

7 November 2025

Submission to the Committee Secretariat Transport and Infrastructure Committee on the **Local Government (Auckland Council) (Transport Governance) Amendment Bill**.

We are a Catholic Commission comprising of concerned citizens of Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. Guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we are committed to promoting justice, peace, human dignity, and the common good in all areas and walks of life.

We are deeply concerned that the **Local Government (Auckland Council) (Transport Governance) Amendment Bill**, while presented as a means of “restoring democracy” to Auckland’s transport, risks doing the opposite. By concentrating appointment powers and weakening Māori participation, the Bill threatens to undermine the very democratic principles it seeks to introduce.

For this reason, and those outlined below, the Justice & Peace Commission opposes the Bill in its current form.

1. Human Dignity, Equity, and the Common Good

Transport is not merely a technical or economic system, it is a public necessity that connects people to education, work, healthcare, and community. True democracy requires equitable access and management to these essentials.

The Bill makes no explicit provision for public consultation, engagement, or equity assessment. It assumes that representation by the Mayor, Council, and Ministers as sufficient in expressing the will of all citizens and residents of Auckland. This assumption neglects underserved and underrepresented communities, particularly Māori and low-income, who face persistent barriers to safe and reliable transport.

2. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Obligations to Tangata Whenua

CST calls for solidarity with indigenous peoples. Further, Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires at the most basic level equity in partnership, inclusive participation, to act in good faith, and active protection of the rights and responsibilities of both parties. The Bill fails to uphold Te Tiriti principles even at the most baseline level.

No Māori representation is guaranteed on the proposed Auckland Regional Transport Committee (ARTC). The Bill provides only “opportunities for Māori to contribute,” a vague and dismissive statement that falls short of true participation and partnership.

Without explicit Te Tiriti obligations, the Council will not meet its statutory duties under the Local Government Act 2002 and Auckland Council Act 2009.

We recommend that Māori representation on the ARTC and in local board decision-making. We also expect and encourage ARTC and the 30-Year Transport Plan to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori outcomes, frameworks and protections.

Furthermore, protections must be made for existing and future Māori engagement roles, cultural agreements, and iwi partnerships throughout the transition process and beyond.

3. Subsidiarity and Local Empowerment

Subsidiarity is a core CST principle that promotes decision-making at the most local level possible. The Bill’s stated aim to empower local boards is commendable, but it lacks mechanisms and resourcing to ensure that local and Māori voices can meaningfully and fully participate.

To be consistent with both CST and democratic values, empowerment must include:

- Clear and resourced participation pathways for Mana Whenua and local communities.
- Equitable representation in governance and decision-making.
- Capacity-building for boards and Māori entities to engage effectively.

4. Stewardship and Environmental Responsibility

CST and Māoritanga share a commitment to Kaitiakitanga – care for creation. The Bill’s 30-year planning framework presents an opportunity to embed and stimulate long-term ecological responsibility. We question why sustainability and emissions reduction are not mandated within this Bill.

We request the 30-Year Transport Plan address emissions reduction, climate adaptation, and Māori wellbeing outcomes to ensure continuity of environmental and cultural protections during the transfer of designations and consenting powers.

5. Democratic Integrity and Accountability

The Bill proposes that all six voting members of the ARTC, and its independent chair, be appointed, not elected. This process erodes the democratic process by centralising power and reducing public accountability.

If democracy is to be “restored,” we as members, citizens and residents of Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland must have transparent, participatory channels to influence decisions on transport policy, planning, and infrastructure priorities. Appointment by Ministers and the Mayor alone does not constitute democratic governance.

Again, we reiterate:

- Guarantee Māori representation on the ARTC and embed Te Tiriti partnership in all governance structures.
- Mandate equity and environmental impact assessments for major transport decisions.
- Protect Māori capability, engagement expertise, and cultural agreements during transition and beyond.
- Resource local boards and Māori entities for effective and meaningful participation.
- Establish transparent public consultation and accountability mechanisms for all ARTC appointments and plans.

Conclusion

A just and sustainable transport system is not only a legislative goal but a moral imperative. To truly serve “the people of Auckland,” this Bill must reflect the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, uphold human dignity, and ensure participation, accountability, and fairness for all in our community.

We urge the Committee to amend the Bill accordingly so that it may foster genuine democracy, shared stewardship, and the common good for the transport agency of Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland.