

Northland Tunnel

Northland Road



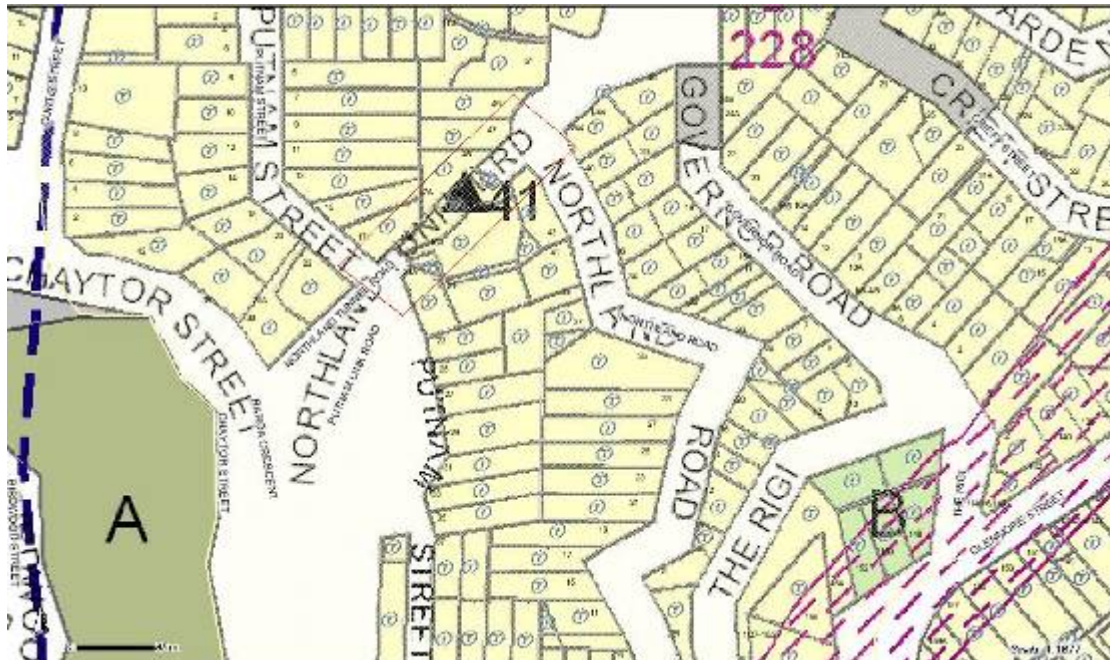
Image: Googlemaps 2013

Summary of heritage significance

- Although constructed to fulfil a utilitarian purpose, the designs of the entrances of the Northland Tunnel have been influenced by the Classical style, featuring a well proportioned archway. The tunnel itself was constructed using materials and techniques appropriate to the period and is an elegantly engineered structure.
- The Northland Tunnel is part of the legacy of the tramways system in Wellington and a physical reminder of the expansion of the tramway system throughout the first part of the 20th century and the role that it played in Wellington's suburban development.
- The Northland Tunnel is an important historic object that has become a feature in the Wellington community, particularly for those who use public transport on a regular basis. The Tunnel contributes significantly to the sense of place and continuity in Wellington and acts as an important link between the city and the suburbs of Northland and Karori.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| District Plan: | Map 11, reference 41 |
| Legal Description: | - |
| Heritage Area: | - |
| HPT Listed: | Category II, reference 3602 |
| Archaeological Site: | - |
| Other Names: | - |
| Key physical dates: | Built: 1928-29 |
| Architect / Builder: | Architect: C.A. Lawrence |
| Former uses: | Transport – tunnel |
| Current uses: | Transport – tunnel |
| Earthquake Prone Status: | Unknown at time of writing |

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

At the turn of the century, Wellington was experiencing unprecedented demand for land for residential building purposes. The expansion was not hampered by the difficult and hilly topography around the city, and soon new suburbs were developing on the hills of Vogeltown, Roseneath, and Northland.

