement bus-based public transport due to capacity constraints but should be considered complementary rather than a replacement, such as suggested in this proposal.

## 5.4. Modelling and Evidence

- The Multi-Criteria Analysis does not provide sufficient detail on assessment criteria or data inputs.
- Transport modelling raises questions regarding assumptions and inputs.
- Independent peer review of transport effects and modelling would be required to support further consideration.

## 5.5. Effects on Other Committed Transport Projects

- The proposal may reduce journey times for some users and create capacity for others.
- The information provided does not support the conclusion that the proposal would defer the need for other committed transport projects. This reflects the continued role of those projects in supporting network

resilience, mode integration, and future growth beyond the proposal's catchment.

- A significant reduction in bus public transport demand is not supported, nor would it be desirable given the need for ongoing service frequency increases and network coverage beyond the cable car route (which is limited linear infrastructure).
- Deferral of the Town Centre bus hub based on the information currently available in the proposal is not supported by QLDC.
- Arterial Stages 2 and 3 remain included in the QLDC Long Term Plan, with substantial sections already delivered in conjunction with the Lakeview development and continuing to play an important role in town-centre connectivity and mode integration.

#### 5.6. Mode Shift and Induced Demand

- Acknowledged that any public transport system will assist in reducing reliance on private vehicle use.
- Induced demand from freight movements, tourism fleets, and expanding public transport services is expected to continue to utilise available road capacity.
- These demands are anticipated to increase alongside development growth.

#### 5.7. Route Alignment and Catchments

- The proposed routes do not strongly align with intermediate catchments, particularly along SH6A.
- Detours to Queenstown Hill and Lake Johnson do not materially enhance the public transport function of the scheme relative to their impact on travel time and network legibility.
- Connections to Boundary Street car park, Frankton bus hub, Frankton Flats, and Queenstown Airport are considered to align with the planned transport network.
- Broader network coverage would be required to support growth and intensification areas identified through spatial planning.

#### 5.8. Accessibility and Funding

- Further understanding of walk-up catchments is required, with optimal distances of approximately 400–800 metres on flat terrain and shorter distances on steeper gradients.
- QLDC currently funds minor public transport infrastructure such as bus stops and shelters.
- QLDC is not currently positioned to financially support major infrastructure interventions required for network expansion without further direction or consideration through formal funding and decision-making processes.
- Greater clarity is required regarding funding expectations, including any proposed tolls, levies, or rate-based contributions.

## 5.9. Route Protection

- The application identifies designation ‘overlays’ where proposed routes intersect with existing designations.
- Limited information is provided regarding long-term route protection, particularly where corridors traverse private land. Without clear protection mechanisms, there is a risk that future land-use change or access constraints could materially affect the operability and financial viability of the network.
- Risks associated with future land-use change or financial viability are not fully addressed.
- In addition to the above, consideration should be given to potential interface issues with the proposed active travel bridge currently being progressed by Kā Huanui Tāhuna, the Whakatipu Transport Programme Alliance<sup>1</sup>. The proposed Frankton North Gondola Station is located in close proximity to the indicative bridge alignment, and there is a potential for spatial or structural conflicts between the two projects. Coordinated design development would be required to ensure that the gondola route, station footprint, and construction methodology do not compromise the delivery of the bridge or its long-term role within the active travel network. Early engagement between the applicant and the Alliance team is recommended if this has not already occurred.

## 6. Three Waters Servicing

### 6.1. Overview

- An infrastructure assessment has been provided describing how individual stations will be serviced for potable water supply, fire-fighting water supply, wastewater, and stormwater.
- Several stations are anticipated to place low demand on Council networks and are located proximate to existing infrastructure:
  - Airport Station
  - Frankton Bus Hub Station
  - Queenstown Station
  - Frankton North Station
  - Five Mile Station
- The following subsections summarise servicing considerations as presented.

### 6.2. Potable Water Supply (General Stations)

- Water supply infrastructure with (current) sufficient capacity to service these stations is already located within a feasible distance for connection.

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<sup>1</sup> The Whakatipu Transport Alliance, Kā1 Huanui a Tāhuna made up of representatives from Queenstown Lakes District Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency.

- Demand is expected to primarily arise from toilet use. As the application does not specify the number of toilet stalls, an assumption of up to 20 stalls (including hand-washing facilities) has been applied when assessing servicing feasibility.

### 6.3. Fire-Fighting Water Supply (General Stations)

- A minimum fire-fighting level of service equivalent to FW2 is currently available from existing hydrants.
- Any requirement exceeding FW2 will need to be provided by the development and secured through consent conditions, with approval from FENZ.

### 6.4. Wastewater (General Stations)

- Council-owned wastewater infrastructure with adequate (current) capacity is located within a feasible distance for connection.
- Expected wastewater demand is low and linked to toilet use. Assumptions of up to 20 toilet stalls have been applied for assessment purposes.

### 6.5. Stormwater (General Stations)

- **Lake Johnson Station** | Elevated location requiring a booster pump; significant unquantified demand associated with bar, dining, and retail uses; static on-site fire-fighting supply proposed; wastewater and stormwater solutions are feasible subject to further detail and approvals – there is no funding for new water, wastewater or stormwater services in the current LTP.
- **Queenstown Hill Station** | Low potable demand; booster pump required due to elevation; static fire-fighting supply proposed; wastewater to be managed via a private on-site system subject to Otago Regional Council approval.
- **Ferry Hill Station** | Water supply connection feasible but preference expressed against direct connection to trunk infrastructure; unquantified wash-down and maintenance demand; booster pump required; wastewater connection to Ferry Hill Road feasible; stormwater to be managed on site.
- **Lower Shotover and Ladies Mile Stations** | Servicing dependent on future installation of Ladies Mile three waters infrastructure. Stations should not become operational until appropriate connections are available.
- **Quail Rise Station** | Potable water and wastewater connections to Council networks are feasible; unquantified wash-down demand remains; stormwater proposed via soakage or discharge to the Kawarau River, subject to detailed design.

## 7. Other Infrastructure and Property Matters

### 7.1. Solid Waste and Refuse

- The proposal does not identify direct impacts on Council solid waste or refuse collection services.

- No assessment of construction-related or operational waste servicing requirements has been undertaken. These matters would need to be addressed through detailed design and construction planning.

#### 7.2. Landowner and Property Considerations

- Limited information is provided regarding long-term route protection where proposed corridors traverse private land.
- Changes in land use, development activity, or withdrawal of access could affect the operation or financial viability of the proposed network.
- Further clarity on route protection mechanisms and landowner implications would be required.

### **8. Matters Recommended for a Substantive Application**

- Independent peer review of transport effects, including modelling and economics.
- Clear plans for long-term route protection.
- Documented support from Otago Regional Council as Public Transport Authority.
- Confirmation of public-sector funding commitments.
- Risk analysis relating to potential changes in public transport governance.
- Assessment of alternative or additional route options to improve network coverage and support identified growth.

## Technical Memo

<b>To:</b>	QLDC Resource Consent Team
<b>From:</b>	Aaron Burt – Property & Infrastructure
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 23 January 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024 – s17 Comment Technical Memorandum – Property Southern Infrastructure Limited - Queenstown Cable Car (FTRA2505)</b>

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This memorandum provides input from Queenstown Lakes District Council's (QLDC or Council) property team to inform QLDC's response to the expert panel under s17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA) for the Queenstown Cable Car application by Southern Infrastructure Ltd (SIL).
- 1.2 The SIL proposal seeks to access various areas of land that are administered by the QLDC Property team. These land areas comprise freehold titles, and a Local Purpose (Transport) Reserve.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Memorandum is to highlight considerations by QLDC in its capacity as a landowner of freehold land, and also as the administering body of an identified Local Purpose (Transport) reserve. It must be emphasised that there have been no commitments or undertakings to allow the SIL use of any QLDC owned or administered land. Any pathway to enable access to QLDC land will materially involve decisions to be made by the Full Council and the potential for engagement with the community.

### 2. Qualifications and Experience

- 2.1 This report was prepared by Aaron Burt, Senior Property and Planning Advisor (Property & Infrastructure).
- 2.2 I hold a Bachelor of Resource Studies from Lincoln University. I have 27 years of professional experience in planning roles with the Department of Conservation and Councils in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. I have been a Planner and Senior Property & Planning Advisor at QLDC for 17 years. I have previously prepared evidence and acted as an expert witness before the Environment Court. I am a Full Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.

2.3 I confirm that I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This technical report has been prepared in accordance with that Code. In particular, unless I state otherwise, the opinions I express are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

### 3. Land and Considerations

3.1 The following identifies the land interests administered by the QLDC Property team, and associated considerations.

#### **5 Boundary Street – Freehold (CFR: OT8B/532, OT3A/750, OT340/249, OT222/45 & OT11C/276)**



3.2 5 Boundary Street is privately owned by Council and accommodates a well-utilised parking area that is necessary to accommodate larger vehicles (e.g. campervans, minibuses) and to support the surrounding area, including access to community facilities. Council has previously explored options to accommodate a multi-level parking building on this site.

3.3 It would be a concern if there was any loss of existing parking capacity that is necessary to meet community needs. It is doubtful any parking needs would be offset by a cable car network in the locality, which may actually generate increased parking demands in the vicinity.

3.4 There is no commitment at this early stage to enable any use of 5 Boundary Street for the SIL proposal, and this acknowledges that SIL cannot confirm if this is an endorsed Public Transport offering (supported by the ORC and NZTA), or instead a private commercial venture.

3.5 Any consideration by QLDC as landowner for any access to this land, will involve a decision by Full Council and a potential for community input. However, the proposal would first need to be comprehensively clarified so that Council can fully appreciate all implications and engage in reasoned considerations.

**Gray Street/Kawarau Road - Local Purpose (Transport) Reserve (CFR: 544617)**



- 3.6 This area of land at Gray Road / Kawarau Road is a Local Purpose (Transport) reserve utilised for existing public transport activities (bus hub) and may therefore accommodate public transport activities that align with its purpose. To enable consideration for access to this land, SIL will need to confirm the proposal is for Public Transport and engage with Council as the administering body of the reserve, to progress consideration of any written approval that may be necessary.

**4 Shotover Delta – Fee Simple (CFR: 483927 & 829775)**



- 3.7 Shotover Delta is privately owned by Council and accommodates the Shotover Wastewater Treatment Plant which treats wastewater from the Queenstown, Arthurs Point, Frankton, Shotover Country, Lake Hayes area, and

Arrowtown. One of the suggested cable car routes will traverse above the wastewater treatment plant/infrastructure.

- 3.8 There is no commitment at this early stage to enable any use of this land/airspace for the SIL proposal, and this acknowledges that SIL cannot confirm if this is an endorsed Public Transport offering (supported by the ORC and NZTA), or instead a private commercial venture. Any consideration would also need to consider potential implications to the function of the essential wastewater treatment infrastructure (and associated future developments) already accommodated upon the site.

**Trench Hill Road - Fee Simple (CFR: 63357)**



- 3.9 This land on Trench Hill Road is privately owned by Council and is associated with a water reservoir.
- 3.10 There is no commitment at this early stage to enable any use of this land for the SIL proposal, and this acknowledges that SIL cannot confirm if this is an endorsed Public Transport offering (supported by the ORC and NZTA), or instead a private commercial venture.

**Queenstown Events Centre. 33 Joe Oconnell Drive – Freehold (CFR: 659427 & 627621)**



- 3.11 33 Joe Oconnell Drive is privately owned by Council and accommodates the Queenstown Events Centre and associated sport fields, a large well used community facility.
- 3.12 It is noted that the Memorandum from the Parks & Reserves team also addresses considerations relating to this land, given its vital community function and need to support the requirements of a growing population.
- 3.13 There is no commitment at this early stage to enable any use of this land for the SIL proposal, and this acknowledges that SIL cannot confirm if this is an endorsed Public Transport offering (supported by the ORC and NZTA), or instead a private commercial venture.
- 3.14 It should be highlighted that a cable car bisecting the events centre and sport fields would constitute a significant adverse effect to the use and function of these public community areas. As landowner, Council would exercise its full discretion in determining any use of its land.
- 3.15 It would be beneficial to understand how an alternative route that is instead located within the State Highway corridor, might be achieved.

**4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 Given the potential significance of the proposal and implications to Council as a landowner, it is first necessary that the proposal reaches a degree of certainty so that what is being proposed, is sufficiently comprehensive. This is so Council may understand relevant implications and decide what may or may not be enabled upon its land. It must be noted that the FTAA process does not negate the requirement to obtain landowner approvals for Full Council (elected members) and that associated community engagement may be required in accordance with the Local Government Act. Hence, the material involvement of Full Council will be necessary, and associated community engagement likely. As the QLDC Full Council meeting and workshop agenda

is set and typically follows a six-week course along with statutory requirements for agendas to be prepared in advance, considerations might be required over a greater sequence of meetings before any potential positions might be reached.

