

Introduction



This section details the purpose of this document and who should use it.

It also explains the principled approach that underpins all parts of a project. These guiding principles are at the heart of the system and affect every part of it.

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1.0

The role of wayfinding systems in placemaking is subtle yet unambiguous, providing a clarity and cohesion that grows over time into shaping a recognisable sense of identity. This is Auckland. This is a part of who we are.

Introduction

Purpose of this manual

This manual will enable the Auckland Council family to deliver a consistent suite of signage across the Auckland region.

A simpler wayfinding system with enhanced information will be more user friendly, contributing to Auckland being a more liveable city.

The aim is to help:

- Identify and connect places in and around the city
- Build people's confidence to walk, cycle or use public transport
- Reassure and encourage Aucklanders and visitors to explore the urban environment
- Reduce reliance on private cars, encouraging sustainable travel and healthier lifestyles
- Declutter the urban landscape
- Stimulate economic growth and promote social inclusion.

Signs play a key role in a wayfinding system and this document refers primarily to the medium of signage in the Auckland Transport (AT) network.

The guidelines in this manual include detailed specifications for the look and layout of:

- Pedestrian signs
- Cycling signs
- Public transport signage – bus, train and ferry
- Information signs for motorists, e.g. street name signs.

The new regional signage system is being designed for future integration of new technology (e.g. digital and audio), as it becomes more accessible.

The guidelines have been developed to bring clarity and consistency to the provision of information across these transport modes.

What is wayfinding?

Wayfinding is how people find their way around an environment – whether they are strangers to the place, or residents needing information on using public transport or unfamiliar facilities.

Wayfinding systems identify and connect places in and around the city. They build people's confidence to get out and explore the city on foot, by bicycle or by using public transport rather than relying on private cars – encouraging sustainable travel and healthier lifestyles. Navigating transport environments independently also reduces reliance on transport staff, allowing them to use their time more productively.

Wayfinding systems stimulate economic growth by drawing visitors to the city. They promote social inclusion by using formats that are accessible to people with impaired mobility or vision.

Who should use this manual

This manual is designed to be used by:

- Facilities managers
- Project managers – major and minor capital projects, and road maintenance
- Signage contractors
- General operational staff needing signs updated or installed
- Graphic designers – in-house or contractors
- The 21 local boards of Auckland Council.

The guidelines are not designed for use by businesses, and business or residents' associations, or individuals. Any of these groups should approach their local board in the first instance to discuss their proposals.

Background and scope

The Regional Signage Project was an integral component of Auckland Council amalgamation in 2010. Each of the legacy councils had its own set of design guidelines and many capital projects had also created their own designs. It was recognised that signage around the region was inconsistent and incomplete. Our customers experienced a cluttered landscape with confusing signs that no longer reflected Auckland's brand, growth and aspirations.

Like the Unitary Plan, which provides one set of rules for planning, the Regional Signage Project is an opportunity to bring the region together by introducing a multi-modal signage system that makes sense to everyone. The project showcases a significant and positive change resulting from amalgamation.

A decision was made at council and council-controlled organisation (CCO) chief executive level for AT to lead this project as the majority of signs are under its governance.

The strategy is for Auckland to be one of the first cities to implement a comprehensive, holistic wayfinding system that covers the four key modes of walking, cycling, vehicles and public transport.

This is in line with AT's mission: 'Working together to deliver safe, innovative and sustainable transport for a great city', and complement's Mayor Phil Goff's vision for Auckland 'of a modern city that is diverse, inclusive and dynamic'.

The goals were:

- Design a customer-centric connected city with a consistent look and feel
- Connect Auckland with a single wayfinding system brand
- Declutter the landscape
- Promote active travel and healthy lifestyles
- Support Auckland's regeneration, particularly in the city centre
- Demonstrate the benefits of cross-council agency initiatives with a strong customer focus
- Develop a mapping solution that allows a standard look and feel for all maps on all media.

Development of the new guidelines was informed by a study of best practice wayfinding systems in other major world cities, and local research to find out what users' needs are. Pilot projects enabled testing and modification, based on feedback.

Making signage accessible for everyone

The new Wayfinding system incorporates Universal Design principles. These principles ensure that all signage in Auckland will be accessible to the greatest possible extent by all people regardless of their age or ability. The principles simplify life for everyone: if the signage is easy for a person who is vision-impaired, it will be easy for all of us to read.

The principles go beyond making signage barrier-free to including aesthetics as a core consideration.

We followed a robust accessibility approach, as follows:

1. Engagement with the AT-facilitated regional accessibility group, the Public Transport Accessibility Group (PTAG), to review the proposed designs.
2. Review of designs by the New Zealand Blind Foundation.
3. Adjustments to designs, based on feedback.
4. Once trial signs were installed, an external journey tester was contracted to assess the pilot project.
5. All feedback was evaluated and 99% of it incorporated into the updated designs.

The key feedback we took on board was to increase font sizes and improve the legibility of maps. The consultation process throughout was a positive experience. The project team valued all the input from the disability advisory groups and this has resulted in best practice signage.

1.1

The guidelines cover wayfinding and directional signage for:

- Transport modes – walking and cycling signs and routes, public transport and motorists, e.g. street name signs
- Places where transport interacts – road corridors, parks, public transport facilities, cycleways etc.

Exceptions are:

- Place names, e.g. libraries, regional facility names
- Regional facilities
- Regional parks
- Commercial signage
- Special events
- Internal signage within the council and council controlled organisation (CCO) staff buildings.

The design elements in this manual are mandatory and must be followed whenever signage is being designed, manufactured or installed.

Each section of this manual has a business owner within the council group. No changes can be made to any aspects of the suite of signs given in this manual unless approved by the business owner.

To request a change to the signage suite please email signage@at.govt.nz and include the following information:

- Which sign or aspect of the signage do you want the change made to?
- What is the change?
- Why will this improve the sign/s?
- What is the benefit to the customer?
- How many customers will it likely affect?
- What is your role?

Principles

Specifics of a good wayfinding system

A good wayfinding system:

- Is recognisable and consistent
- Is backed by plentiful on-the-ground research
- Is functional, accessible, seamless and interesting to a wide and varied audience
- Breaks complexity down into a series of connected stages and well-defined routes that are easy to navigate
- Has good placement. Signs stand out and can be seen from any angle or distance
- Enables anyone to reach their destination easily and quickly, by providing the cues and information on:
 - Where they are (position and context)
 - What transport modes and routes they can use to reach their destination
 - When they have reached their destination
- Declutters the urban landscape. It is simple and concise, providing just the right amount of information
- Provides maps and directories in public places to give a bird's eye view of the environment, for people to study in advance of their journey.

Recognisable and consistent

Unless you are an accidental tourist who enjoys wandering, the experience of being lost in a city generally creates anxiety. Not knowing what navigation aids to look for, or if there are any, wastes time and is stressful.

It should be easy for people to spot the wayfinding signs that are relevant to their journey. These signs allow people to move through spaces easily and with confidence – avoiding ambiguity.

Having a cohesive sign family with consistent colour, design, size and placement, and an Auckland-specific visual language, all helps to make signage instantly recognisable. When used over time, this familiarity and reliability offers comfort – the feeling that someone has walked in your shoes and already predicted your needs.

Use solid research

Good signage systems adopt the viewpoint of the customer, considering where they will be coming from, where they may want to go, entry and exit points, key decision points along the way and what information they will need at those decision points. Again, this functional usability inspires confidence.

Be seamless

We all have the experience of being overwhelmed by too much information. When complex journeys are broken down into a series of stages, the mind can let go of its instructional map and just focus on one step at a time.

Signs must be placed to connect places, enabling a seamless transition from one transport mode, system or area to another.



The seamless journey



Provide just the right amount of information...

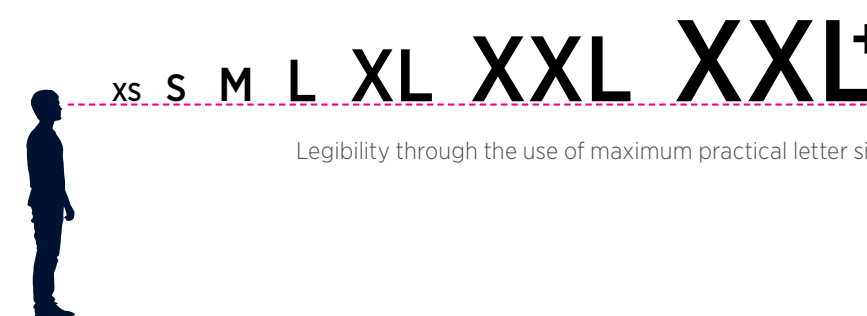
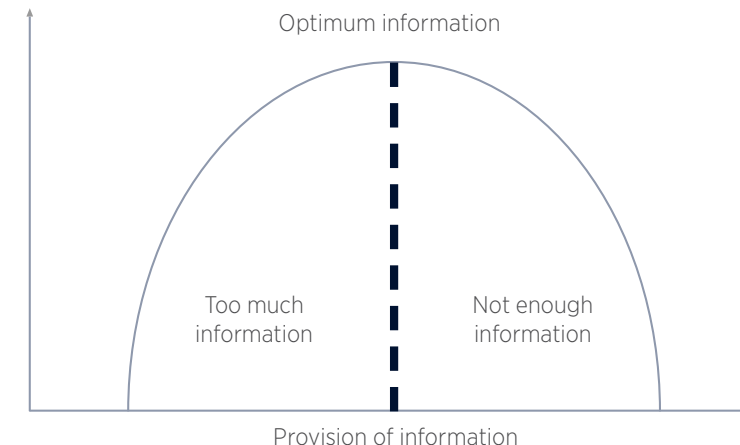
...not too much to overwhelm and not too little to create confusion. The best wayfinding systems are simple, and use as little language as possible and limited navigation choices. Necessary information is brief, allowing people to find their destination while in a hurry or in the flow of traffic.

Present information clearly

Signs must be placed in the best position to aid wayfinding, i.e. within the expected cone of vision for a person travelling on the route that the sign is intended for.

The information on signs must be logically and clearly structured. The design in these guidelines focuses on:

- Legibility**
 The format and layout of travel information has been designed to improve legibility, through the use of contrasting colours and the maximum practical letter and image size.
- Simplicity**
 The graphic templates have been developed to accommodate only important information.
- Use of graphics**
 Information is presented in graphic form wherever possible, as this is a universal language.



Use of icons, landmarks and illustrations for legible signage not based on textual language.



Simplicity through the use of important information and use of graphics in the form of icons.

Be inclusive

The wayfinding system must be as inclusive as possible by providing information in formats accessible to people with impaired mobility or vision.

When deciding on the appropriate size of signs and their content, bear in mind the distance from which the viewer will see the sign.

Be modular

A modular approach to signage allows for a multitude of applications. Modules allow similar signage to be used for different applications, and also make updates easy.

Be sustainable

Improving wayfinding in the Auckland region means installing a large number of signs, so it is important that these signs are sustainable. Materials used must be long-lasting and take into account environmental factors. Specifications for signs ensure manufacturers use the appropriate materials and processes for making signs.



Showing the bloom/blur test and large type for vision deficiencies.



Hierarchy of information showing the most important and immediate information most prominently. Providing the best and simplest way of transmitting the given information. The contents of the design displaying in as accessible a form as possible.

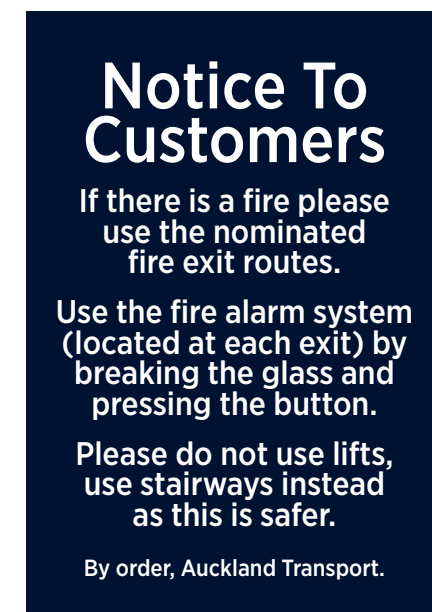
Clear and concise

Signs should be as clear as possible for as wide a variety of people as possible. Keep in mind that people using the signs may have English as a second language, be dyslexic, or have a visual impairment etc.

For this reason, signs should be written in plain English, avoiding jargon, legalese and pompous language. Signs work well when they can be read and understood in an instant. In practice this means using short, simple words and keeping messages as simple as possible. Keeping the number of words short also means that a larger font size can be used for better legibility.

For instance: incorrect ✘

vs: correct ✔



For instance: incorrect ✘

vs: correct ✔



Consistent

Using consistent words and phrases across the signs helps avoid confusion. For instance, all train stations should be referred to as stations, not transport centres, hubs or interchanges.

See the list of standard words and phrases here.

Using consistent formatting also helps avoid confusion and gives a consistent appearance to the signs.

Style rules for text formatting:

Capitalisation

Only used for the first letter of proper nouns and the first word of a sign or sentence.

eg: Pick up & drop off ✓

vs Pick Up & Drop Off ✗

One exception to this is the Customer Service Centre ID sign. This has a capital letter for each word as it is the proper name of the centre.

Alignment

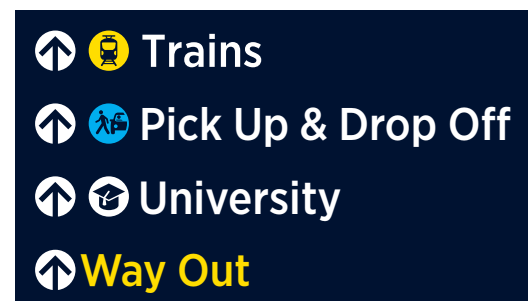
Left alignment should be used on all signs. The exceptions are ID signs such as the Platform ID, Station location ID, Customer Service Centres, tickets, and accessible door signs. These are all noted in the individual sign information within the graphic elements sections.

Spacing

Specific rules of vertical line spacing also help to ensure the sign is as readable as possible.

More information on this can be found in the graphic application section.

Incorrect use of capital letters ✗



vs: correct ✓



One exception to the use of capital letters only on the first letter of each sentence or line, is the Customer Service Centre location ID sign as below.



Words and phrases for signage

Use	Don't use	Note
Alcohol free	No drinking	
Bus Station		
Bus Stop		Manukau Bus station has bays, all other bus stops in the network are referred to as bus stop, or stop
Buses	Busses	
Buses replace trains	Rail replacement bus service	
CCTV Crime prevention cameras operating 24 hrs	CCTV cameras operating 24 hours	
City centre	"CBD, up town, mid town, downtown"	Instead of up, mid and down town use POIs such as Aotea Square, Britomart etc
Customer Service Centre	Ticket office	May be shortened to 'Tickets Information' on directional signs
Ferry terminal (or just 'Ferry')	Ferries	Where space is limited 'Ferry' may be used on its own
Help	Assist	
Inbound (<i>trains only</i>)	Northbound	This applies to trains only, and is used in conjunction with City centre (<i>Buses</i>) Northbound is used on the Northern Express Busway only
Outbound (<i>trains only</i>)	Southbound	This applies to trains used in conjunction with end of line eg. Manukau
Overbridge	Overpass	
Mall	Westfield Mall	No commercial names to be used
Mens toilet/Men	"Male toilet, gents toilet"	
... only	Reserved for the use of ...	E.g. 'cardholders only' not 'reserved for the use of cardholders'
Pick up & drop off	Kiss n Ride	May be shortened to just Pick up if space is limited
Pier	"Wharf, gate, jetty, pontoon"	
Piers 2 3 4	Piers 2,3 and 4	do not use punctuation or 'and' on signage between numbers
Platform		This is used for train stations only
Please walk	Do not run	
Please walk your bike	Do not cycle	
Slow	"Slow down, go slow"	
Smoke free	No smoking	
Station	Train station	
Stops A B C	Stops A, B and C	do not use punctuation or 'and' on signage between numbers
Taxis	Cabs	
Town centre	Village	unless a proper noun such as "Albany Village"
Waiting area	Waiting room	
Way out	Exit	"Exit" is reserved for fire exit signs
Womens toilet/Women	"Female toilet, ladies toilet"	
Underpass	Tunnel	