In June 2013, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key, for the first time showed support for the proposed Auckland city rail link with the caveat that he wants to delay the project until 2020, suggesting that only by then will there be enough patronage to justify it. He has not committed central government to funding the project. Research shows that similar announcements were made by another National Prime Minister in 1967 and 1969. This paper provides an historical overview of public transport planning and policy in Auckland to identify the institutional challenges that can explain central-local relationships in rapid rail project. The concept of political path dependence is employed as a theoretical framework to investigate the history of small events and circumstances against which rapid rail projects have been conceived, argued over and advanced by local government, but failed to proceed due to institutional, funding and political biases against rapid rail from central government. Public transport decision-making is thus understood as having become locked-in to political decision making concerning the nature of the problem and its solution, eventually creating political path dependence. The research concludes that current barriers to public transport in Auckland can be understood by analysing the history of central and local relationships in wider social and political environment.

Keywords: Path dependence, Auckland rapid rail project, central-local relationships
Introduction

In June 2013, the Prime Minister of the National-led government of New Zealand, John Key, for the first time showed support for a city rail loop (CRL) – more than two billion dollars for a 3.5 km underground rail project necessary for Auckland’s public transport system. However, he wants to delay the project until 2020 suggesting that only by then will there be enough patronage to justify it. He has not committed central government funding for the project. Although Auckland Mayor Len Brown and the majority of people in Auckland are delighted by the government announcement, research shows that similar announcements were made by National Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, in August 1967 and October 1969.

This paper provides an historical overview of public transport planning and policy in Auckland in general and the 1960s rapid rail project in particular to identify whether political path dependence can be detected in transport planning in Auckland. Path dependence explains how a particular solution to a policy issue becomes selected over time by probing the history, small events, coincidences and circumstances in an institutional context (Arthur 1988; North 1990; Pierson 2004). Political path dependence can be described as historical relationships between central and local governments. Political path dependence hypothesises that power dependencies within the state apparatus or constitutional structures have left local government with little or no choice but to adopt policies/projects which favour vertical alignment with central government policy decisions. Therefore, the paper elucidates the political-institutional context by considering how political and institutional power and finance have influenced public transport decision-making in Auckland. This paper investigates, in particular, why and on what grounds Auckland public transport projects are resisted or supported by central government.

This paper first explores public transport history in Auckland before World War II, followed by in-depth analysis of rapid transit project in Auckland. The reasons why rapid rail project has not proceeded are discussed, concluding that political path dependence is an effective tool in explaining historical and therefore, current responses to CRL in Auckland.

Public transport in Auckland – Historical overview

Public transport in Auckland before WWII

Initially, the main aim of public transport in Auckland was to open up areas for immigration and settlement by adopting new technologies (Bloomfield 1975; Dahms 1980). Accordingly, rail and tram systems were developed and became symbols of municipal pride, superiority, economic growth and progress, quickly becoming the backbone of the city (Watson 1996). Early days, the rail network was publically provided and operated, while the tram system, horse bus and ferry services were privately operated, informal and fragmentary (Stewart 1973; Watson 1996; Harris 2005).

After passing the 1872 Tramway Act, Auckland City Council (ACC) became the regulator of the tram network and placed strict terms and conditions on frequency, hours of operation, and fares. The first passenger tram service opened in 1884, quickly becoming popular due to being fast, smooth and relatively cheap, resulting in overcrowding (see Fig. 1), disorderly behaviour, and the first ‘peak hour’ (Bush 1971; Stewart 1973). Tram overcrowding was addressed by bus services, ultimately creating...
tram versus bus competition (ibid). However, most passengers preferred the smoothness of the tram and therefore, the media focused on peak hour problems.

Figure 1: Newspaper cartoon on ‘five o’clock rush’. Source: Stewart 1973, p.60. Figure originally from Auckland Weekly News, 1910.

Public transport caused outward but compact suburban expansion along tramway corridors (See Figure 2 and 3). Figure 3 from the 1880s shows shops and houses built along tramway corridors and wide footpaths. The figure also shows horse-buses operating along the tram corridors where they effectively competed for passengers with tram services.

Figure 2: The Auckland tramway network. Source: Bush 1971, p.240. Original source unknown.
Auckland’s tram network was electrified in 1902 improving the service and further encouraging outward urban expansion, ultimately increasing adjacent land values (Bloomfield 1975; Dahms 1980).

However, privately operated tram and rail services struggled due to low fares, bus competition and city council requirements to improve roading along the tram lines (Bloomfield 1975; Dahms 1980). Therefore, ACC purchased the tram company in 1919 (Bush 1971) and made a profit until the early 1950s. Moreover, the Motor Omnibus Traffic Act 1926 and 1928 Auckland Transport Board Act allowed freer movement of publicly owned trams by compelling buses to move to different streets. These acts aimed to reduce wasteful competition, maintain minimum safety levels, and provide timetabling and fare guidelines (McDonald 1974). However, these acts also introduced subsidies for private bus operators (ibid).

Public transport in Auckland after WWII

By the 1950s, Auckland’s public transport network (rail, tram and buses) was predominately run by the public sector. Public transport patronage averaged over 100,000,000 passenger trips per annum, comparable to many other world cities (Lee 2010). Beside a total monopoly on tram and rail services, in 1954 public buses comprised 60 per cent of services (McDonald 1974). Furthermore, New Zealand Rail provided their own bus fleet to act as feeder services to and from the rail network (ibid).

The Ministry of Works 1946 Rail Plan to expand and electrify the rail network was abandoned in 1954 (Lee 2010), coinciding with the introduction of the Auckland Regional Planning Authority’s (ARPA) 1955 first Master Transportation Plan for Auckland, which changed the city’s transport focus from public transport to private vehicle travel. This plan recommended inner ring road construction around the CBD, fed by express urban motorways, and the building of extensive inner cities parking facilities. Through the recommendation to abandon rail upgrades until population growth justified it, this plan almost exclusively favoured private over public transport (Harris 2005; Mees & Dodson 2007), despite public transport use exceeding previous levels (See Figure 4). These decisions...
coincided with withdrawal of the popular, well patronised electric tram network. Following this change in transport planning direction, patronage levels per capita dropped, car ownership increased and local authority bus networks profits decreased, mainly due to fare increases, which further decreased patronage (Stewart 1973; Mees and Dodson 2007).

Figure 4: Public transport use in Auckland (1925 – 2011). Source: Auckland Transport website.

This change in transport direction also coincided with Auckland decentralisation, with land-use patterns becoming segmented and dispersed (Mees and Dodson 2007). Public transport did not adapt this dispersal and continued to serve the traditional ‘suburb to city’ commuter movements despite businesses becoming scattered across the city and people no longer travelling to the CBD. As a result, public transport became ineffective and patronage declined further (see Figure 4). Unsurprisingly, by the 1970s private vehicles use exceeded that of public transport, with in 1970 there being 1,500,000 car trips compared to 200,000 bus trips (William 1975).

Auckland’s second attempt to electrify and expand the rail network was made by the Auckland Regional Authority’s (ARA) 1965 Regional Transit Plan (De Leuw 1965) and 1967 Regional Master Plan (ARA 1967). Rapid rail was proposed in these plans in conjunction with coordinated bus services. However, the motorway network proposed in the 1965 Comprehensive Transportation Plan superseded the rapid rail project. The Mayor of Auckland City Council, Sir Dove-Myer Robinson believed rapid rail was the only way to reverse the extreme decline in public transport usage experienced since the 1950s (Edgar 2012). He worked with the National and Labour governments to get them to commit to rapid rail. Increasing petrol prices due to the worldwide ‘oil crisis’ and rubber tyre shortages in NZ, which made private vehicle travel expensive, favoured Robinson’s arguments (Dravitzki & Lester 2007). However, the National government dropped this project favouring the
1976 Comprehensive Transportation Plan which promoted motorways over public transport development.

**Auckland Rapid Rail / City Rail Loop Project – 1960-70s**

**Background**

Half of the Auckland City Rail Loop (CRL) was completed in 1929, and right-of-way for the unbuilt section was identified (Harris 2005). In 1946, the Public Works Department of the Labour government prepared a 10 year plan for Auckland rail development including the completion of the CRL. In 1950, the Halcrow Thomas report recommended an electrified rail service with an extension under Queen Street from the Central Railway Station (see Figure 5). In 1964, American consultant, De Leuw Cather & Company started preparing the Auckland Transit Plan for ARA. The first option considered was a well-coordinated bus-based transit system similar to existing services but eliminating duplication, and managed by a single agency. The second option shown in Figure 5, was a coordinated bus and rapid rail system, achieved by upgrading and electrifying existing suburban rail, with an underground extension to the whole CBD, with two new stations at the Civic Centre and Queen/Customs Street (De Leuw 1965). New track was proposed from South and West Auckland to the CBD and from the North Shore, via an underground harbour tunnel. New rail lines were also planned for the eastern suburbs and the airport. Existing bus services would feed the rail service. Based on their evaluation and overseas experience, the consultant recommended coordinating the bus and rapid rail system (ibid). ARA’s transport and planning divisions supported these recommendations. In April 1966, ARA and the Mayor of Auckland lobbied the Prime Minister for support and funding.

**Figure 5: Auckland City Rail Loop Proposals:**

Adapted from the Auckland 1946 Ministry of Work Plan. Adapted from the Halcrow Plan for Auckland Rail 1950. Adapted from the De Leuw 1965.
Vertical relationship - Central-government response on the Auckland rapid rail project

On May 1966, the National government appointed a committee to organise an independent analysis of the options, evaluate the financial implications, and make recommendations. The committee accepted the complexity of estimating patronage for either system but believed the estimate that the coordinated bus rapid rail system would attract 25 per cent of patronage in the rail corridors, to be ‘optimistic’. The committee found that rapid rail did not require new buses as the existing buses could provide the feeder services, although it did require purchase of land near some stations. It was accepted that a co-ordinated bus rapid rail system might not provide congestion relief in the short term but:

‘in 15 to 20 years’ time the co-ordinated bus rapid rail system would provide the only feasible method of moving large numbers of passengers to and from work at peak hours in a congested city.’

The committee raised concerns that overseas experience of rapid rail systems might not be useful in the NZ context, particularly as it was difficult to anticipate exact land development trends in the CBD and wider region, which ultimately provide patronage to rapid rail.

Professor Colin Buchanan’s assessment favouring a bus based system due to its flexibility, and lower operating costs and liabilities as compared with rail was considered. Buchanan’s report cast doubt on a rail link extension to the CBD on economic grounds based on uncertain future development in the CBD and wider region, low population densities in Auckland and bus system flexibility.

Overall, the committee recommended buses in the short term and rapid rail in the long term, closely linked with the development plan of the Auckland region. Moreover, it suggested that public transport should be directly operated by ARA (or contractors), who should plan for the necessary financial responsibility of public transport operation. ARA expected government to make a decision on Auckland’s rapid rail before the November 1966 general election.

National won this election but Cabinet decided to defer the committee decision for 12 months and asked the committee to re-examine: the need for subsidies, method of financing, date of commencement, precise rail route, construction timetable and establishment of the National Urban Transport Fund which imposed an additional levy on fuel and created a vehicle mileage tax. It was argued that the US Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development under the Mass Transportation Act 1964 provided funds to the Chicago Transit Plan, and this model could be applied in NZ.

The Cabinet meeting of 1 August 1967 adopted recommendations for a bus rapid rail system in Auckland to commence in the 1980s, announced by Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake on 11 August 1967 as:

‘the Government has approved recommendations on transport plans for the Greater Auckland area based on a co-ordinated bus and rapid rail system ... it is essential that the Regional Authority and other local authorities should work out a co-ordinated development for the whole Auckland area, into which the mass transport scheme can be fitted. The Government...’
will co-operate fully in this planning and investigation. The successful introduction of the scheme will depend upon the combined efforts of all interested parties’

The NZ Herald headline read ‘Rail-Bus Scheme wins approval’ (12 August 1967).

ARA Chairman, H. D. Lambie and former Chairman D. M. Robinson did not agree with the start date and argued that existing traffic congestion would almost certainly force a start at least five years and perhaps eight years earlier. Lambie argued that ‘a new approach to the financing of urban transport was needed as a first step’ and hoped that the private sector would invest in urban redevelopment in the CBD as, ‘the area was of major importance to the whole region’, and that the transit system and its underground extension would shape the CBD and the economy of Auckland.

Horizontal relationship – Auckland City Council response on the Auckland rapid rail project

As early as March 1966, ACC engineers raised concerns about the analysis and recommendations of the De Leuw Cather reports (See Figure 6). They found the consultant report contain a statement of conclusions and does not provide basic technical information and that bus alternatives were rejected with too little explanation. They raised questions about the cost of the rapid rail system, estimated patronage, its suitability for Auckland’s size, and claims that it would relieve traffic congestion and attract car users. They asked the consultants and ARA to provide details of: the modal split, peak and off-peak travel time maps, inter-zonal transit movement, and park-and-ride passenger expected. They also noted that the rail system relied heavily on feeder buses, and thus on public acceptance of mode change or transfer to complete the journey. For these reasons, the proposal needed a careful and extensive examination.

Figure 6: ACC perspectives on the Auckland rapid rail project. Source: NZ Herald, 21 September 1967.
In 1967, ACC prepared its own report on the transport proposals. The planners favoured an all bus system, their main concern being the cost of the rapid rail system to be shared across all the Auckland councils. ACC feared that the council might have to increase rates by 25-30 percent to meet its share of the cost, an annual loss being ‘out of the question’ and ‘irresponsible for any local authority’\cite{6}. It was assumed that ‘it was very unlikely that ratepayers in areas of the city such as the North Shore, St Heliers and Mt Roskill, who would not receive benefit from the rail system, would agree to bear share of the large costs’. Moreover, the low density urban form and small population was also a concern for ACC referring to American consultant Wilbur Smith and Associates report which argued that rapid rail is suitable for cities with populations of two million and over, as compared with Auckland’s then population of 0.75 million.

However, ARA did not accept the ACC arguments saying that ‘in the long term an all bus transport system for Auckland would be more costly, would lead to fragmentation and be less effective than a coordinated bus and rapid rail system’\cite{7}. The ARA Chairman stated that ‘urban transport is too costly and too important an item in our economy to be dealt with piecemeal or to be left to a number of separate, uncoordinated decisions’. He described overall investment in rapid rail as ‘extremely small’ compared to the overall economy.

**Horizontal relationship – Bus Operators response on the Auckland transport and rapid rail project**

In the mid to late 1960s, Auckland bus services saw a sharp loss in patronage; in response companies increased fares, reduced Sunday services, and reduced concession ticketing with ratepayers covering the losses. ARA argued that central government should subsidise bus fares for children, students and disable people from National Roads Board funds\cite{8}.

The private bus operators and the Omnibus Proprietors Association (OPA), supported by research conducted by the Institute of Economic Research, raised their financial positions, in a letter to Minister of Transport\cite{9}. The OPA Chairman stated that ‘very few companies are earning even a reasonable profit and many are operating at a loss’ and that buses cannot only operate on the basis of ‘public interest’. The financial situation had been aggravated by wage increases, bus schedule leaving drivers idle for several hours each day, congestion induced increases in operating and maintenance costs, low patronage, suburban development and commercial activity decline in the CBD. The situation was magnified by spending ‘more and more on magnificent highways [and parking buildings and facilities] right into the heart of the cities’ which facilitate private cars. ‘Every million spent to assist the private car owner is another nail in the coffin of public passenger transport.’ Moreover, the financial situation did not allow companies to replace vehicles leading to the unsatisfactory state of many operating in Auckland.

The point was made that ‘operators do not want a subsidy’ but relief from indirect taxation such as fuel (petrol and diesel) taxes, heavy traffic licences on buses, and exemption from duties on imported vehicles and parts as well as access to government agency loan finance on reasonable conditions to replace and modernise buses, and a national campaign to give publicity and support to public transport. Overall, the bus operators adopted a ‘wait and see’ policy toward rapid rail and lobbied to improve their financial conditions.
Collaborative relationships between central and local governments on the Auckland rapid rail project

In February 1968 the National government set up a working party tasked with ascertaining the most desirable route for a rapid transit system, and evaluating four alternative transport systems: 1) an average standard minimum all-bus system 2) a modern attractive all-bus system 3) rapid rail using the existing track and 4) rapid rail using new track exclusive to urban transport. Cost-benefit analysis was carried out on 1) the four alternative systems with construction and operating costs being the deciding factors 2) their costs and benefits to roading expenditure and land values and 3) intangible benefits or costs. It was accepted that ‘a fully integrated bus system could fulfil the needs at the present time’ but that future planning should include restrictions on motor vehicles in the CBD and exclusive bus lanes. It was expected that future technological advances might help in achieving these objectives and could even make the expenditure on rapid transit unnecessary or undesirable.

In the light of the 1965 de Leuw Cather report, the working party considered the proposed north-south route, discussed extension to Papakura in the early 1980s, and considered the need for a line to the North Shore. It was thought to facilitate interchange of passengers between North Shore buses and the rapid transit system, but that the inner city route should not preclude future extension to the North Shore and a future harbour crossing after 1986. The working party advised that ‘the single line loop proposed in the inner city is cheaper than … double line up Queen Street’. They also thought tunnelling for the rail loop to be an economical option.

The committee found the existing railway track imposed limitations on the operation of rapid transit due to: existing freight services, and stability and safety issues due to the higher speeds and weight of modern vehicles. A separate and exclusive track was therefore deemed desirable despite requiring considerable engineering work, including grade-separated road crossings. Initially rapid transit was to serve 25 stations (both existing and new). New stations were to be: on sites with proximity to trip generation; have car access and parking facilities, bus terminal facilities, pedestrian access, and be at least one mile from other stations. All stations will be fully automated including ticket purchasing, and trains were to have one driver. Park-and-ride facilities were proposed for outer stations by acquiring 105 acres of land at cost of $1.5M. It was estimated that park-and-ride facilities would reduce peak-time car use of 16,000 and save road construction and parking building costs of $30M. It was considered that overhead electrification would be aesthetically harmful.

ACC proposed the levying of a 3 cent petrol tax over the whole country to in the short term upgrade Auckland city transport (public transport). In the medium to long term, they suggested using two thirds of the petrol taxes in Auckland with one third being used to upgrade transport systems in other cities. They stated that ‘there is no alternative to rapid rail’, and that the public would prefer this use of funds over road schemes. Central government was inclined towards the 3 cent petrol tax increase, but only if restricted to the Auckland region. ARA claimed that the region ‘paid more than a fair share of Roads Board tax in relation to works in Auckland’ and that this argument also applied to general taxation. Central government also argued that in the absence of reliable estimates of patronage it would be likely that suburban trains in Auckland would need subsidisation. Because since 1954 no subsidies had been provided to railway from general taxation to support suburban operation, Auckland authorities would need to find their own ways of funding rail loses.
On June 1969, Cabinet approved the ‘establishment of a Steering Committee to direct the second stage investigations of the report of the working party on Rapid Transit in Auckland.’ The Steering Committee set up a technical sub-committee to investigate for instance track gauge, possible line extensions, cost benefit analyses, and town planning implications.

On 26 August 1969, ARA requested the Ministers of Works, Finance and Transport to try to start construction in late 1970, so rapid rail could start by 1975. Their arguments were based on keeping cost escalation to a minimum and reducing the adverse effects of the continuing decline in patronage on the existing public transport system.

On 29 August 1969, the Minister of Finance prepared a Cabinet paper in which he agreed that if the rail component of the rapid rail system was to be owned by the Government and operated by the Railway Department, ‘it is reasonable that the Government should provide the capital and construct the facilities’ for ARA. However, the Government would charge ARA full operating costs, plus overheads and management fees, depreciation and interest on all capital. It was also proposed that ‘financing, both capital and operating, be kept at “arms length” from normal railway operations.’

In September 1969, Cabinet agreed ‘it is reasonable that the government should provide capital and construct facilities’ for the Auckland Rapid Rail Transit (Letter CM 69/36/18 from the Prime Minister Office). The Cabinet meeting on October 1969 agreed that:

The construction of Rapid rail in Auckland will be funded by the central Government and operated by the Railway department for ARA. The Railway Department operates the rapid rail separately ... and on the basis of contract price which includes, operating cost (including train operating staff wages, cost of relief services and cost of space for parking), overheads, management fees, depreciation cost, interest on capital investment as per the normal railway practices. ARA would determine fares, timetables and frequencies and would receive revenue from fares, advertising and shops. Moreover, the authority will provide parking facilities for the system. It was made clear that subsidies would be decided later.

However, Cabinet agreed that construction would not start until the cost-benefit study was completed and the Carter Committee of Inquiry recommended financial assistance/subsidies for public transport operation. Cabinet showed its willingness to move swiftly to reduce cost escalation by making legislative changes, if required, but it was anticipated that construction would not be completed until 1977.

D. M. Robinson, Chairman of the Rapid Transit Committee, did not accept the financing part of the transit scheme agreed by Cabinet decisions, because of central government’s unwillingness to provide subsidies for transit operation, referring to it as ‘disappointing’, ‘status quo’ and ‘wrong in principle’. He did accept that the 15 local bodies would benefit from the project, but in the absence of central government commitment, these local bodies would have needed to increase their rates by 15.8 percent, which is

‘obviously unacceptable ... It is not reasonable to expect that local authorities, not on the railway route, and which will not receive a direct benefit from the railway part of the transit
scheme, will willingly agree to pay a share of the annual costs – at least not without strenuous opposition”.

He went on that it is even more difficult for local bodies to find extra funds without any new source of income and that this would cause a ‘crushing burden’ on ratepayers. He argued that the railway department was subsiding to existing suburban rail services in Auckland and that they would benefit from savings on this due to the rapid rail project. He stated that ‘the financing of the railway part of the rapid scheme is the most important problem facing Auckland [on which] the whole future planning and development of Auckland depends’.

Discussion – Why did the rapid rail project fail to proceed?

The historical overview clearly shows that the total number of people using public transport in Auckland was highest between 1946 and 1958. However, the opening of north-western motorway (1952), southern motorway (1953) and the Auckland Harbour Bridge (1959) and the adoption of motorway based 1955 Transportation Plan and 1965 Comprehensive Transportation Plan set priorities for Auckland transport. Elsewhere, Imran and Matthews (2010) have called this period a ‘critical juncture’ in history when the range of transport options was narrowed in favour of road transport. During this critical juncture, popular tram lines were removed and the rapid rail project was resisted by delaying tactics from central government. Ultimately, loss of patronage removed support for any investment in public transport in Auckland. Review of public transport planning and the rapid transit project provides a fascinating example of the tensions between vertical and horizontal relationships at a particular time. Despite the unquestionable benefits rapid rail can bring to Auckland, there have been institutional, planning, funding and political factors that offer possible explanations for the central-local government relationships. The primary purpose of this section is to discuss these factors that are even now largely present in the current CRL proposal.

a) Institutional factors: Institutional factors refer to the organisations that are responsible for or can influence public transport planning or decisions in Auckland. History shows that public transport planning was undertaken by a range of governmental departments at the local (ACC and other councils), regional (ARA) and central government (Ministries of Works, Transport, Treasury and NZ Railway) levels. Moreover, a range of bus operators and the OPA were responsible for the operation of public transport services. These multiple organisations had their own priorities/agendas and created conflict/doubts about rapid rail, failing to look at the public transport system from an holistic perspective. For example, ACC opposed ARA on rapid rail, preferring a bus-based solution. The private bus operators had their own concerns about subsidies and tax exemptions and did not support rapid rail. Therefore, at a horizontal level, there were several conflicting and fragmented voices which provided the vertical level (central government) with an excuse to impose several conditions on the project which made it impossible to proceed not only in the 1960s, but now in 2013 as well. However, such conditions were not placed on local government when building motorways in the 1950s or currently on roads of national significance (RONs) projects. This shows that local government in New Zealand is dependent on political, legal/regulatory and financial resources from central government. When central government provides a clear and focused directive (such as the National Roads Act 1953 and the GPS 2012), then the regional and district level councils are required to respond due to their hierarchal relationship.
b) Planning factors: The Planning factors refer to land use and public transport service planning which both affect rapid rail project.

Motorway building in the 1950s and 1960s generated dispersed urban development patterns and increased car ownership by almost 11 percent per annum for the next twenty years (Mees & Dodson 2007). The decision to remove the popular tram network further cemented-in a low density urban form, which became the main argument against rapid rail in Auckland in general and the CBD in particular. The rapid rail was proposed when trams were popular and public transport patronage at its highest, but not advanced until patronage had dropped significantly, and with the aim of stopping/reducing the pace of urban sprawl and car usage. However, with central government inclined to follow overseas technical opinion on ‘predict and provide’ motorway building solutions rather than the ‘predict and prevent’ approach, they chose not to provide funding for rapid rail (Gunder 2002). Eventually, this led to more urban sprawl making rapid rail even harder to achieve.

1960s public transport service planning did not adapt to low density urban development patterns, continuing to service traditional ‘suburb to city’ commuter movements despite travel needs being scattered throughout the city (Badcock 1970; William 1975; Fitzsimons 1981). Rapid rail proposal clearly shows that there is a need to coordinate or integrate rail, bus and ferry services to serve the urban development pattern. Rail services were competing with the bus services that should have been feeding rapid rail. This situation has not changed over the following fifty years, and in some cases has become worse due to the Transport Services Licencing Act 1989 and the Land Transport Management Act 2002 (Ashmore & Mellor 2010; Gibson 2010). Currently, the Auckland public transport network provides dense and complex services where different modes and operators compete with each other (Stone et al. 2012). This situation makes the rapid rail project of the 1960s appear visionary.

c) Funding factors: Funding is the most important factor that shows real commitment to a specific project. In the 1950s, National Road Board funds were allocated by central government to finance Auckland’s motorways. This practice has continued to the present day with the establishment of Transit NZ in 1989, Transfund in 1995 and the NZTA funding model in 2008. This kind of commitment has been seriously lacking in case for rapid rail in Auckland. Historical review shows that establishing a National Urban Transport Fund and enacting legislation similar to the US Mass Transportation Act to secure rail routes and fund construction of rapid rail projects in Auckland and other NZ cities was discussed, but not advanced. Moreover, there was a fear that such projects would exponentially increase property taxes/rates generating muted support from some local councils. Conversely, local government in Auckland has easy access to central government funding for road based development and full support for motorway projects (for example, the National Road Board funds and RONs funds). This funding structure was very powerful in the conflict between ACC and ARA solutions, and central government exploited these differences to avoid funding rapid rail. In short, all discussions on rapid rail in Auckland in the 1960s and CRL in 2013 hinge on funding issues: contributions from different organisation and finding innovative funding methods to build rail-based public transport system.

d) Political factors: Politics (or political beliefs) is another important factor that influences rapid rail decisions and campaigns in Auckland. The rapid rail was used during local and national election campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s, and also in Len Brown’s mayoral campaign in 2010. Sir Dove-
Myer Robinson, the Mayor of ACC and the Chairman of ARA Rapid Transit Committee was very committed to rapid transit, earning the rapid rail in Auckland the nickname ‘Robbie’s Rapid Rail Scheme’ during a local government election campaign. This historical review clearly shows that rapid rail was supported by the National government of Keith Holyoake in the late 1960s and later the Labour government of the early to mid 1970s, overriding opposing political ideologies. However, this project later suffered from being linked with left-wing ideologies. Both governments failed to provide funding for this project and subsequent free-market ideology saw privatisation of public transport services. Regional councils’ lack of ability to exert influence on public transport planning meant that this project was not able to proceed (Ashmore & Mellor 2010; Gibson 2010). A more recent political example was the 2010 mayoral campaign for the new Auckland Council. In this campaign, successful mayoral candidate Len Brown championed public transport improvements. Plans to improve public transport include implementing integrated ticketing, electric trains and the construction of a CBD rail link (Auckland Council 2012).

In summary, institutional, planning, funding and political biases against rapid rail explain central-local power relations in Auckland. These biases interrelate and, overlap making them hard to distinguish. However, the power of central government to control financial resources is critical to their power relationship with local government in Auckland. History clearly shows that rapid rail was objected to on the basis of technological selection (buses versus rail), physical location (CBD), patterns of urbanisation (low density land uses) and funding arrangements in the governance of Auckland. Consequently, public transport planning becomes locked-in to political decision making concerning the nature of the problem and its solution, eventually creating political path dependence.

**Conclusion**

This paper provides an historical overview of public transport planning and policy in Auckland to explain central-local relationships in rapid rail project. The concept of political path dependence has been used as a theoretical framework to investigate the history of, small events and circumstances against which rapid rail has been conceived, argued over and advanced by local government, and accepted, twisted and resisted by central government. This research concludes that current barriers to public transport can be understood by analysing the history of central-local relationships, local politics, and its relationship with wider political, social and corporate policy communities.

Historically, public transport in Auckland has been operated by public and private authorities and companies. Throughout, competition has existed between buses and trams, buses and rail, municipal buses and private buses, and between private bus companies, all undermining the public transport network and eventually leading to a loss of patronage. There are some examples of co-ordination, such as between rail and railway owned feeder buses and private ferry services. This started the creation of a connected and integrated public transport network which would be advanced by a rapid rail project.

During and immediately after the critical juncture, a repositioning of the central-local relationship in Auckland can be observed, especially with regard to rapid rail, for which central government developed its own myths, arguments and preferences based upon institutional, planning, funding and political biases which became stable overtime. There was a visible lack of co-ordination among
the horizontal actors which was manipulated by central government. Interestingly, there has been ongoing co-ordination between local and central government on Auckland’s motorway projects, but such co-ordination was lacking for rapid rail. Lack of funding by central government limits the ability of local government to identify and develop public transport projects. As a result, local government in Auckland has little or no choice to develop strong relationships with central government and adopt policies and projects which favour vertical alignment in a wider political-institutional context.

There are interesting similarities between the response of the current National-led government to Auckland’s CRL project and the events of the late 1960s. This response reflects stability; a symptom of path dependence which does not allow change over time. The main implicit assumption underlying central government responses is that patronage increases are required before investment in rapid transit. However, such evidence was not required for motorway spending either in the 1960s or in 2013. The analysis and discussion confirms political path dependence, which suggests that the present response of central government politicians is a reflection of prior events and therefore understanding those events can help to explain the current situation. There is of course a role for central government in future public transport development in Auckland, but how this role could be used following the creation of the Auckland Council to break path dependencies and develop a new and sustainable path needs further research.

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