- 4.2 As it stands, it is unconfirmed how SIL are progressing their proposal, as either a confirmed Public Transport offering or a private commercial venture. This has implications for Council in its capacity as a private landowner and ability to make any decisions. The proposal first needs to be comprehensively established to a degree necessary to inform any subsequent conversations.
- 4.3 It is necessary that confirmed endorsement from the ORC as the Public Transport Authority and Waka Kotahi (NZTA) is required so that the project might thereafter be considered as a potentially viable public transport system.
- 4.4 A route that avoids land associated with the Queenstown Events Centre should be put forward for consideration.

# Technical Memo

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<b>To:</b>	QLDC Resource Consent Team
<b>From:</b>	Dom Harrison – Parks and Reserves
<b>Date:</b>	30 January 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA) – Technical Memorandum – Parks and Reserves</b> <b>Southern Infrastructure Limited - Queenstown Cable Car (FTRA2505)</b>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This memorandum provides Parks and Reserves (P&R) input to inform Queenstown Lakes District Council's (QLDC or Council) response to the expert panel under s17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA) for the Queenstown Cable Car application by Southern Infrastructure Ltd (SIL) (FTRA2505).
- 1.2. The proposal would utilise a substantial amount of QLDC reserve land and land held for community/recreation purposes and includes the Queenstown Events Centre (QEC). The application has not demonstrated how the significant impacts on the existing reserve land and recreation use will be managed.
- 1.3. The occupation of entire recreation reserve parcels combined with inefficient alignment design that dissects existing QEC facilities (sports fields, golf course, hockey turfs) compromises the use of QLDC land for its existing primary purpose, community facilities.
- 1.4. The application has insufficient information. Whilst the limited use of some QLDC reserve land may be considered appropriate for a public transport system, the proposed significant use of reserve land isn't considered appropriate, and the applicant is advised to assess alternative alignments that avoid or limit the use of public reserve land and does not detract from reserve values. This is particularly critical if this proposal ends up not being a public transport system but a private commercial operation, where all use of, and impacts on, public reserves should be avoided.
- 1.5. Any use of QLDC reserve land, including QEC, will require Council approval, and in many situations will involve approval by elected members.
- 1.6. Approval under s176 of the RMA would also be required from the requiring authority (QLDC) for any land subject to a designation. This can only be given if the proposal does not hinder QLDCs ability to implement the works able to be done under the designation. This process is also separate to the FTAA.

## 2. Qualifications and Experience

- 2.1. This report was prepared by Dom Harrison, Parks and Reserves Planner at QLDC.
- 2.2. I hold a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Management. I have three years of professional experience. I have been a Parks and Reserves Planner at QLDC

for one and a half years where responsibilities include the assessment of development proposals and effects on the reserve and recreation network.

2.3. I confirm that I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This technical report has been prepared in accordance with that Code. In particular, unless I state otherwise, the opinions I express are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

3.1. QLDC has been asked to provide comment on a referral application under the FTAA made by SIL(the applicant). The applicant has provided a description of the proposal in the document titled *Queenstown Cable Car Planning Report – Referral Application – Clean – 17.11*. A brief description of the activity for context is provided below.

3.2. The application proposes to construct a cable car network that extends from Ladies Mile and the Queenstown Airport, to Frankton and through to the Queenstown CBD via Queenstown Hill. A high-level overview of the proposed network is shown in Figure 1 below.

3.3. The network is proposed by the applicant as a Mass Rapid Transit system (MRT) to alleviate road congestion.

3.4. Parks and Reserves input is required as landowner (and the Requiring Authority) for the number of QLDC reserve parcels and the QEC impacted by the proposed cable car.

3.5. The QLDC reserves and QEC are proposed to accommodate a combination of cable car towers, stations, and other associated infrastructure such as servicing station, storage, carparking and ancillary commercial activities.

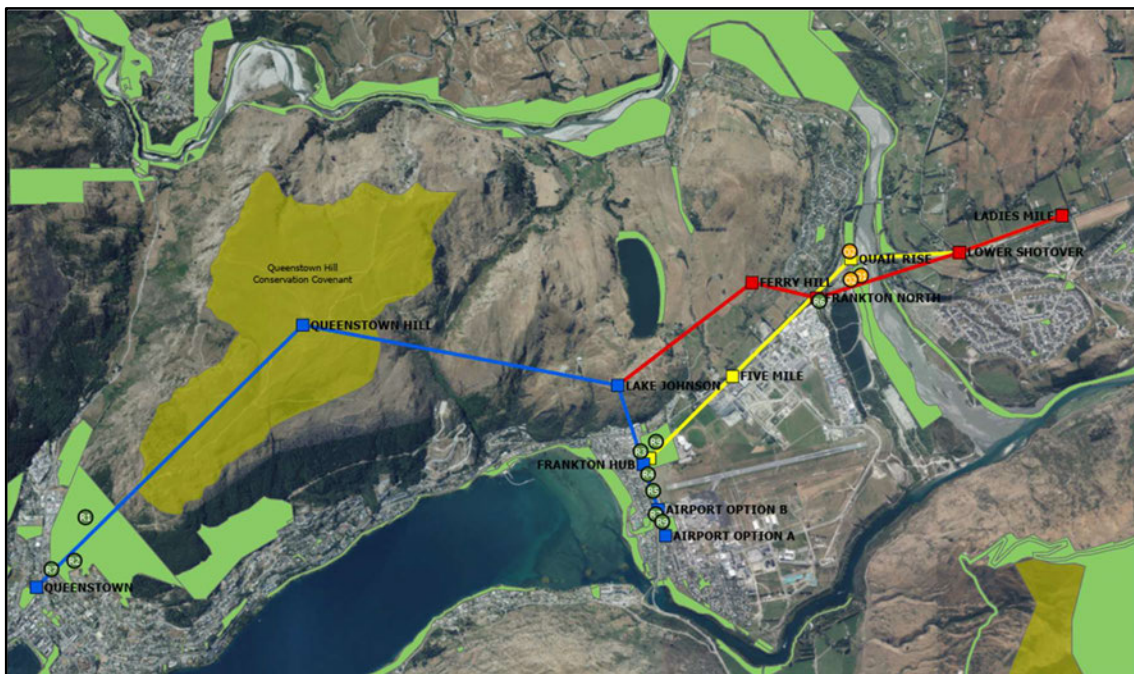


Figure 1: Exert showing the proposed alignment (blue) with two alignment options shown for Ladies Mile (red and yellow).

## 4. ASSESSMENT

### 4.1. Context:

- 4.1.1. QLDC administered reserves are shown in green in Figure 1 above. The below is an assessment of the potential effects of the proposal on the QLDC reserve network and the QEC.
- 4.1.2. The proposal includes the use of a range of vested public reserve land which is a combination of recreation and local purpose reserves, and the QEC which is freehold. For the purposes of this memorandum the QEC is referred to as a reserve.
- 4.1.3. Generally speaking, reserves in the Queenstown Lakes District seek to provide the public and local communities with easily accessible spaces to enjoy a variety of sport, recreation and community activities such as but not limited to; organised sport, events, walking, running, cycling, and dog walking. Many reserves also provide access, connection, and interaction to waterways and the lakes and rivers (blue network) and provide for biodiversity and ecological restoration. Due to the topography of the District, high visitor numbers and an active resident population, reserve land is well utilised and faces increasing pressure from competing uses.
- 4.1.4. The QEC is a regionally significant sport and recreation facility that hosts local, national and international sporting and cultural events and provides for many of the community's formal sport and recreation activities. It is a major social infrastructure hub and operates at capacity year-round with sports fields, cricket oval, indoor courts, swimming pool, gym, and the District's only full-size artificial turf. The busy 9-hole Frankton Golf Course is immediately adjacent.
- 4.1.5. Reserve land is highly sought after for use by community groups, clubs and large events, as well as commercial recreation businesses. QLDC receives a high volume of requests to occupy reserve land for a variety of purposes. Due to the topography and the high residential and visitor growth within the Whakatipu, flat usable QLDC administered reserve land is a limited resource. The high cost of undeveloped flat land makes it difficult and often unfeasible for QLDC to acquire additional reserve land, other than small local parks in new subdivisions. As such it is critical that public reserve land is protected for its intended purpose, for existing and future generations.
- 4.1.6. The application proposes a range of infrastructure on a range of reserve types. The applicant has labelled the reserves proposed to be utilised R1, R2, R3 etc. For consistency and clarity this memorandum will use the same naming policy. A table detailing each reserve parcel and the potential impacts arising from the proposal is included as **Attachment 1**. Our response for the referral application focuses on specific large reserves and groups the smaller reserves together as summarised below (and further discussed in section 3.2.6):
  - i. Queenstown Events Centre: QLDC Recreation Reserve and QLDC Freehold – R9
  - ii. Shotover Delta: QLDC Recreation Reserve - O2
  - iii. Queenstown Hill: Recreation Reserve – R1, R2
  - iv. Local purpose or linear recreation reserves adjacent to the road reserve – R3, R4, R5, R6, R7

#### 4.2. Public Transport vs Private Commercial Use of Reserves:

- 4.2.1. As covered in other QLDC comments, there is uncertainty still whether this proposal will be a public transport system which delivers public benefits, or whether it is a private commercial operation with limited or no public benefit to the reserve land that it would occupy and the local community.
- 4.2.2. This uncertainty in the proposal is critical to guide any further assessment on the use of reserve land. The limited use of some QLDC administered reserve land may be considered appropriate where the use is for a viable public transport system where it provides a tangible benefit to the community and sufficient mitigation is provided that results in an at least nil (ideally positive) change to the recreation and reserve network.
- 4.2.3. Several reserve parcels would be exclusively occupied and significantly modified by the proposed cable car infrastructure, resulting in a land use change that is contrary to the primary purpose (recreation) of the land parcels. The parcels are vested for beautification, recreation or held for conservation purposes. Occupation with large cable car stations and associated infrastructure will remove these values and potential, irrespective of the commercial or public transport determination of the project.
- 4.2.4. If the project eventuates in being a private commercial operation and not considered to be a viable MRT by ORC, QLDC is being asked to relinquish public reserve land for private benefit, which is contrary to the purpose of the land and may not be politically or publicly acceptable.
- 4.2.5. If the cable car eventuated to be a private commercial operation, the public would also be excluded from using the reserve land unless they paid to use the cable car. As such, it would be much more difficult for Council to justify the use of public reserve land where there is little to no benefit to the local community.
- 4.2.6. In summary, additional analysis and engagement with QLDC is required to investigate alternative alignments and station locations (to what is proposed) that avoids the entire occupation of recreation reserves or detracts from the intended use of the land.

#### 4.3. Landowner Approval Processes:

- 4.3.1. The FTAA addresses concessions such as leases, licenses and easements (sections 48, 54 and 61 of the Reserves Act 1977) on reserves.  
Due to the proposed alignment and location of certain stations, particularly the entire occupation of O2 and the location on R9, it is considered that the granting of the necessary concessions to give effect to the application would result in the use of the land that conflicts with an existing use of several of the parcels identified, as detailed in **Attachment 1** and summarised in section 4.4 of this memorandum.
- 4.3.2. The FTAA requires the Panel to decline the approval of a concession, if written agreement from the administering body is not obtained. This is qualified, and QLDC cannot unreasonably withhold its agreement and must take into account the purpose of the FTAA and relevant Reserves Act matters. QLDC would consider the compatibility of the proposal with existing uses of the reserves when assessing the suitability of providing written agreement. As the proposal for many of the reserve land parcels is currently contradictory to this, as outlined in the assessment in **Attachment 1** and summarised in paragraphs 4.4.6.1 – 4.4.6.4 of this

memorandum, alternative alignments that sufficiently address the existing land use and purpose need to be considered.

