

Wellington Regional Transport Committee's submission to Horizons Regional Council's Regional Land Transport Strategy Review - Discussion Paper

July 2009

1. Introduction

The Wellington Regional Transport Committee (the Committee) thanks the Horizons Regional Council for the opportunity to provide feedback on the key transport issues for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region to be considered when reviewing the Horizons Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS).

2. Inter-regional issues

2.1 Safety and capacity issues on State Highway 1 south of Levin

In relation to Section 4.1, which lists the issues identified in the 2006 RLTS, the Committee believes that addressing *safety and capacity issues on State Highway 1 south of Levin* remains very important and is an issue of national significance for both Horizons and the Greater Wellington regions.

State Highway 1 has a vital role in providing for efficient, safe and reliable access for people and freight from the north to Wellington City, CentrePort, Wellington International Airport and through to the South Island.

Improving the safety and capacity of State Highway 1 has a significant role in supporting the economies of both regions. Growing traffic volumes along this route makes it an increasingly important issue.

We note that the NZ Transport Agency is currently considering proposals for the upgrading the corridor consistent with the government's identification of SH1 between Levin and Wellington as a Road of National Significance (RoNS). It will be important that the Agency and both regional transport committees work together so that issues affecting this RoNS can be addressed in a coordinated way.

2.2 Rail network issues

The 2006 RLTS identified *Declining use of rail transport through the region* as an issue and suggested that improvements were needed to the rail network to increase the ability to carry freight. The discussion paper states that the tunnel restrictions in the Manawatu Gorge and at Kai Iwi have now been corrected and freight movements using Hi-Cube containers are now possible (page 19).

The Committee believes that continually improving the rail network to address the needs of rail freight remains an important issue going forward. Both of our regions will need to contribute towards the New Zealand Transport Strategy 2040 target to significantly increase rail freight mode share. This might involve including policies in the new RLTS to ensure the rail network provides journey times and reliability to make rail a more attractive and feasible mode for moving freight,

and looking for opportunities to encourage rail based transfer of logs to the ports. An advocacy action identified in Wellington's Regional Freight Plan is for development of log transfer sites at Marton and Wanganui.

The Committee notes the concerns identified in the discussion paper (page 19) about the potential impact on the viability of the Capital Connection as a result of planned commuter rail improvements in the Wellington Region (for example the rail double tracking and electrification to Waikanae, to eventually achieve a 15 minute commuter train frequency). Greater Wellington officers would welcome involvement in any upcoming discussions with Horizons and KiwiRail about this issue.

2.3 East-West Connectivity

The need to investigate improvements to secondary strategic links that are playing an increasing role as east-west links and alternative routes (page 17) is another issue identified in the 2006 RLTS that we believe is still relevant and important for the next Horizons RLTS.

In particular, improving the Pahiatua Track is of particular importance to our region as it is being increasingly used by our Wairarapa residents as a connection to Palmerston North, particularly for accessing specialist health services.

3. Other transport issues

Section 4.2 of the discussion documents seeks to identify any other issues not captured in the 2006 RLTS that might be important.

The Committee agrees that issues of integrated land use and transport planning and transport's contribution towards climate change are important issues that could be added.

We also suggest that accommodating a forecast 70-75% increase in freight volumes and movement by 2031¹ should be added to the list of issues for the next Horizons RLTS. This is particularly important given the key freight corridors that pass through the Manawatu-Wanganui region and the potential 'wall of wood' effect signalled in the discussion paper as likely to occur in 15 years time.

4. Upcoming review of the Wellington RLTS

Wellington's Regional Transport Committee is about to commence its review of the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy. The Committee's technical working group will review the policies of the current Wellington RLTS, with input from key stakeholders as required, between August and December 2009. Public consultation on a draft Wellington RLTS is then expected to be carried out during February and March 2010.

We look forward to working with your committee as we review our strategies.

¹ *National Freight Demands Study* (September 2008) Prepared by Richard Paling Consulting for Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Economic Development, and the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Signed on behalf of the Wellington Regional Transport Committee:

Hon Fran Wilde
Chair, Wellington Regional Transport Committee