Northland, in 1900, was being heralded as Wellington's latest and best suburb – despite the fact that the oft heard Wellingtonian expression, “it's grand when you get there!” was particularly applicable. Situated between the Botanic Gardens and Karori the suburb was planned by surveyor Mr. Thomas Ward, and it was said that the roads ‘circle, pierce, and intersect the suburb, so that there is no section without its frontage, and at every turn a panorama either of seascape or landscape’.¹

Along with the development of the suburb came the need for reliable transport routes and the expansion of the tramway into the suburb had been promised for some time. By the 1920s planning had begun for the tunnel, with the intention of the time being for just a tramway tunnel. There was some protest against this, as people believed that this was not taking into account future expansion and increased need for the tunnel. Similar issue had been taken with the Kilbirnie Tunnel (Pirie Street Bus Tunnel) which by the mid 1920s was unable to cope with the traffic pressures that were put upon it, and the cost of expanding the tunnel were greatly more than that of constructing a larger tunnel to begin with.² Despite this, work on the proposed 27ft wide, 295ft long, and 20ft high tunnel began in 1923.

Work appeared to be proceeding satisfactorily throughout the first part of 1924 until July when the foreman of the project gave notice to the Wellington City Corporation that he would not continue to work under the conditions. It was stated that the tunnel penetrated through a bad spur, the ground was damp and treacherous, and that a number of slips had occurred.³ By mid 1925, further rumours had begun to spread regarding the safety of the tunnel.⁴ Inspections carried out by the City Engineer and Councillor Mr. Robert Semple found large cracks in the concrete through several portions of the tunnel and that in several places the concrete, instead of being 18 inches, was closer to 6 inches thick.⁵ Following these discoveries the tunnel underwent significant strengthening works.

¹ ‘Northland, Our New Suburb’, *Evening Post*, 5 March 1900, Page 2, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19000305.2.3&srpos=59&e=-----10--51---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

² ‘First and Final Costs’, *Evening Post*, 4 October 1923, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19231004.2.18&srpos=27&e=-----10--21---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

³ ‘Risky Tunnel Work’, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 July 1924, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=NZH19240721.2.32&srpos=10&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

⁴ ‘The Northland Tunnel’, *Evening Post*, 20 April 1925, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19250420.2.98&srpos=5&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

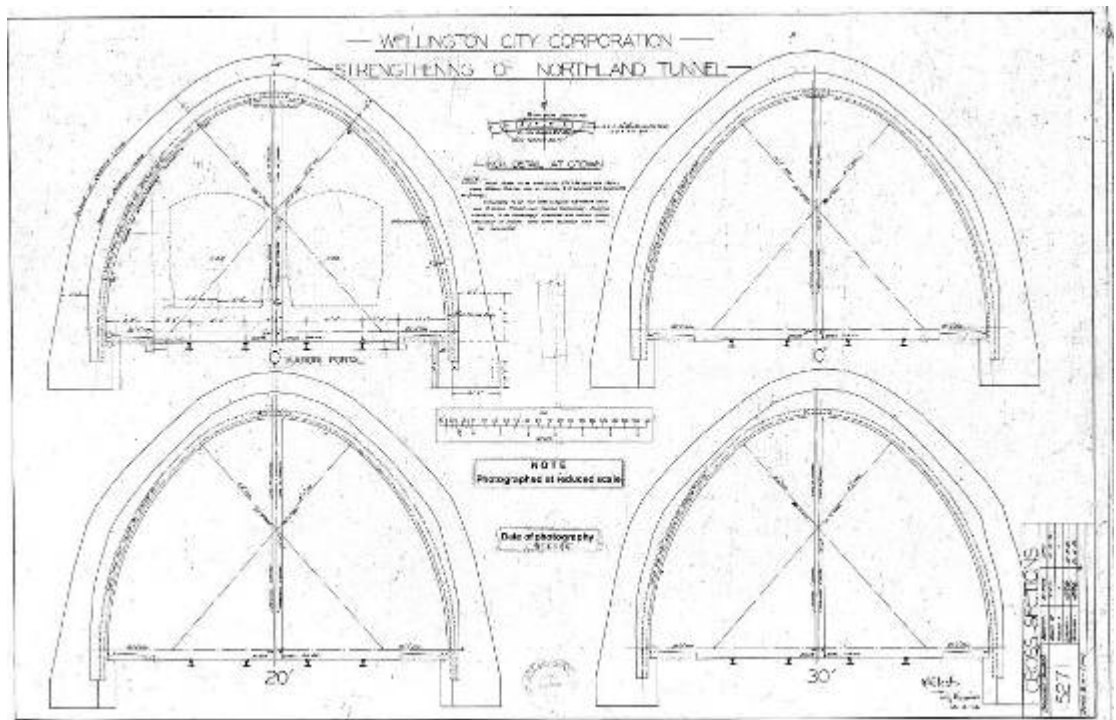
⁵ ‘Northland Tunnel’, *Evening Post*, 27 April 1925, page 12, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19250427.2.118&srpos=60&e=-----10--51---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->; ‘Northland Tunnel’, *Evening Post*, 21 December 1925, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19251221.2.98&srpos=37&e=-----10--31---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

Issues with the construction of the tunnel itself were not all that caused problems. In 1927 Laurence Dallington Foster claimed £200 from the Wellington City Council as compensation for alleged depreciation to his house caused by the construction of the Northland Tunnel.⁶ By 1928 the tunnel had been fully strengthened, relined, and reinforced with steel arches every few feet, and the two portals were finished in light cement, however, even this was not without delays. A steelworkers strike in 1927 had halted the reinforcement of the tunnel.⁷

The tram service eventually began on the 4 June 1929 after more than four years of construction work. It was noted at the time that the tunnel was a sore spot for the civic administration as it was defective in its construction and was only able to be used following great expense had been incurred.⁸

The tunnel has been in continuous use since the time of its construction, having had some minor alterations made in line with changing safety and road standards. As of 2012-2013, the tunnel was designated as needing earthquake strengthening work. Although the tram tunnel is a utilitarian structure, it has been designed with skill and is a scholarly work, with good proportion. The entrances are influenced by the Classical style, with an arched opening.

1.2 Timeline of modifications (Strengthening plans – WCA 00107:1:471)



1920s Northland Tunnel portal (00107:1:428)

⁶ 'Value of a House', *Evening Post*, 9 August 1927, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19270809.2.37&srpos=7&e=-10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

⁷ 'Tram Building Halted', *Evening Post*, 13 May 1927, Page 8, accessed 19 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19270513.2.86&srpos=35&e=-1927-----10--31---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington+->

⁸ 'Expensive Tunnel', *Auckland Star*, 16 May 1929, Page 8, accessed 20 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=AS19290516.2.105&srpos=2&e=-10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington+->

1920s Northland Tunnel portal, wing walls, reinforcement (00107:1:429)
1922-1935 Northland Tunnel Construction (00233:527:1926/454)
1925 Arching Northland tunnel (2008/27:2:3637)
1927-1928 Retaining Wall, Northland, and Strengthening Tunnel, Matters between City Engineer and Resident Progress Reports (00009:2020:50/12A)
1927 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00205:13:1311)
1927 Northland Tunnel, plan in Commission Report (00107:1:465)
1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:471)
(00107:1:472, 00107:1:473, 00107:1:474, 00107:1:475, 00107:1:476)
1927 Northland Tunnel, Contract 1311 (00107:1:481, 00107:1:482)
1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:499)
00107:1:500, 00107:1:501, 00107:1:502, 00107:1:503, 00107:1:504)
1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311, plan of elevations, walls, steps and locality (00107:1:505)
1927 Strengthening of Northland tunnel (2008/27:2:3911)
1928 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00107:1:601)
1928 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00107:1:602)
1930 Straightening of tunnel, Northland Tunnel (00157:1:47)
1969 Northland Tunnel, Proposed Pedestrian Safety Barrier (00070:1:393)

1.3 Ownership history

Wellington City Council

1.4 Occupation history

Not assessed

1.5 Architect

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Although constructed to fulfil a utilitarian purpose, the designs of the entrances of the Northland Tunnel have been influenced by the Classical style, featuring a well proportioned archway. The tunnel itself was constructed using materials and techniques appropriate to the period and is an elegantly engineered structure. Soon after the time of construction the Northland Tunnel had to undergo extensive strengthening work which was carried out with steel arches and concrete.

2.2 Materials

- Reinforced concrete
- Steel arches
- Cement render

2.3 Setting

The Northland Tunnel is located on Northland Road and links the city with the suburbs of Northland, Kelburn, and Karori. The areas on either side of the tunnel are mainly residential and views of the city can be seen upon exiting the Northland Road/ Putnam Street entrance of the tunnel. The tunnel can loosely be understood as an exit and entrance to Wellington city.