- 4.3.3. For QLDC freehold parcels, the regular process to obtain a lease, license or easement over freehold land would be required. This may require public consultation which would need to occur prior to any written agreement to ensure that the public consultation is meaningful.
- 4.3.4. Based on the above, the process for obtaining landowner approval would require significant consultation with Council (and possibly public consultation) to determine an appropriate alignment to facilitate obtaining Full Council approval. Written agreement, as required under clause 3(1)(m) of Schedule 6 of the FTAA, could not be given for the proposed occupation of any QLDC administered land without Full Council approval.
- 4.3.5. When considering whether to provide written agreement for the use of reserve or recreation land, Council would consider the impacts on the reserve network including:
  - i. Displacement of reserve users
  - ii. Fragmentation of reserve network
  - iii. Disrupted access and connection
  - iv. Mitigation/off-setting proposed
  - v. Purpose of occupation (public transport vs. commercial)
  - vi. Future reserve potential and demands from increasing urbanisation and density
  - vii. Capacity of reserve to accommodate proposed infrastructure
  - viii. Classification and intended use of land
  - ix. Designations
  - x. Reserve Management Plan
- 4.3.6. In this instance, the recently adopted (2025) Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond and Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan (RMP) is of relevance and will also be considered when assessing the suitability of providing any written agreement.
- 4.3.7. Policy 14.3.10 is of most relevance to this proposal but the entirety of the RMP will assist in informing Council. It is included here:

*14.3.10. New commercial activities within the reserves will generally be limited in scale and location to protect the natural character and recreational values of the reserves. However, proposals that can demonstrate a significant wider public benefit such as improvements to sustainable transport, accessibility, or community connectivity may be considered, subject to robust assessment under the Reserves Act 1977 and appropriate statutory and community consultation.*
- 4.3.8. All of the reserve parcels are also designated in the District Plan mostly for Recreation Purposes, with QEC being designated for a 'Multi-Purpose indoor and outdoor recreation, cultural and conference complex.' Designations provide an important statutory function to ensure activities do not interfere with the purpose of the designation.
- 4.3.9. Section 176(1)(b) of the RMA provides that no person may, without prior written consent [of QLDC as requiring authority], do anything in relation to the land that is subject to the designation that would prevent or hinder a public work or project to which the designation relates. Section 6.6.2 of the application assumes that in most

instances the proposal may not hinder a public work or project. That assumption in the application is not agreed with. The entire occupation of reserve parcels and inefficient alignment dissecting QEC will prevent or hinder the recreation purpose of the designations. As designations are enduring, all potential public works/projects on the designated parcels are not fully realised at this stage and future projects must be considered.

- 4.3.10. Based on the above, approval for works/occupation within a designation from the requiring authority (QLDC) will be required under s176 of the RMA. The FTAA does not address s176 (designations) of the RMA and as such separate approval [from QLDC] under s176(1)(b) of the RMA would be required. The purpose of the relevant designations and s176 of the RMA will assist in informing any consideration for written agreement.
- 4.3.11. In addition to the above approvals, the application may require the reclassification and or revocation of reserve land to reflect the intended use. These are both publicly notified processes not covered by the FTAA. This would need to occur prior to the commencement of any works to ensure meaningful public consultation is achieved as per s24 of the Reserves Act (1977).
- 4.3.12. The above processes are complex with legislated timeframes. Additionally, as some of them may require meaningful public consultation and hearings (if necessary), the outcome cannot be pre-determined if meaningful consultation required by the Reserves Act (1977) and Local Government Act (2002) is undertaken.
- 4.3.13. There are also a number of resource consents and concessions issued to third parties on the reserves, primarily for commercial recreation activities, that need to be considered.
- 4.3.14. In summary, written agreement would be required from QLDC for the use of any land (reserve or freehold). In order to consider any written agreement, significant engagement with Council officers and elected members would be required from the applicant. Parks & Reserves would require the applicant demonstrate that alternative alignments have been considered that adequately mitigate the effects on reserves specifically those outlined in paragraphs 4.4.6.1 – 4.4.6.4 of this memo, and sufficiently considers the assessment matters identified in paragraph 4.3.5 of this memo.

#### 4.4. **Impact on Reserve Network:**

- 4.4.1. The use of recreation reserves and recreation areas such as QEC for the proposed cable car is of significant concern as it appears little regard has been given to the existing activities and intended purposes of these spaces.
- 4.4.2. The applicant has failed to assess existing recreation use or reserve values that will be affected or displaced by the proposal, or demonstrate how the proposal will not interfere with existing use and/or the purpose and intent of many of the reserve parcels.
- 4.4.3. There has been no consideration of adequate mitigation for the impacts on the community's access to and use of the reserve network, recreation areas resulting from the proposal.
- 4.4.4. The application at s7.2.4 states the proposal will generally result in positive and well-managed effects due to the projects "*contribution to connectivity, public realm*

*quality, and sustainable urban growth.*" As mentioned in paragraph 4.4.2 the applicant has not assessed specific effects on each of the individual reserves or the QEC and the associated impacts on the community.

4.4.5. The application suggests that the benefit to the public from the implementation of a public transport system will alleviate any remaining adverse effects on the public realm. This ignores effects on existing and future potential uses of the reserve network.

4.4.6. The following provides an assessment of the QLDC administered land that Parks & Recreation consider to be most impacted by the proposal:

4.4.6.1. **Queenstown Events Centre & R9:**

- The 14.2 hectare community precinct is a highly utilised and important strategic hub. These areas host a multitude of highly valued community and recreation facilities including: the Queenstown Golf Course (the only public golf course in the District); a multi-purpose sports turf used for hockey; eight sports fields used for soccer, cricket, league, rugby, touch, and athletics as well as for large events; six outdoor tennis and netball courts. These facilities are used for training as well as competition.
- QEC is a strategically important and regionally significant facility which includes future Long Term Plan investment to meet future growth. It operates at near capacity year round and needs to accommodate the rapid growth of the District as the only facility of its kind.
- The alignment of the yellow route dissects the QEC site and locates a station on R9. This will undoubtedly diminish the functionality of R9 and QEC and will conflict with the high public use. It will also restrict QLDC's ability to develop the site in the future for as yet unrealised projects to accommodate demands for community facilities.
- Regional facilities such as this, require a large area of land that is extremely difficult to obtain due to the topographical constraints of the District as well as the financial cost of acquiring sufficient land to host such facilities creating a significant burden for Council and the ratepayer.
- The applicant needs to investigate alternative alignments that do not disrupt QEC and relocate the station to avoid disturbing the existing golf activity and preventing future development of community services.

4.4.6.2. **Shotover Delta – O2:**

- This reserve contains important recreation trails and an associated carpark that connects to the wider trail network. It experiences high usage for recreation as well as active travel/commuting.
- It hosts a large amount of mature vegetation and trees protected under the District Plan as well as providing access to the Shotover River and Historic Bridge, both of which are popular destinations.
- The application proposes to occupy the entirety of the reserve for a station (including a servicing/storage area) and other associated infrastructure.
- The proposal would remove any ability for the land to function for its purpose as a recreation reserve and held for conservation purposes as intended by the notice in the Gazette.
- It is important to also consider the future potential of the reserve as identified in the QLDC Blue Green network for ecological and riparian restoration. The proposal will cause further fragmentation of the reserve network, negatively impacting recreation, biodiversity, and ecological values both current and potential.

- The entire occupation of a recreation reserve will reduce the amount of valuable QLDC reserve land available for public enjoyment and enhancement of the Blue Green Network.

#### 4.4.6.3. **Queenstown Hill – R1 & R2:**

- Queenstown Hill is a large informal reserve that is heavily used for recreation, and it provides one of the backdrops to Queenstown. Any overhead infrastructure will likely require a firebreak, and maintenance access. This has not been assessed.
- The applicant should consider how the proposal can integrate and assist with the Queenstown Hill revegetation plan.
- The proposal does not provide any enhanced access or other benefit to the reserve, or demonstrate how the proposal may integrate with the reserve and trail network. The provision of a cable car will undoubtedly result in increased demand for walking and biking trails.
- Queenstown Hill provides a scenic experience and provides separation from built infrastructure. The proposed infrastructure and any fire break would reduce the amenity and recreation value experienced by reserve users.

#### 4.4.6.4. **Local purpose or linear recreation reserves adjacent to the road reserve – R3, R4, R5, R6, R7**

- These reserves provide a buffer from the road network and include trails/footpaths for pedestrian and cycle access that are frequently used for pedestrian and cycle access.
- These reserves are considered to have greater capacity to accommodate the proposal and are more appropriate for the proposed infrastructure included in the proposal where appropriate mitigation is provided, i.e. retention and enhancement of pedestrian and cycle footpaths/trails and access.

4.4.7. In summary, whilst limited use of reserve land may be considered for some aspects of the application, further analysis and engagement with Council is required by the applicant to investigate alternative alignments that avoid or limit the use of recreation reserve land and existing QEC facilities. This should be achieved by utilising private land to enable the extensive infrastructure proposed within the application.

## 5. **SUMMARY**

5.1. The QLDC reserve network is heavily relied upon by the applicant to deliver this project. The reliance of the proposal on the reserve network places a burden on public land set aside for sport, recreation, beautification or conservation which so far, the applicant has not sufficiently addressed.

5.2. Further investigation needs to be undertaken by the applicant to refine the proposal and consider alternative alignments that utilise private land for station locations rather than utilising public recreation reserves and reducing the quality and quantity of the open space network. The alignment needs to consider public benefit/access such as connections (existing and future), limiting use of recreation reserve land by avoiding the entire occupation of reserve lots, and avoiding impacting existing and future QEC facilities.

- 5.3. The applicant needs to provide a detailed assessment of public vs private land alternatives. Where public land is the only option, the applicant must provide details of satisfactory mitigation measures to address the removal or reduction in quality, of reserve land.
- 5.4. The use of recreation reserves for a commercial project (ie that does not meet the definition of public transport as guided by ORC as the Public Transport Authority) would be contrary to the intended use and purpose of recreation reserves. The purpose of recreation reserves is to provide public access and enjoyment for recreation and sporting activities and the protection of the natural environment and retention of open space as defined in s17 of the Reserves Act. As a commercial venture, this project would provide little to no benefit to the reserves and would be significantly more difficult to justify the use of reserve land.
- 5.5. The restricted use of some recreation reserve land where it does not interfere with existing uses, and where the adverse effects are able to be appropriately mitigated may be considered for public transport.
- 5.6. The proposal as submitted will result in an increased burden of reserve land, reduced reserve land available for the benefit of the public, increased fragmentation of existing recreation activities and of the blue green network.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1. The applicant needs to consider alternative alignments that avoid the dissection of QEC and the disruption of existing and potential future facilities.
- 6.2. The applicant needs to consider alternative alignments that avoid entire occupation of reserve land and considers existing recreation uses with station and infrastructure location.
- 6.3. Where no alternatives are viable and reserve land is proposed, the applicant needs to provide sufficient mitigation (off setting) that achieves a direct benefit to the reserve and recreation network.

## Section 53 Fast Track Approvals Act 2024 - Individual Elected Member Statement

### QUEENSTOWN CABLE CAR COUNCIL REFERENCE NUMBER: FTRA2505

#### SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

A subdivision to establish an aerial cable car network with a series of stations servicing Queenstown CBD, Frankton/Airport area and Ladies Mile. The network involves two lines and a total of 9 stations with the proposal seeking the option of two alternative routes to reach Ladies Mile. A number of the stations are proposed to include ancillary activities such as cafes/bars/office/storage uses.

The proposal spans several landholdings, including council administered local purpose and recreation reserves. The application involves a subdivision component create the necessary legal parcels to support leasehold, freehold or other property rights for the proposed stations.

#### SUMMARY OF INFO PROVIDED WITH APPLICATION

1. *Planning report and proposal summary*
2. *Survey Plans, context plans*
3. *Engineering Feasibility Documents*
4. *Expert Reports – transport, ecological, economic, landscape, noise, urban design, Air Navigation*

#### IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ELECTED MEMBER STATEMENT

1. Statements are an elected member's personal views, and these do not constitute a collective decision or position of the Council. Discussions with constituents may have assisted to form this view.
2. The statement is an opinion and not put forward as expert evidence.
3. The statement is intended to assist the expert decision making panel following an invitation for commentary.

#### ELECTED OFFICIAL NAME – CODY TUCKER

#### ELECTED OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

Kia Ora

My name is Cody Tucker, I am a Councillor for Queenstown Lakes District Council, Chair of the Smart Growth Committee and Deputy Chair of Assets and Infrastructure.

Let me start by saying that offline mass rapid transport is a critical element in helping solve Queenstown's transport problems. Without question, the social licence in Queenstown is eroding fast, as residents endure the cumulative effects of growth that consistently outpaces transport infrastructure delivery.

Because of the natural limitations in an alpine environment, a cable-based transport package is a welcome solution to ease congestion and offer a credible alternative to private vehicles in principle.

Significant parts of this proposal seem adequate in helping address these issues, and other parts seem less intuitive.

The application also seeks to utilise significant parcels of land owned by the community and will have district wide impacts, yet it has not been developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders and the local authority. As such, it's crucial that the strategic planning of routes, network integration and financial assumptions are developed and tested in collaboration with QLDC and ORC.

Given the scale and significance of the project, it's success will be down to navigating adequate scrutiny to ensure this can be a legacy and not a liability.

I commend the applicant for the inspired initiative and work to date.

As a district, we need bold ideas that disrupt the typical thinking if we're to ever build a future that addresses these big issues.

Something this big can't be done alone.

So let's help find a way to do it well together.

Cody

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## ELECTED OFFICIAL NAME – JON MITCHELL – COUNCILLOR WHAKATIPU QUEENSTOWN WARD

### ELECTED OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

As well as being a councillor for the ward in which the cableway proposed by this application would predominantly be located, I have experience in the design, operation, and management of aerial passenger cableways. This experience began with Skyline in Queenstown in the mid-1980s, three seasons as a lift operations manager in the early 1990s for the company that is now NZSki, and a season as a lift operations supervisor at Heavenly Valley ski resort, Lake Tahoe California/Nevada, USA.

