**Design Review: a necessary evil?**

How do we assure that designs for new infrastructure are future-proof, strategically aligned and deliverable throughout the whole design lifecycle? That’s a question that we’ve been trying to solve for Auckland Transport’s projects.

Design and delivery of transport projects in Auckland have often been plagued with time consuming design iterations, rework, and cost escalations to achieve desired outcomes. A deep dive into the design review processes found several challenges, such as:

* Significant design changes between different design phases
* Lack of an escalation mechanism in case of design disagreements
* Little oversight of design issues and performance

A couple of years ago, Auckland Transport introduced the Design Review Panel process, with more formal design checks at specific project milestones. Now, two years in, we have data from over 500 project reviews done through the system and have been able to identify several root causes, including:

* Early design phases not taking an integrated, strategic view and therefore not understanding all the user requirements – including future aspirations
* Incomplete technical investigations in the detailed business case leading to insufficient budget for delivery
* Design standards not being followed

Although we are now able to catch off these issues in an early stage and help projects move in the right direction, there is still a big question on why we are seeing these issues. Is it siloed working? Are we tackling business casing wrong? Do we have good enough industry knowledge?

So, until we have enough confidence that the design processes delivers the right outcomes, design review is a necessary evil.