Sources

Papers Past

'Northland, Our New Suburb', *Evening Post*, 5 March 1900, Page 2, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19000305.2.3&srpos=59&e=-----10--51---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'First and Final Costs', *Evening Post*, 4 October 1923, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19231004.2.18&srpos=27&e=-----10--21---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'Risky Tunnel Work', *New Zealand Herald*, 21 July 1924, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=NZH192407.21.2.32&srpos=10&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'The Northland Tunnel', *Evening Post*, 20 April 1925, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19250420.2.98&srpos=5&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'Northland Tunnel', *Evening Post*, 27 April 1925, page 12, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19250427.2.118&srpos=60&e=-----10--51---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'Northland Tunnel', *Evening Post*, 21 December 1925, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19251221.2.98&srpos=37&e=-----10--31---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'Value of a House', *Evening Post*, 9 August 1927, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19270809.2.37&srpos=7&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington-->

'Tram Building Halted', *Evening Post*, 13 May 1927, Page 8, accessed 19 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19270513.2.86&srpos=35&e=---1927-----10--31---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington+->

'Expensive Tunnel', *Auckland Star*, 16 May 1929, Page 8, accessed 20 November 2013,

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=AS19290516.2.105&srpos=2&e=-----10--1---0Northland+Tunnel+Wellington+->

Wellington City Archives

- 1920s Northland Tunnel portal (00107:1:428)
- 1920s Northland Tunnel portal, wing walls, reinforcement (00107:1:429)
- 1922-1935 Northland Tunnel Construction (00233:527:1926/454)
- 1925 Arching Northland tunnel (2008/27:2:3637)
- 1927-1928 Retaining Wall, Northland, and Strengthening Tunnel, Matters between City Engineer and Resident Progress Reports (00009:2020:50/12A)
- 1927 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00205:13:1311)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel, plan in Commission Report (00107:1:465)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:471)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:472)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:473)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:474)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland tunnel (00107:1:475)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland Tunnel (00107:1:476)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel, Contract 1311 (00107:1:481)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel, Contract 1311 (00107:1:482)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:499)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:500)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:501)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:502)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:503)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311 (00107:1:504)
- 1927 Northland Tunnel strengthening, Contract 1311, plan of elevations, walls, steps and locality (00107:1:505)
- 1927 Strengthening of Northland tunnel (2008/27:2:3911)
- 1928 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00107:1:601)
- 1928 Strengthening Northland Tunnel (00107:1:602)
- 1930 Straightening of tunnel, Northland Tunnel (00157:1:47)
- 1969 Northland Tunnel, Proposed Pedestrian Safety Barrier (00070:1:393)

Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

Although constructed to fulfil a utilitarian purpose, the designs of the entrances of the Northland Tunnel have been influenced by the Classical style, featuring a well proportioned archway. The tunnel itself was constructed using materials and techniques appropriate to the period and is an elegantly engineered structure.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

The Northland Tunnel is one of a group of tunnels constructed in the first half of the 20th century designed to link Wellington city with other suburbs. The Karori Tunnel, Hataitai Tunnel, Seatoun Tunnel, and the Mt Victoria Tunnel can be seen as a part of a group with the Northland Tunnel as they are of similar ages, uses, history, and built using similar materials and techniques.

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The Northland Tunnel is part of the legacy of the tramways system in Wellington and a physical reminder of the expansion of the tramway system throughout the first part of the 20th century and the role that it played in Wellington's suburban development.

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

The Northland tunnel is of educational value for what it can tell us about the suburban development of Wellington in the early 20th century and the role that the tramway had in this development. It also can provide insight into the ways in which tunnels were constructed in the early part of the 20th century.

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

The Northland Tunnel is of technical interest due to the materials and construction techniques that were used.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

The Northland Tunnel is an important historic object that has become a feature in the Wellington community, particularly for those who use public transport on a regular basis. The Tunnel contributes significantly to the sense of place and continuity in Wellington and acts as an important link between the city and the suburbs of Northland and Karori.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The Northland Tunnel is a good example of a tram tunnel. It is built in materials, to a design, and using techniques appropriate to the period and can be understood as one of a group of similar tunnels in Wellington.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The Northland Tunnel maintains a high level of historic authenticity and integrity as it has been through minimal changes since its construction.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

The Northland Bus Tunnel is a locally important historic object due to its long history linking Wellington city and the suburbs. It makes a significant contribution to the Northland Road streetscape and loosely defines an exit and entrance point to Wellington. As one of a group of tunnels built for the tramways it presents an interesting element of Wellington's suburban development. It retains significant amounts of original materials.

3.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

| Source | Y/N | Comments |
|--|-----|----------|
| 1995 Heritage Inventory | | |
| 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory | | |
| WCC Records – building file | | |
| WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values) | | |
| Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory | | |
| Plan change? | | |
| Heritage Area Report | | |
| Heritage Area Spreadsheet | | |
| Heritage items folder (electronic) | | |
| HPT website | | |
| HPT files | | |
| Conservation Plan | | |
| Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2) | | |

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*