I also have experience in planning for mass public transport in my role as project consultant to the New Deal for Communities in Rochdale, Manchester, UK, 2000 to 2002. In that case the extension of light and heavy passenger rail services into communities in Northern Manchester.

I have a BA and post-graduate diploma in human geography and planning, and a master's in emergency management.

I have extensive experience in using winter sports/tourism focused aerial cableways in continental Europe, Asia and North America, as well as experience in making the most of mass public transport in major cities in Australasia, Asia, North America, Europe and North Africa.

I have worked in senior roles in local government policy, economic and community development, risk, resilience and emergency management for the past 30 years.

I was born in Queenstown, have spent much of my adult life here, and have closely followed the discussions and developments in Queenstown public and private transport context for the past 40 years.

My views on the Queenstown Cableways application are informed by all of this experience.

#### **Summary:**

Although very familiar with aerial passenger cableways as a user and manager I am convinced they will be a key component of future solutions to the increasing traffic congestion in Queenstown-Frankton-Southern Corridor-Arrowtown area, it is my informed opinion that the Queenstown Cableways proposal is likely to not appreciably improve the current future traffic congestion or speed connections for most in the area. Further, the proposal risks worsening congestion as users make their way to/from the Queenstown, Frankton Hub, Frankton North, and Lower Shotover terminals.

#### **Detailed assessment:**

##### 1. FULL SCOPE OF INTENDED DEVELOPMENT

The application is for a considerably less extensive cableway network than the applicant has been discussing with business groups and the council over the past 6 months or so. leg between tourist activities owned by the principal of the applying company, at Arthur's Point, and the Queenstown Hill station and beyond, has been omitted from the proposal before the ministers. This is a matter of appreciable concern and raises questions about the applicant's full intentions with a cableway network and associated developments.

## 2. TRANSPORT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The transport impact assessment included in the application itself and in the Appendix 15 Transport Assessment provides no meaningful assessment of the positive or negative impacts of the proposed cableways on current or future traffic patterns. The lack of any consideration of the impact of land-based traffic converging on the Queenstown and Frankton terminals renders the transport impact assessment practically useless.

The estimated walking times to/from the Queenstown terminal are around half the actual time that most users, especially with bags, would take to get to/from the terminal. Only a small proportion of cableway users would be coming from/going to locations within the suggested 10 minutes walking radius, resulting in this aspect of the analysis being meaningless.

The referral application and supporting Appendix 15 relies on misleading, unsubstantiated, or simply untrue claims in both about alternative public transport and road enhancement programmes and projects is concerning. One matter of particular concern is the claim that the cableway would entirely replace the current public bus service along State Highway 6A. Realistically though the designed cableway route and location of terminals cannot replicate the multiple bus stops along the highway on Frankton Road (State Highway 6A). Frankton Road not only has numerous accommodation and tourist activities located along it, but is also where a substantial amount of long-term resident and short-term worker residential accommodation, all of which increasingly depend on the current frequent, affordable, and reliable public bus service and its multiple convenient stops along the road. The need for ground-based transport between points as distant as Sunshine Bay/Fernhill, Arthurs Point, Kelvin Heights, Frankton, Lake Hayes Estate/Shotover Country, and the Southern Corridor (Jack's Point/Hanley's Farm) would remain despite the proposed cableway.

The proposed Queenstown terminal, on QLDC land on Gorge Road, appears largely devoid of public and private vehicle drop-off/pickup and carpark space. Given other communication between the applicant and QLDC it appears that the applicant expects that the council and ratepayers will meet the costs of the design, construction, maintenance and operation of this integral aspect of any successful mass public transport project.

## 3. DUPLICATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT / LIMITING OTHER OPTIONS

The proposed location of the Queenstown terminal would result in duplication of the already considerable planning and investment made for the current future larger Stanley Street public transport transfer hub. Funding and location of the proposed Queenstown terminal alone would likely jeopardise the viability of other transport solutions currently being considered for future funding that would hub through downtown Queenstown.

## 4. LAND ACCESS NEGOTIATIONS

The applicant claims that there have been negotiations with QLDC on the applicant gaining access to council owned or administered freehold land and reserved needed for the project. No such negotiations have occurred, although council staff and elected members have been briefed by the applicant on aspects of what they intend to later negotiate on.

The application suggests that terminals would be adjacent to QLDC owned or administered land when in fact at least one of the terminals would in-fact occupy QLDC owned and controlled land, currently the main council administration building, library and adjacent car and campervan carpark.

## 5. QUEENSTOWN AIRPORT CONNECTION

The proposed short cableway between the Frankton transport exchange and the St John Ambulance/Lakes District Hospital site almost 500 metres from Queenstown Airport is a problematic and expensive solution to traffic congestion at Queenstown Airport. It would be preferable for the applicant to work with the other stakeholders in this context, including QLDC, ORC and Queenstown Airport Corporation, to come up with a more practical connection between the airport a proposed aerial cableway solution, rather than be given a green light through a fast-track application.

## 6. LACK OF BUSINESS CASE

Given that the applicant has indicated elsewhere, within Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal discussions, that they expect QLDC to provide land and reserves for terminals, a ticketing system, substantial rates and development contribution remissions, and other direct and indirect support, including in road and stormwater enhancements, the application appears to misrepresent the nature of the application and de-facto dependent relationship with QLDC.

## 7. LANDSCAPE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The landscape impacts of the proposed cableways, in their current forms and with the currently proposed terminal locations, would be substantial. Attempts in the application to argue that these effects would be moderated by the ongoing spread of residential and commercial development in some of the areas the cableways would traverse and terminals would be based avoids the obvious cumulative effects of all of this development. The height of the cableway towers in Queenstown and Frankton, necessitated by the current proposed cableway routes, and the cableways, terminals and resultant moving cable-cars, represent intrusions into the landscape that have not yet been socialised with the affected communities and which could be mitigated with more inclusive consideration of potential routes and terminal locations with stakeholders.

## 8. ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The economic assessment (Appendix 13 – ECPC Limited) includes fanciful economic benefits (captured in an entirely subjective tick-box analysis not supported by any meaningful analysis or evidence), disturbing errors (“\$400 billion” cost of the cableway network), and deliberate misrepresentation of status quo transport investment programmes (assuming the Queenstown Business Case will not be delivered on until 2039) to the extent that is simply not credible.

The economic assessment provided by Property Economics (Appendix 14) posits the hyper-local economic impacts of the proposed cableway as “regional” in nature, which is geographically, logically and factually incorrect and appears to deliberately misrepresent the impact of the proposal.

Despite its limitations the Property Economics assessment provides more holistic, evidence-informed, and meaningful analysis than Appendix 13, although it concentrates almost exclusively on the impact of the construction phase of the project and not its long-term impacts, rendering the analysis meaningless in the assisting the ministers in their consideration of the proposal.

The detail included in Appendix 14 provides considerably more insight into the actual anticipated costs of the project than the proposal itself. These details indicate that the majority of expenditure on the

construction costs of the project will immediately leave the district (and region), negating most of the project economic multiplier effects claimed.

Appendix 14 repeats the unsubstantiated and fanciful claims of the proposal itself that the proposed cableway will mitigate the transport issues identified in the Queenstown Business Case 2020 and Queenstown Public Transport Business Case in the claim that the proposed cableway will substantially reduce private (including trade, commercial and visitor rental car) vehicle congestion of State Highway 6 Frankton Road. The relatively drastically “off-line” nature of the proposed cableway is likely to increase traffic on Frankton Road as it might reduce it, factors not included by this appendix or the more targeted traffic assessment (Appendix 15).

#### 9. PROJECT FUNDING

The proposal lacks reference to how the project would be funded which is highly problematic for QLDC, with the applicant suggesting in the application and elsewhere that external funding would be necessary to make the project operationally viable. The problem with this approach is that re-directing existing transport-targeted funding or acquiring funding from future sources, such as time-of-use charging on State Highway 6/Frankton Road, would mean that funding for other road and public transport programmes and projects would at least be in jeopardy.

The operational funding model proposed to QLDC elected members in recent briefings raises considerable concerns about the complex foreign investment model being considered by the applicant and the competitive impact on potential traditional NZTA, regional council and local authority funding and potential new funding options, such as time-of-use charging being discussed within and outside of the regional deal process, for already planned and proven transport options. That such funding or associated risk analysis and management has not been included in this application or any parallel processes means that this proposal is premature and incomplete.

#### 10. RECOMMENDED DECISION

A more logical approach would be for the minister to decline this application and recommend that the applicant instead work openly and honestly with the other local and national stakeholder organisations to develop more objectively evidence-based, effective, and economically sustainable cableway solutions that are fully integrated into other current transport modes and future developments in the district's, and potentially the region's, multi-mode transport network.

## Section 53 Fast Track Approvals Act 2024 - Individual Elected Member Statement

### QUEENSTOWN CABLE CAR COUNCIL REFERENCE NUMBER: FTRA2505

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#### ELECTED OFFICIAL NAME – NIKI GLADDING

#### ELECTED OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Queenstown Cable Car's application for referral. I do not believe this project should be referred at this time. My reasons are set out below.

In short, this is **not yet** an infrastructure project with regionally significant benefits. I've taken this position because the ORC hasn't yet agreed to procure the service, because there are other transport solutions being considered by the Councils that might require use of the same space, and because without public revenue this project will be unsustainable.

To that last point, briefings provided to QLDC councillors clarified that the project requires public funding from the Otago Regional Council and/or QLDC to cover its operational costs. Road user charges have been raised as a potential revenue source.


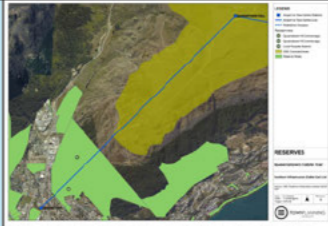


Of course, Queenstown *does* need an 'offline' public transport solution, but that solution will need to integrate seamlessly with the wider PT network in order to help achieve the goal of 50-60% mode shift. Because it has a limited number of stations (entry and exit points), I'm not convinced the QCC gondola would be a sufficiently convenient alternative for enough people. Another option may be preferable and obviously it will be the preferred option that is granted permission to use QLDC land.

The councils (ORC and QLDC) currently have two concepts in front of them – the QCC gondola and the Whoosh proposal. Both companies have briefed QLDC. These two proposed solutions are quite different, but both may need to use the same key land holdings – meaning that progressing with one option may preclude the other. Competing uses of the same space is something the Minister may choose to consider under s22(6)(a) and (c) of the Act.

In summary, I believe a referral at this time would be premature. The ORC must first undertake a competitive procurement process for an offline PT solution. The preferred solution would likely meet the regional benefit test; an unapproved proposal can't.

Best

Niki Gladding  
Councillor – Wanaka Upper Clutha Ward  
s 9(2)(a)

Name	Route and ref	IMAGE	Classification	Impact & Requirements	Current Proposed Use of Site	Parks Comment	Recommendation
QT Hill	BLUE R1 & R2		Recreation Reserve	Cable & Pylon Easement Corridor	The proposal shows the blue route transiting this site via an easement corridor.	<p>The applicant has not identified if and to what degree a fire break would be required. QT Hill is subject to closures during summer due to wildfire risk. This does not appear to have been considered. The applicant should provide comment on the QT Hill revegetation plan and consult with the WCG on how this proposal could integrate and contribute</p> <p>QT Hill offers a scenic experience, separated from built infrastructure. The presence of a gondola and its associated infrastructure towers fire breaks etc would reduce the visual and recreation amenity value of the reserve users.</p> <p>The application does not show maintenance access or how this would occur. To be able to properly assess the impact on the reserve a comprehensive plan set identifying works and infrastructure in the reserves is required. The co-location of services is generally encouraged (where they don't conflict with each other).</p> <p>The Reserve Management Plan (RMP) has some provision for providing for infrastructure for public transport. However, there is no provision made for commercial activities. The application does not have sufficient information to determine if the proposal will be a legitimate public transport option that benefits the QT community.</p> <p>The applicant has not provided information on how a cable car station would integrate with the QT Hill reserve and trail network. There would inevitably be demand for new walking and biking trails.</p>	<p>Mitigation and integration.</p> <p>How can the proposal assist the QWT Hill reforestation plan?</p>
QT Hill	BLUE R2		Recreation Reserve	Cable & Pylon Easement Corridor	The proposal shows the blue route transiting this site via an easement corridor.	Same as R1 assessment.	<p>Mitigation and integration.</p> <p>How can the proposal assist the QWT Hill reforestation plan?</p>
Shotover Delta	O2 - Quail Rise YELLOW		Recreation Reserve	Station Reclassify and Revoke (applicant proposes lease)	The proposal shows the yellow route utilising the entirety of this reserve as a station and associated infrastructure including coach a gondola service station.	<p>This reserve contains important recreation trails and associated carpark that connect into the wider trail network utilised frequently for recreation and active travel/commuting. Access to the river and the historic bridge is also provided by these trails, both of which are popular destinations. It is the only QLDC administered recreation reserve with these values in the vicinity.</p> <p>The reserve also contains a large amount of mature vegetation including two protected trees under the district plan - reference number 207 that are 2x Sequoia and has been identified in the draft QLDC Blue Green Network for ecological and riparian restoration. The site is ONL and Wahi Tupuna and provides an important connection with the Kimi-ahau (Shotover River).</p> <p>This is a riverside reserve that requires protection for the public enjoyment rather than exclusive use of the entire parcel for a private interest. The proposal is also not in accordance with the QLDC Blue Green Network which signals the potential for ecological and riparian restoration and will cause further fragmentation of the network for recreation and biodiversity/ecology.</p> <p>The use of recreation reserve for the occupation of a cable car station and associated infrastructure will result in removal of the reserve values and will effectively remove the reserve from the QLDC network. It will no longer be able to provide for public enjoyment for the purpose of the parcels intent (recreation).</p> <p>This location is also not considered a necessity as it does not service a high density of housing lots without driving so would likely function as a Park and Ride. Provision of a park and ride in this location would further detract from the blue green network values. The applicant has not shown how this occupation is proposed to be managed ie, lease, subdivision and sale or what mitigation and offsets are proposed.</p> <p>The use of the R6 Station would allow for the continued use of the O2 reserve whilst still providing a station in this general vicinity.</p>	Realign or significant redesign to reduce and minimise footprint
Shotover Delta	O2 YELLOW		QLDC Freehold	Station, Reclassify Revoke (applicant proposes lease and easement corridor)	Significant infrastructure, taking up almost whole parcel	Same as O2	Realign or significant redesign to minimise footprint

QEC/Frankton Golf Co	R9 YELLOW		Recreation Reserve	Station + Pylons + cables <b>Reclassify, Lease, Easement</b>	Application shows alignment dissecting the site as well as a station located in the south west quadrant. Application shows alignment dissecting the site from the Grant Road/Frankton - Ladies Mile Highway roundabout to the hockey turfs.	These parcels are occupied by the Frankton Golf Course, which is the only public golf course in the district, and the recently constructed multi purpose sports turf which is highly used for active recreation activities (golf, hockey and football) and two formal sportsfields. The proposed alignment completely dissects the site which would greatly impact both of these activities that provide for the local community as well as regionally significant turfs for sporting competitions. The applicant has shown no attempt to mitigate these effects or demonstrate how the proposal will be able to functionally be co-located without impacting existing and future activities.  QEC is a strategically important sport and recreation asset that operates at capacity year round and needs to accommodate districts high levels of growth into the future. Potential for future expansion should not be constrained.  By dissecting the site as is proposed, the functionality of the land will be diminished and will conflict with the high public use (or interest), result in a large loss to; amenity value; current function; and any possible future recreation function. These sportsfields as with the hockey turfs in the R9 assessment, provide a regionally significant facility for a variety of sports including soccer and cricket, athletics and are used for large events.  Facilities such as this require a large area of land this is extremely difficult to obtain in a topographically constrained district such as the Queenstown Lakes. Also the financial cost of obtaining land for these types of facilities is a large burden for Council and the ratepayer.  These facilities must be protected for their intended purpose (sportsfields/recreation/ community facilities). The current alignment would diminish this Council/public asset. The applicant needs to provide careful consideration regarding the proposed alignments to minimise the impacts on public assets. No evidence that an effects hierarchy model has been applied to the application (avoidance, minimisation, remediation, offsetting) or what these may be.  Any impact on this land should be avoided.	Avoid
Minor	R6 RED		Local Purpose (Beautification) Reserve	Station and/or pylons	Application shows a station for the red route and easement corridor for the yellow route across this reserve.	This reserve is adjacent to the highway. It has a greater capacity than the other reserves proposed for absorbing infrastructure development. It is considered a better station location than O2 as it would not impede recreation opportunities to the same degree.  Public access and trail connections need to be retained through this reserve as it will form an important active travel route connecting to Frankton, especially if the plans for a pedestrian overbridge proceeds in this vicinity.	Propose mitigation and ensure pedestrian and cycle connection provided.
Minor	R7 RED		Recreation Reserve	Cable & possibly pylon	The proposal shows the blue route transiting this site. An easement corridor utilising approximately half the site is shown.	The alignment shown follows the existing transmission line corridor and fire break.  The applicant has not shown how they will deal with existing infrastructure? E.g. powerline corridor in this location.  Transmission line corridors provide important connections to the adjoining Queenstown Hill Reserve and trails.  The applicant has not shown if public access will be maintained.	Propose mitigation and consider access.
Minor	BLUE R3		Local Purpose (Transport) Reserve	Station + Pylons	The proposal shows the blue route utilising this entire area for route alignment as well as the southern portion for a station.	This parcel is narrow and the easement corridor and station would occupy the entire parcel.  This parcel provides an important pedestrian/cycle connection. This is a critical connection as it provides recreation value as well as forming part of a highly used active travel commuter network of tracks and trails. The application has not shown if this will be maintained.  There are already a significant amount of underground services in this reserve. The application has not shown if the proposal is feasibly compatible with these existing services.	Propose mitigation and demonstrate feasibility. Ensure pedestrian and cycle connection retained.
Minor	BLUE R4		Recreation Reserve	Station + Pylons	The proposal shows the blue route utilising this entire area for route alignment as well as the northern portion for a station.	Same as R3 assessment. Would also require reclassification from recreation reserve to local purpose reserve.	Propose mitigation and demonstrate feasibility. Ensure pedestrian and cycle connection retained.
Minor	BLUE R5		Local Purpose (Beautification) Reserve	Station	The proposal shows the blue route utilising this entire area for route alignment as well as the southern portion for a station.	Same as R3/R4 assessment. Would also require reclassification.	Propose mitigation and demonstrate feasibility. Ensure pedestrian and cycle connection retained.
Minor	BLUE R7 (duplicate)		Recreation Reserve	Station	The proposal shows the blue route utilising a small portion of the northern parts of these parcels for a station.	Same as R3/R4/R5 assessment.	Propose mitigation and demonstrate feasibility. Ensure pedestrian and cycle connection retained.
Boundary St Carpark	Blue - Not Applicable		QLDC Freehold	Station + Pylons	The proposal shows the entire Boundary St site being occupied by the station and associated infrastructure/pylons.  Existing use is car parking.	This site adjoins Home Creek and the Queenstown Recreation Reserve. The impacts on Home Creek have not been identified are not known. Some of the renders show engineered solutions constraining the banks of the creek. Adding these elements to waterways can have down stream effects on aquatic habitat, hydro dynamics (flow rate/erosion patterns etc), water quality as well as reducing the naturalness of waterways.  There is also a range of mature trees on the site that have taken a considerable time to establish. Trees are a unique asset that appreciate over time. It is unknown if these are proposed to be removed or retained.	

## Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Fast-track Approvals Act referral application – Queenstown Cable Car – FTAA-2510-1124</b>
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Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email [contact@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:contact@fasttrack.govt.nz) or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

<b>1. Contact Details</b>			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>*Portfolio</b>	Acting Minister for the South Island and Acting Minister for Transport		
<b>*First name</b>	Nicola		
<b>*Last name</b>	Grigg		
<b>Contact person (if different from above)</b>	Emma Smith (SPS)		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

<b>2. Please provide your comments on this application</b>
Please refer to the attached 2 page letter.

Minister's signoff



Hon Nicola Grigg  
**Acting Minister for the South Island**  
**Acting Minister for Transport**

Date: 30/01/2025

# Hon Nicola Grigg

Minister of State for Trade and Investment  
Minister for Women  
Associate Minister of Agriculture  
Associate Minister for ACC



30 January 2026

Hon Shane Jones  
Acting Minister for Infrastructure

**By email:** [infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz)

## **Fast-track Approvals Act referral application – Queenstown Cable Car – FTAA-2510-1124**

Dear Minister Jones,

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the referral application for the Queenstown Cable Car project under section 72 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. You requested comment from Hon James Meager as Minister for the South Island, and Associate Minister of Transport. I am responding as Acting Minister of those portfolios.

I understand the proposal is to construct and operate a mass rapid transit cable car network and supporting infrastructure, connecting central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport, and Ladies Mile across nine stations.

If constructed, the project is expected to be capable of transporting up to 3,000 passengers per hour in each direction with typical travel time between Queenstown Airport and the town centre expected to be approximately 22 minutes.

The applicant has provided an economic impact assessment by Property Economics to support the application. The assessment estimates that during the five-year construction phase, the project will inject approximately \$249.00 million (Net Present Value) into the Otago regional economy and support a total of 2,141 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with peak annual employment reaching 796 FTEs. Of the total, 813 FTEs are direct employment, and 1,328 FTEs arise from indirect and induced activity.

I have considered the information provided and its alignment with the priorities of my South Island portfolio. Given the scale of the projected economic benefits, including job creation and regional investment, the project will deliver significant regional economic benefit.

When it is time to consider the future substantive application and its effects, the application will likely require more analysis on the potential operational impacts on existing transport networks, particularly air navigation. I strongly encourage the applicant and the expert panel considering any future substantive application to ensure the New Zealand Transport Agency and the Civil Aviation Authority have been involved in the development of this application. This will ensure that operational matters are properly considered and are able to be safely mitigated before any consents approval is granted.

I note this project was included in the Queenstown Transport Package proposal, which was endorsed in December 2025 by the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission as national infrastructure priority at Stage 1. This endorsement indicates a problem or opportunity for New Zealand, which can progress to an indicative or Programme Business case to identify a range of options. The project also complements Arthurs Point Crossing, another priority project for the Otago region.

I also note there is a competing project in Queenstown proposed by Holmes Solutions called Whoosh, which is a cable-pod network aiming to provide an on-demand public transport system. Whoosh is currently progressing through the resource consent process, and there is no public indication of an FTAA 2024 referral application at this time.

Finally, I consider the Queenstown Cable Car project has significant regional benefits, and I therefore support the application being referred to the Fast-track Approvals Act process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Grigg', written in a cursive style.

Hon Nicola Grigg  
**Acting Minister for the South Island**  
**Acting Minister for Transport**

# Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance  
Minister for Economic Growth  
Minister for Social Investment



20 JAN 2026


Hon Chris Bishop  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

REQ-0025854

Dear Chris

Thank you for the opportunity to comment under the Fast-track Approvals Act (FTAA) on the following applications:


Out of Scope



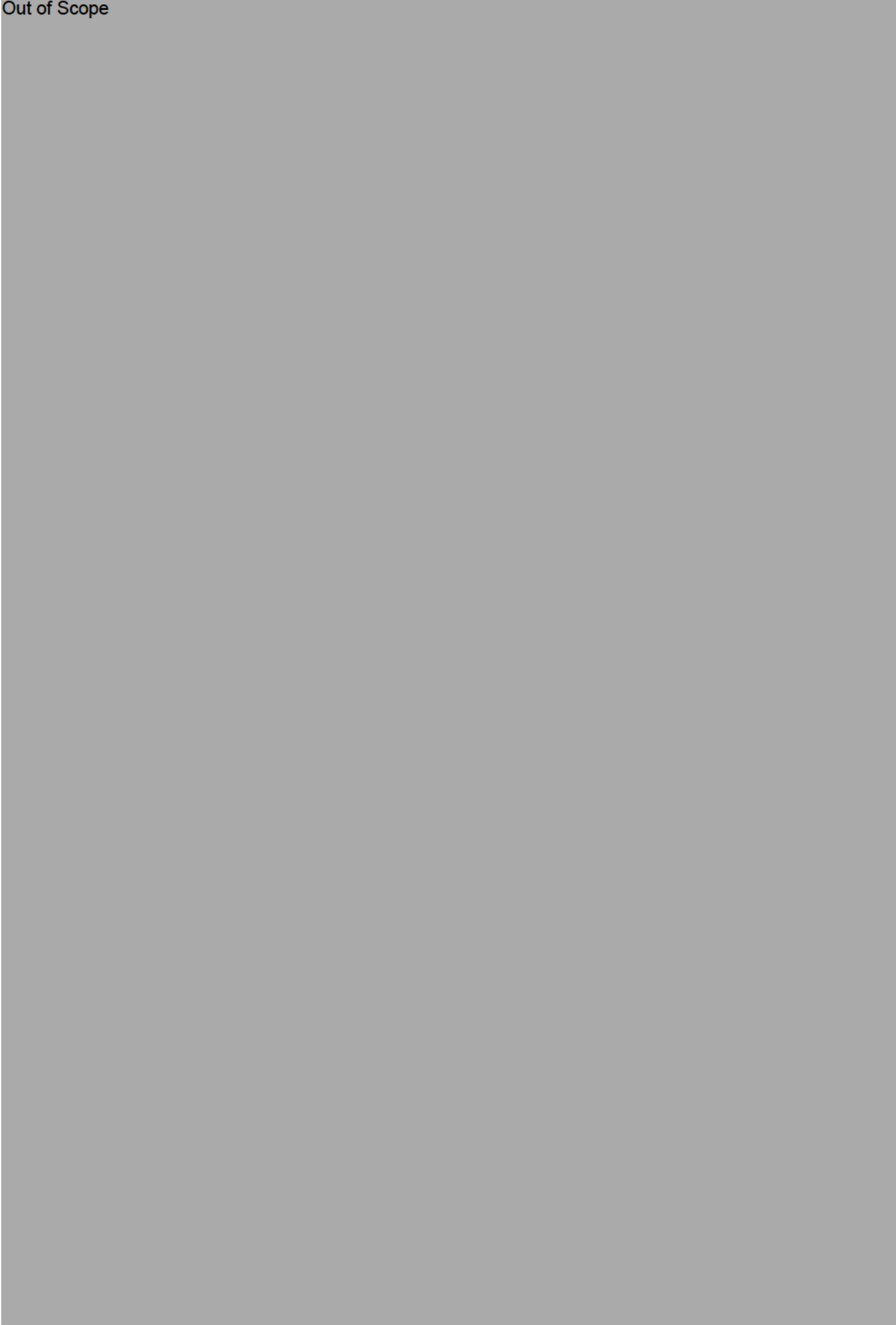
- Queenstown Cable Car, FTAA 2510-1124

I am providing comments in my capacity as Minister for Economic Growth, focusing on whether these applications are likely to have significant economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the FTAA, based on the information provided. I defer to you and other relevant Ministers to assess the remaining criteria.


Out of Scope



Out of Scope



Out of Scope



### ***Queenstown Cable Car – FTAA 2510-1124***

The proposed application is to establish and operate a mass-rapid transit cable-car network connecting the central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile. The project includes the construction and operation of a series of cable-car lines with associated stations, towers, cableways and other supporting infrastructure and activities across multiple sites in the network.

According to the economic assessment provided by the applicant, the expected total value over a five-year development period will contribute \$249 million to GDP, direct FTE for 796 people over the peak year of development and operation, with a total of 2,141 FTE over the five-year development period. Of the 2,141 total FTE, 813 FTE are direct, while the remaining 1,328 are indirect.

The assessment also lists a range of qualitative benefits to the Queenstown economy, including improvement to the regional transport network, support for future regional economic and population growth, greater tourism and increased visitor spend, expanded labour market catchment encouraging further development, and improved productivity and agglomeration benefits.

I am aware that there is a competing cable car project in Queenstown proposed by Holmes Solutions called Whoosh, which is currently progressing through the resource consent process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Willis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Nicola Willis

**Minister for Economic Growth**

# Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for the Environment  
Minister for Vocational Education  
Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment



28 January 2026

PS-COR-1788

Hon. Chris Bishop  
Minister for Infrastructure  
c.bishop@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the invitation to provide comments on the application for referral of the Queenstown Cable Car project to an expert panel (the Panel) under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA).

Having reviewed the referral application, I have identified specific information relating to potentially significant adverse environmental effects of the project that, if provided in the substantive application, would ensure efficient and timely consideration of the project.

The development is proposed on land that includes the sensitive indigenous biodiversity and freshwater systems of the Shotover and Remarkables Ecological Districts. Therefore, should you decide to accept the referral application, it is of particular importance the adverse impacts are adequately addressed by the substantive application, and consideration is given to the effects management hierarchy of both the NPS-FM and NPS-IB. I note recent amendments to the assessment requirements for these national direction instruments will require consideration should a substantive application be lodged.

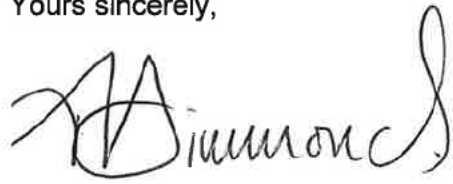
You may wish to use your discretion to specify information that is required to be provided with the substantive application under section 27(3)(b)(ii) of the FTAA, including:

- a. Comprehensive ecological assessment that includes the following information
  - a. Field surveys that assess indigenous fauna and flora, including bats and invertebrate species, and natural inland wetland extent
  - b. Assessment of the Lake Johnson Significant Natural Area and consistency with the NPSIB and NPS-FM
    - a. Assessment of how proposed stormwater wetland will impact biodiversity values in the subject site and nearby
    - b. Assessment of hydrological connection of the proposed stormwater wetland to natural inland wetlands and existing waterbodies.
  - c. Assessment of adverse effects that include construction and operational impacts on indigenous biodiversity ecosystems and water bodies, how these will be managed and promote climate change resilience, including proposed management and monitoring plans.

The approach to specify this information early will reduce the risk of unanticipated significant matters being identified late in the process and support the smooth and efficient conduct of the Panel's decision-making.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this referral application.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Simmonds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S".

Hon Penny Simmonds  
**Minister for the Environment**

# Hon Louise Upston

Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector  
Minister for Disability Issues  
Minister for Social Development and Employment  
Minister for Tourism and Hospitality  
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction  
Deputy Leader of the House



Hon Shane Jones  
Minister for Regional Development  
[infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz)

Dear Shane

## Fast-track referral application for the Queenstown Cable Car project – FTAA-2510-1124

As a Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, I appreciate the invitation to comment on the application by Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Ltd for the Queenstown Cable Car (QCC) under the Fast-Track Approvals Act (FTTA) 2024.

I note this project includes the development of new infrastructure that could deliver positive outcomes for the Queenstown Lakes District and the wider region. These are set out below.

- *Demand*: the QCC (both as an attraction in its own right and as a quick transport option between the airport and city centre) could drive demand to visit Queenstown from domestic and international visitors.
- *Regional carrying capacity*: given the anticipated increase in the number of international visitors to New Zealand, the QCC could help to increase the carrying capacity of the regional transport network, facilitating visitor flows around the region.
- *New opportunities for business growth*: the QCC may create new opportunities for tourism and hospitality operators. This may include through establishing offerings near to, or at, cable-car stations.
- *Improving social licence*: Research from early 2025 showed that while Queenstown residents recognise that tourism is good for the region (96 per cent), almost all residents also reported experiencing adverse impacts from tourism in their area (97 per cent).<sup>1</sup> Projects such as the QCC could help alleviate this issue by providing an alternative route and mode of transport, in particular between the airport and town centre.
- *Regional air connectivity*: the QCC could improve the attractiveness of Queenstown's airport through having an easy and fast transport option to the town centre. This could encourage greater use of this asset by national and international airlines.
- *Sustainable transport*: the QCC would contribute to the region's climate change mitigation through its low-emission transport system. This could reduce the environmental impact of tourism on the region.

These benefits align with my Tourism Growth Roadmap, which outlines the Government's strategic vision and plan to boost tourism, drive economic growth and enhance the visitor experience in New Zealand.

I note that there is a competing project in Queenstown proposed by Holmes Solutions called Whoosh, which is a cable-pod network, aiming to provide on-demand public transport

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<sup>1</sup> Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism, "Views on Tourism Research: Queenstown 2024 – 2025".

system. Whoosh is currently progressing through the resource consent process, and no public FTAA referral has been indicated.

Overall, I consider the QCC initiative is infrastructure-led and directed at addressing an urgent and well-evidenced transport constraint in one of New Zealand's most economically important tourism regions. I support the application being referred to an expert panel for further consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Louise Upston', with a stylized, cursive script.

Hon Louise Upston  
**Minister for Tourism and Hospitality**

**From:** [Infrastructure Portfolio](#)  
**To:** [FTAreferrals](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Queenstown Cable Car project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2510-1124  
**Date:** Wednesday, 28 January 2026 9:57:55 am

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Please see Minister Watt's comments below

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**From:** Emily Young [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 28 January 2026 9:42 AM  
**To:** Rob Schick [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#)  
**Cc:** Steve Mason [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Queenstown Cable Car project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2510-1124

Morning Rob,

Please see below a comment from Minister Watts, as the Minister of Climate Change on the Queenstown Cable Car fast-track project:

*The project is likely to be regionally (and not nationally) significant in terms of climate mitigation. The initial assessment concludes that the risk from natural hazards can be mitigated to an acceptable level, and that the development is feasible from a geotechnical perspective.*

Regards,  
Emily

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**From:** Infrastructure Portfolio <[Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 December 2025 1:56 PM  
**To:** Nicola Willis (MIN) <[N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz)>; Penny Simmonds (MIN) <[P.Simmonds@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:P.Simmonds@ministers.govt.nz)>; Tama Potaka (MIN) <[T.Potaka@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:T.Potaka@ministers.govt.nz)>; Chris Penk (MIN) <[C.Penk@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:C.Penk@ministers.govt.nz)>; Louise Upston (MIN) <[L.Upston@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:L.Upston@ministers.govt.nz)>; James Meager (MIN) <[J.Meager@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:J.Meager@ministers.govt.nz)>; Simon Watts (MIN) <[S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz)>  
**Cc:** FTAreferrals <[ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Queenstown Cable Car project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2510-1124

To:

- Minister for Economic Growth
- Minister for the Environment
- Minister for Conservation
- Minister for Land Information
- Minister of Tourism and Hospitality
- Associate Minister of Transport
- Minister of Climate Change
- Minister for the South Island

**PLEASE NOTE**

Minister Bishop, as Minister for Infrastructure, has declared a conflict of interest with this application, and has therefore transferred decision-making to Minister Jones for this referral application. The Office of Minister Bishop will continue to process the application on behalf of Minister Jones' Office, however, the final decision on this application will rest with Minister Jones.

Dear Ministers,

Hon Shane Jones, the Acting Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) for this project, has asked for me to write to you on his behalf.

The Minister has received an application from Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited for referral of the

Queenstown Cable Car project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process (application reference FTAA-2510-1124).

The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

### **Invitation to comment on referral application**

I write in accordance with section 17 of the Act to invite you to provide written comments on the referral application. I have provided summary details of the project below.

If you wish to provide written comments, these must be received by **return email** within **20 working days** of receipt of this email (30 January 2026). The Minister is not required to consider information received outside of this time frame. Any comments submitted will contribute to the Minister's decision on whether to accept the referral application and to refer the project.

If you do not wish to provide comments, please let us know as soon as possible so we can proceed with processing the application without delay.

If the Minister decides to accept the application and to refer the project, the Applicant will need to complete any preliminary steps required under the Act and then lodge their substantive application for the approvals needed for the project. An expert panel will be appointed to decide the substantive application.

### **Process**

The application documents are accessible through the Fast-track portal. Please note that application documents may contain commercially sensitivity information and should not be shared widely. If you haven't used the portal before, you can request access by emailing [ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz). Once you are registered and have accepted the terms and conditions, you will receive a link to view the documents. Existing users will be able to see application documents via the request when logging into the portal. Should you need for your agency to provide any supplementary information, a nominated person can be provided access to the portal, access can be requested by emailing [ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz).

To submit your comments on the application, you can either provide a letter or complete the attached template for written comments and return it by replying to this email, [infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz).

Before the due date, if you have any queries about this email or need assistance with using the portal, please email [contact@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:contact@fasttrack.govt.nz). Further information is available at <https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/>.

### **Important Information**

Please note that all comments received from Ministers invited to comment will be subject to the Official Information Act 1982. Comments received will be proactively released at the time the Acting Minister for Infrastructure makes a referral decision, unless the Minister providing comments advises the Office of Minister Bishop (as the administrating office for this application) they are to be withheld, at the time they are submitted.

If a Conflict of Interest is identified by the Minister providing comments at any stage of providing comments, please inform the Office of Minister Bishop (as the administrating office for this application) and the Cabinet Office immediately. The Cabinet Office will provide advice and, if appropriate, initiate a request to the Prime Minister to agree to a transfer of the project/portfolio invite to another Minister (a request to transfer a COI from one Minister to another can take 1-7 days).

### **Project summary**

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable Car
<b>Applicant</b>	Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited
<b>Location</b>	Queenstown, Otago

**Project description**

The applicant describes the project as the establishment and operation of a mass rapid transit cable car network connecting the central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile. The project includes the construction and operation of a series of cable car lines with associated stations, towers, cableways and other supporting infrastructure and activities across multiple sites in the network.

Yours sincerely

Hon Chris Bishop

**Minister for Infrastructure**

**Office of Hon Chris Bishop**

Minister of Housing | Minister for Infrastructure | Minister Responsible for RMA Reform | Minister of Transport | Associate Minister of Finance | Associate Minister for Sport & Recreation | Leader of the House | MP for Hutt South

Office: 04 817 6802 | EW 6.3

Email: [c.bishop@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:c.bishop@ministers.govt.nz) Website: [www.Beehive.govt.nz](http://www.Beehive.govt.nz)

Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

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# Your written comments on a project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Project name	Queenstown Cable Car
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Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email [contact@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:contact@fasttrack.govt.nz) or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details		
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.		
Organisation name	Department of Conservation	
*First name	Emily	
*Last name	Bayliss	
Postal address		
*Contact phone number	s 9(2)(a)	Alternative
*Email	<a href="mailto:Fast-track@doc.govt.nz">Fast-track@doc.govt.nz</a> ; s 9(2)(a)	

2. Please provide your comments on this application
Comments follow overleaf.

Manager's signoff

Jenni Fitzgerald

January 2026

## Director-General of Conservation s17 comments

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable Car
<b>Applicant name</b>	Southern Infrastructure Limited
<b>Application number</b>	FTAA-2510-1124
<b>Project summary details</b>	<p>The establishment and operation of a mass rapid transit cable car network connecting central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile.</p> <p>The project includes the construction and operation of a series of cable car lines with associated stations, towers, cableways and other supporting infrastructure and activities across multiple land parcels.</p> <p>In relation to approvals where DOC is an administering agency the applicant has identified the following approvals will be required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wildlife approvals for activities relating to lizards.</li> <li>• concession approvals will be required for works on Public Conservation Land (PCL). Although the application is not explicit about the locations of specific infrastructure on specific conservation areas, the following reserves which are administered by DOC and are anticipated to be involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Area – Shotover River Sewage Treatment (Section 4 SD 409393)</li> <li>• Crown Land and a Marginal Strip -Kawarau River flanking Old School Road on the opposite side of Shotover River</li> <li>• an amendment/variation of Conservation Covenant 586535.4 which applies to Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve (Lot 2 DP 351844, RT 670387) and is administered by DOC.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Notwithstanding the above, DOC has identified that approvals related to the following land administered under the Reserves Act 1977 and vested in QLDC are anticipated to be involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shotover Bridge/Delta Reserve (for Conservation Purposes)</li> <li>• Queenstown Hill Commonage/Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve (Recreation Reserve)</li> <li>• Frankton Recreational Reserve (Recreation Reserve); Kawarau Road Beautification Reserve (Local Purpose: Beautification Reserve) and McTaggart Park (Local Purpose: Beautification Reserve)</li> <li>• Queenstown Events Centre (Recreation Reserve).</li> </ul>

	<p>The following reserve also meets the definition of PCL under the FTAA and is administered by Health New Zealand:  Government Purpose (Hospital) Reserve under Gazette 1890  Approvals will be sought for these areas of PCL (including type (b) reserves approvals) however it is noted that the reserves are vested in and/or managed by QLDC and Health New Zealand as above.</p>
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## 1. General comment

- 1.1 The project includes approvals under specified Acts for which DOC is the administering agency, as such the applicant was required to undertake pre-lodgement consultation in accordance with section 11(e) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA).
- 1.2 DOC is satisfied that the applicant has engaged with DOC on relevant aspects of the application. DOC and the Applicant met on 12 August 2025 to discuss additional information provided in relation to the revised application. DOC provided written feedback to the Applicant on the 11 November 2025 on this information. The applicant then met with DOC on 1 December 2025 to review the pre-consultation summary and discuss further, at the time lodgement of the referral application. This feedback is submitted with the referral application.

## 2. Minister’s decision on referral application

- 2.1 The FTAA sections 21 and 22 set out matters to be considered in determining whether a referral application should be accepted. Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any reason why this project should not be referred.
- 2.2 DOC notes that other agencies may be better placed to comment on some matters (such as competing applications on QLDC vested reserves) as detailed in the table below. The comments provided by DOC are targeted to sections where DOC has specific interests or commentary on conservation related information relevant to the Minister’s decision.
- 2.3 For completeness, DOC has considered the criteria for assessing referral applications in section 22 and has not identified anything it considers the Minister should consider as per the tables below.
- 2.4 Sections 21(3), (4) and (5) set out when the Minister may/must decline a referral application. DOC has considered these criteria and comments as follows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
21(3)(b)	<i>Does the project involve an ineligible activity</i>	The meaning of ineligible activity is set out in s 5 of the FTAA – DOC has considered ss 5(1)(f), (h), (i), (j) and (k) and has not directly identified any aspect of the project that would meet the definition.
21(3)(c)	Is there adequate information to inform a decision	With respect to the wildlife approval identified in the application, DOC considers the information adequate in terms of a referral decision.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
		<p>DOC notes that the proposal may intersect with bat populations protected under the Wildlife Act 1953 that may also require wildlife approval.</p> <p>DOC considers there is adequate information to inform a referral decision in relation to the concession and covenant aspects of the application, however further information and clarification would need to be provided should the project be referred. Additionally, QLDC and Health NZ (as applicable) may have further commentary in relation to the reserves vested to them.</p>
21(4)	Are there any other reasons not to refer the project	DOC has not identified any other reasons why the project should not be referred.
21(5)(a)	<p>Is the project inconsistent with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Treaty settlement;</li> <li>• Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019;</li> <li>• Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011.</li> </ul>	<p>DOC has not identified any inconsistency with any relevant settlement or other obligation, subject to any comments from Treaty partners under s 17(1)(d).</p> <p>However, there may be considerations relevant to the project under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act.</p>
21(5)(b)	Would it be more appropriate to deal with the proposed approvals under another Act(s)	DOC has not identified any reason why the conservation related approvals referenced should not be considered under the FTAA process.
21(5)(c)	Would the project have significant adverse effects on the environment	<p>In relation to the wildlife approval sought DOC considers adverse effects can likely be managed through conditions and management plans.</p> <p>In relation to the broader proposal, there will be a range of environmental effects which have not been addressed in the referral application and will need to be considered in further detail if the project is referred. Based on the information available in the referral application, in terms of effects on conservation values, DOC has identified the below focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subalpine areas of Te Tapanui Queenstown Hill Reserve as habitat for indigenous birds, lizards and invertebrates, and At Risk or Threatened plant species</li> <li>• Shotover River environs, ground nesting birds and freshwater fauna – particularly during construction</li> </ul>

<b>Section</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
		<p>These effects may be manageable through appropriate management plans and conditions.</p> <p>The project includes land administered under the Reserves Act 1977, which is administered by QLDC and Health New Zealand. The applicant has submitted a record of preliminary consultation with QLDC in relation to the Type B reserves and interests on Council managed land.</p>
21(5)(d)	Does the applicant(s) have a poor compliance history under a specified Act	DOC has not identified any issues with the applicant's compliance history in relation to conservation Acts.
21(5)(g)	Would a substantive application have any competing applications	<p>DOC has not identified any competing applications for wildlife approvals or concessions relating to the DOC administered areas in our BAU permissions system.</p> <p>QLDC are better placed to provide further comment on any relevant competing applications in relation to the vested reserves which they administer.</p>

- 2.5 While DOC does not have sufficient information to determine the level of any actual and potential environmental effects, DOC considers that it is likely that with the appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels in relation to approval(s). The conservation covenant (now administered by the Minister of Conservation) protects the natural environment in particular the faces and skylines of Queenstown Hill Te Tapunui visible to the public, and a full effects assessment to support variation or revocation of the covenant will need to be addressed as part of a substantive application.
- 2.6 Section 22 sets out the criteria for the Minister for accepting a referral application. DOC has considered these criteria and comments as follows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
22(1)(b)(i)	Would referring the project to the fast-track process facilitate the project, including in a way that is more timely and cost-effective than under normal processes?	DOC notes that a conversation approval of this nature would typically take three-four months to process, which is not significantly longer than the FTAA process is expected to be.  However, there may be benefits for the applicant in terms of consideration being combined with RMA approvals, and given the different decision-making framework under the FTAA.
22(2)(a)(ix)	Will this project address significant environmental issues?	DOC considers that the project could reduce the extent of vehicle congestion on the local roading network, particularly State Highway 6, with a corresponding reduction in carbon emissions.
22(2)(a)(x)	Is the project consistent with local or regional planning document, including spatial strategies?	Relevant local or regional documents include the Otago Conservation Management Strategy 2016. The Wildlife approval sought as part of this application does not appear inconsistent with that strategy.  In principle the broader proposal does not appear inconsistent with the CMS however analysis of this in more detail would be undertaken as part of reviewing substantive application documents.
22(2)(b)	Any other matters the Minister may consider as relevant?	None identified. Given the high level of affects assessment supplied at referral stage, DOC encourages the applicants' engagement with DOC, QLDC and Iwi in relation to concessions and the Conservation Covenant, as applicable, prior to the lodgement of any substantive application.

Jenni Fitzgerald  
Fast-Track Applications Manager

Acting pursuant to delegated authority on behalf of the Director-General of Conservation.

Date: 30 January 2025

Note: A copy of the Instrument of Delegation may be inspected at the Director-General's office at Conservation House Whare Kaupapa Atawhai, Manners Street, Wellington.



# Comments on a referral application under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

## Queenstown Cable Car

Contact Details	
Organisation Name	Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)
Contact person	Ben Henson
Contact Number	s 9(2)(a)
Email	<a href="mailto:fasttrack@heritage.org.nz">fasttrack@heritage.org.nz</a>

### General Comments

1. Southern Infrastructure Limited (Applicant) has lodged an application for referral of the Queenstown Cable Car (project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the FTA Act).
2. In accordance with section 17(1)(c) of the FTA Act, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) has been invited to comment on the referral application as the administering agency for the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
3. HNZPT has not been provided application documents that are relevant to an archaeological authority application and the resource consent application, insofar as it affects historic heritage. These have not been assessed and HNZPT comments as follows:

### Consultation and Engagement

4. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga have not been consulted.

### Archaeological Authority Application

5. The Applicant has not provided an archaeological assessment identifying recorded archaeological sites within the project area. The proposed works associated with the Queenstown Cable Car project have the potential to modify or destroy previously recorded archaeological site E41/302, and there is also potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites, noting that a number of archaeological sites are recorded within the wider vicinity of the project area.
6. As such, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga considers that an archaeological authority is required prior to works commencing and recommends that any proposed earthworks are assessed by a consultant archaeologist. The assessment should consider the past occupation and use of the project area and the scope of the proposed works and will form the basis of an archaeological authority application.

### Effects on Archaeological Values



7. In order to mitigate the adverse effects on archaeological values, a suite of conditions will be required.
8. This has not been discussed with the Applicant.

#### **Resource Consent Application**

9. The Applicant is also applying for a resource consent application which will generate adverse effects on historic heritage.
10. HNZPT has not identified any listed historic places from the New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangī Kōrero (the List) being directly impacted by this proposed fast track project.

#### Effects on Historic Heritage Values

11. HNZPT will need to start discussions with the Applicant in order to develop alternatives or conditions that will avoid, remedy, or mitigate any adverse effects on the historic heritage values.

#### **Conclusion**

12. If the project is referred, HNZPT anticipates further engagement with the Applicant to ensure all relevant documentation is provided with a substantive application, including:
  - A fulsome archaeological assessment;
  - Appropriate methodologies and strategies proposed;
  - Appropriate draft management plan and research strategy;
  - Evidence of appropriate consultation with tangata whenua; and
  - Appropriate proposed conditions.

## Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable Car
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All sections of this form with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	NZ Transport Agency		
<b>*First name</b>	Nicola		
<b>*Last name</b>	Foran		
<b>Postal address</b>			
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
<p>The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) thanks the Minister for the opportunity to comment on the referral of this application into the fast-track approvals process.</p> <p>As noted in Section 8.11 of the Planning Report provided in the referral application, NZTA has had pre-application engagement with the applicant's representatives regarding the Queenstown Cable Car (QCC) project since late 2024, which has consisted of discussions between various NZTA executive and technical staff and Southern Infrastructure Limited (SIL) representatives at a number of meetings and workshops, as well as providing written responses to formal consultation letters from SIL representatives dated 25/7/25, 21/8/25 and 20/10/25.</p> <p>As per the invitation to comment, and from an FTAA referral process perspective, NZTA is broadly supportive of the QCC project, with our support subject to the review of additional information still outstanding and the effects of the QCC on the state highway network being acceptably managed. Therefore, NZTA is not opposed to this project being referred into the fast-track approvals process. However, NZTA note that funding, delivery, operation and governance matters remain outstanding. NZTA has highlighted in its pre-application discussions with SIL that without either a Market Led Proposal (MLP) submission or inclusion within an Otago Regional Council (ORC) Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), NZTA has no pathway to engage in any discussions</p>

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regarding these matters. These matters have a bearing on the viability of the project and will need to be worked through with NZTA outside of this FTAA process. As noted in the referral application, SIL will also need to separately secure approvals from NZTA for the aerial occupation and surface installations over and within the designated state highway road corridors.

#### Comments

The QCC infrastructure will cross or interface with the designated State Highway 6 (SH6) and State Highway 6A (SH6A) road corridors at multiple locations. It is important that the QCC infrastructure is designed, constructed, operated and maintained to ensure that it does not adversely impact the safe and efficient operation of the state highway network, or adversely affect maintenance of the state highway road corridor, nor impede upgrades and development of the state highway network. NZTA would need to see the substantive application to fully understand the potential adverse effects that the proposal may have on the state highway network and any mitigative measures necessary to address effects on the state highway network. In addition to the detailed design plans and Environmental Management Plan that SIL have indicated will be provided in the substantive application, we consider the substantive application should specifically address the following matters:

- The transport economic analysis, including the demand and public transport modelling, undertaken to support the QCC project.
- All of the interfaces of the QCC with the SH6 and SH6A road corridors, including with the pedestrian/cyclist bridge NZTA is proposing to construct over State Highway 6 (Pūāhuru Bridge) at the junction of SH6, Ferry Hill Drive, Jims Way and Hardware Lane, and Stage 2 of the Queenstown Package (Frankton Flats Network Improvements) project that includes a new bus lane and traffic lights at the Lucas Place intersection. The design of the QCC also needs to retain sufficient width to enable future potential four-laning of SH6.
- The proposed QCC alignments will cross over the SH6 and SH6A road corridors. SH6 (Kawarau Road and Frankton-Ladies Mile Highway) is the only over-dimension route into/out of Southland, so it is critical that the design of the QCC complies with the vertical and horizontal clearance envelope for over-dimension vehicles, being 8.1 metres minimum vertical clearance and 10 metre horizontal clearance to any fixed structure, and the vertical clearance to any temporary structure needs to be a minimum of 6.0 metres unless otherwise approved by NZTA. If the yet-to-be selected route of the QCC 'Frankton-Ladies Mile line' is likely to cross over the Pūāhuru Bridge, SIL will need to work with NZTA to determine appropriate clearances over that bridge.
- Details of the construction methodology for sites adjacent to and within the State Highway 6 and 6A road corridors.
- Details of how the QCC alignment will impact traffic flow on SH6 and SH6A both during construction (construction staging/access arrangements) as well as post-construction operation (for instance, maintenance access locations and access restrictions, management of safety risks arising from non-frangible surface installations in the road

corridor, potential visual distraction of drivers arising from moving aerial cabins). Post construction operational effects should also address the design and operational limits of the cable car in respect to climatological parameters like wind speed, lightning and snow load, and demonstrate - in respect to these parameters - that it will be suitably designed and operated to not create a safety hazard to road users below.

- The QCC will create localised points of potentially significant demand, including for pedestrians crossing the highway on foot, particularly at the Lower Shotover and Ladies Mile stations. Pedestrian movement will need to be facilitated through safe crossings, which are currently proposed but not committed as part of Ladies Mile development plans.
- The latency of people transferring between public transport buses and the QCC, particularly on a pulse bus timetable. We anticipate that it will be problematic if articulated buses with 80 people each arrive at the same time from southern, eastern and airport origins.
- Information on proposals for Park and Ride sites at the Ladies Mile stations. NZTA would want to understand and assess any changes to turning movements at intersections that such facilities might create.
- In respect to the proposed Quail Rise station, the results of feasibility testing for operating a large maintenance facility with electric bus charging in a floodplain and located a relatively short distance from the Shotover River.

In addition to the above, we note the following in relation to the information provided in the referral application:

- The Planning Assessment provided in the referral application suggests the QCC project is strongly aligned with key national, regional, and local transport policies, including the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024 and the Otago Regional Land Transport Plan and that (Section 4.2.2) “It will reduce congestion on State Highway 6 and 6A, improve journey-time reliability, and strengthen overall network resilience. In addition to providing new nationally significant infrastructure, the project will enhance the efficiency and continued functioning of existing nationally significant infrastructure, including ... State Highways 6 and 6A – alleviating demand and enhancing network reliability”. NZTA considers that the QCC has the potential to deliver these positive benefits, and be aligned with these strategic transport documents, but only if it is integrated well with adjoining land use and with the existing and planned transport system, particularly the public transport system (routes and timetables), and implements an aligned fare structure for all users - not just visitors - so as to not create a barrier to patronage. Should the QCC project be accepted for referral, we consider the substantive application should include detailed information further addressing these matters.
- Referral application, Attachment 13 – Economic Assessment, Paragraph 4 on page 2: The assumption that public transport plans are delayed until 2039 appears to have a large

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bearing on the economic benefit of the QCC. NZTA considers that there is no real basis for this assumption, given that the NZTA Board (and by extension the Central Government) approved all funding for the requested bus improvements in 2024-27 National Land Transport Programme. It effectively means that the cable car benefits from 13 years-worth of growth in public transport (PT) are inflated. As demand that is assumed not to be accommodated by buses, which at the 3-5% rate observed since the PT network started, is 1-2 million extra yearly passengers by 2039. It also appears to be incongruent with demand modelling undertaken for the project, which, it is noted, assumes bus connectivity for non-airport-town centre trips (i.e. if assuming no growth in bus access, those trips modelled accessing the QCC by bus above current capacity should be removed).

- Referral application, Attachment 13, Section B2, paragraph 23a: The QCC is described as having a potential capacity of up to 3,000 passengers per hour per direction, but there is no evidence presented that this level of demand is likely, or that passengers could practically access the system at that scale. Without evidence of demand and integrated network capacity, the inference that the QCC would materially reduce demand and congestion on SH6A is unsubstantiated.
- Referral application, Attachment 13, Section B2, paragraph 23b: While there is a programme of activities priced between \$200m and \$500m\*\*, none of the infrastructure is currently funded, so it's NZTA's view that the savings quoted are hypothetical. \*\*It is unclear as to where these monetary values have been derived from, presumably they're taken from the Queenstown Business Case, in which case these values haven't been updated since the 2021 Business Case for escalation etc.
- Referral Application, Attachment 14 - Economics Assessment: We note that this assessment considers possible economic benefits derived from the construction on the QCC project but does not include any assessment of benefits during the operational phase of the project (specifically, impacts on demand/ mode shift, traffic congestion and travel time, transport costs and emissions have not been considered). Paragraph 3 on page 20 also claims that the project will "boost productivity and generate agglomeration benefits by enhancing the efficiency of movement for both residents and visitors across the district" however no supporting evidence is provided. Referral Application, Attachment 15, page 10: Figure 8 refers to a superseded bus network, meaning some of the proposed route changes don't make sense. NZTA does not support removing route 5 as it is important for accessibility (the QCC station would be >1km walk for parts of Lake Hayes Estate and Shotover Country). This is only a consideration if the Option B route is chosen for the Ladies Mile line, as otherwise there would be no direct public transport connection into the major employment centre at Five Mile.
- Referral Application, Attachment 15, Section 3.3.1 'Permanent effects': it is noted in the application that the QCC project does not divert funds away from other projects nor does it necessitate change to the existing public transport services. We would suggest that under the current National Land Transport Fund framework, funding one project is always

at the expense of others and realistically we would need to change existing public transport services.

NZTA would welcome the opportunity to provide comments on any substantive application in due course.

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

**Managers signoff**



Nicola Foran

Date 30/01/2026

## Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable Car
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All sections of this form with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Queenstown Airport Corporation Limited		
<b>*First name</b>	Melissa		
<b>*Last name</b>	Brook		
<b>Postal address</b>			
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
As attached overleaf.

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

**Managers signoff**



Melissa Brook

29 January 2026

**General Manager Strategy**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Referral Application for the Queenstown Cable Car (QCC) project.

Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) recognises the strategic intent behind the proposal and the potential for the Queenstown Cable Car to contribute positively to regional transport outcomes, network resilience, and wider urban connectivity. Our ten-year Strategic Plan recognises that it is vital that public transport connectivity is enhanced to increase the use of sustainable transport and reduce the pressure on the surrounding roading network. We acknowledge the applicant's early engagement with QAC and the constructive approach taken to date in understanding aviation-related constraints and integrating these into preliminary design work.

As the operator of a complex controlled aerodrome, QAC has statutory obligations under the Civil Aviation Act 2023, Civil Aviation Rules (including CAR Part 77 and Part 139), our Aerodrome Operator Certificate, and our Safety Management System. Ensuring the continued safety, efficiency, and commercial viability of air operations is paramount.

Based on the information provided, it is clear that elements of the proposed cable car infrastructure—including pylons, cables, construction activities and associated structures—have the potential to penetrate Queenstown Airport's established airspace protection surfaces, including Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS), Type A surfaces, take-off and approach surfaces, and the inner horizontal surface. The Navigatus assessment, included in the application, usefully outlines the process and level of analysis required to determine whether any such penetrations can be safely accommodated.

QAC's position at this stage is summarised as follows:

### **1. Support for objectives, subject to aviation safety and efficiency being maintained**

QAC is broadly supportive of the project's objectives and the potential benefits to regional transport. We are committed to continuing to work collaboratively with the applicant as the proposal is refined. However, QAC's support is conditional on all aeronautical safety, efficiency and certification considerations being fully resolved to our satisfaction, consistent with our obligations under the Civil Aviation Act and associated regulations.

### **2. Requirement for further detailed aeronautical assessment**

The current referral material appropriately identifies potential interactions with protected airspace but does not constitute a full aeronautical study. Detailed design, vertical clearances, obstacle assessment, and operational / airspace modelling (including flight-path analysis, procedure impacts, and safety case development where required) will be essential inputs to any substantive application. Where avoidance of OLS penetration is not possible, risk must be demonstrated to be as low as reasonably practicable and acceptable to both QAC and the CAA.

### **3. Construction safety and temporary penetrations**

Construction phase activities (e.g., cranes, temporary structures, lighting, dust, and equipment) may also affect navigable airspace and will require advance coordination, permitting, and compliance with Civil Aviation Rules Part 77 processes. Should the Minister determine refer the QCC project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, QAC anticipates that these matters will be thoroughly addressed through the substantive application.

#### **4. Ongoing collaboration**

QAC welcomes the applicant's commitment to continued engagement. We anticipate a highly collaborative technical process, including iterative design refinement, simulation, and discussion with QAC's aviation specialists and, where relevant, the Civil Aviation Authority. QAC further notes that any Airport Station or infrastructure near the boundary must integrate with current and anticipated ground-transport and terminal access arrangements.

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#### **Conclusion**

QAC is supportive of the outcomes the Queenstown Cable Car project seeks to achieve, particularly the improvements to public transport connectivity and wider community benefit it may deliver. However, that support is contingent on all aeronautical safety, operational efficiency, and regulatory requirements being fully resolved to QAC's satisfaction. QAC will continue to engage constructively with the applicant to ensure that any future substantive application appropriately addresses the aeronautical matters identified.

# Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

30 January 2026

<b>Project name</b>	Queenstown Cable car project ( <b>Project</b> )
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<b>1. Contact Details</b>			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Transpower New Zealand Limited ( <b>Transpower</b> )		
<b>*First name</b>	Jo		
<b>*Last name</b>	Mooar		
<b>Postal address</b>	PO Box 1021 Wellington 6011		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

<b>2. Please provide your comments on this application</b>
<p>Transpower has been identified as an “other person” for the purpose of section 17(5) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (<b>Act</b>). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about the Project, and its potential impact on National Grid assets.</p> <p>The Project relates to a cable car project in Queenstown.</p> <p>The Project is in the vicinity of Transpower’s 110kV transmission line that runs from Cromwell to Frankton (CML-FKN A line). This line is the sole transmission line to Queenstown and the greater Wakatipu area, and is the critical link for the region’s electricity supply.</p> <p>The Project’s alignment, shown in the concept documents, intersects with the CML-FKN line at one location.</p> <p>In particular, the Route B – Frankton Flats to Ladies Mile line crosses of the CML-FKN A line (span 0123 – A0124), at a point over the Frankton – Ladies Mile Highway. This location is shown by a purple circle in the image below:</p>



The protection, and possibly alteration, of the CML-FKN A line will need to be considered in the context of the Project. There are two key considerations –

1. *Compliance with NZECP 34:*

Any proposed crossing of the Project under the CML-FKN A line would need to comply with the separation distances specified in the New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances (NZECP 34). These requirements are mandatory. They relate to both the finished cable car infrastructure and its construction.

2. *Feasibility*

The feasibility of the Project passing under the CML-FKN A line has not yet been determined. Matters in relation to electrical clearances from electricity infrastructure are complex. Transpower requires the opportunity to review any electrical clearance assessments obtained for the Project, assess the crossing point and determine if it is technically practicable and safe to have the proposed cable car pass beneath the CML-FKN line.

Work may be required to investigate and modify the existing line, such as raised / alternative or additional support structures, to ensure adequate clearance for the Project to pass beneath the transmission line and/or be safely constructed.

We would expect that these matters would be addressed as part of the substantive application, and subject of conditions on any approvals granted. A condition precedent may be required in relation to the need for feasibility to be determined, before construction commences.

Transpower would appreciate the opportunity to comment on any substantive application, to ensure these matters are addressed.