

Before the Proposed Natural Resources Plan Hearing Panel

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: a submission by the New Zealand Transport Agency
(submitter number 146) on the Proposed Natural
Resources Plan for the Wellington Region

and in the matter of: Hearing Stream One

by: **New Zealand Transport Agency**
Submitter

Primary Statement of evidence of **Neil Walker** on behalf of the New
Zealand Transport Agency

Dated: 5 May 2017

Hearing Date: 22 May 2017

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF NEIL WALKER ON BEHALF OF THE NEW ZEALAND TRANSPORT AGENCY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 Transport is a critical part of daily life for all New Zealanders, enabling a range of activities and making a significant contribution to the country's economic growth and productivity.
- 2 The New Zealand Transport Agency (*Transport Agency*) is the Crown entity responsible for delivering transport solutions for a thriving New Zealand. The Transport Agency has multiple statutory functions, responsibilities and powers at a national, regional and local level. The statutory objective of the Transport Agency, is:

*"to undertake its functions in a way that contributes to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest."*¹
- 3 When undertaking its functions the Transport Agency must "exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility".²
- 4 A highly efficient, resilient, safe and sustainable transport network is vital to support the growth and prosperity of the Wellington Region. Consequently, the Transport Agency is committed to working with our investment partners to provide integrated and seamless connections across networks, modes and services when customers need them.
- 5 The Transport Agency owns, operates and maintains approximately 230km of State highway network within the Wellington Region. The efficient and safe operation of this network requires the regular maintenance of hundreds of tunnels, bridges and other structures.
- 6 In addition to managing the current network, the Transport Agency has a significant planned investment programme aimed at improving economic growth and productivity, safety, and value for money.
- 7 It is therefore crucial that the Greater Wellington Proposed Natural Resources Plan (*Proposed Plan*) recognises and enables the development of new, and the upgrade and maintenance of existing, regionally significant infrastructure such as the State highway network.

¹ Section 94 LTMA.

² Section 96(1)(a) LTMA.

- 8 Therefore, the Transport Agency seeks that the Proposed Plan:
- 8.1 Provides certainty and enables investment in infrastructure that aligns with agreed, national, regional and local outcomes and delivers value for money;
 - 8.2 Recognises the key role that the transport network plays in providing for social, cultural, and economic well-being of people and communities within the region and beyond;
 - 8.3 Recognises the need to make efficient use of existing infrastructure as well as the critical need to improve existing infrastructure to accommodate the demands placed on it by communities;
 - 8.4 Recognises the benefits of providing significant new transport infrastructure, including planned projects and ancillary/supporting infrastructure, required to support the region's growth aspirations and increase regional resilience;
 - 8.5 Recognises that the linear nature of State highway infrastructure and the connected nature of the wider transport system often results in locational and functional constraints that can influence the nature and location of future infrastructure improvements; and
 - 8.6 Recognises the need to protect existing State highway infrastructure (including its maintenance and improvement) from reverse sensitivity effects.
- 9 The Transport Agency seeks changes to the Proposed Plan to better recognise the critical role that regionally significant infrastructure, including the transport network, plays within the Greater Wellington Region.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 10 My full name is Neil Walker.
- 11 I am the Transport Agency's State Highway Manager for the Wellington Region. I have overall responsibility for management of the State highway network within the Wellington, Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough local government regions. This responsibility includes the operation, maintenance and improvement of the State highway network, together with a liaison role with local authorities relating to the operation of the local roading network within that region. A key part of my role is delivering the Wellington Northern Corridor Roads of National Significance (*RoNS*).

- 12 I hold a Masters of Business Administration from Massey University. I have 6 years experience in the transport sector. I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of the Transport Agency.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 13 My evidence provides a strategic overview of the Transport Agency's position with respect to the Proposed Plan.
- 14 My evidence will address the following:
- 14.1 Statutory roles, functions, powers and responsibilities of the Transport Agency, including its Treaty obligations and duty to exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility;
- 14.2 The Transport Agency's perspective on the value of the strategic transport network as regionally significant infrastructure and its importance to the Wellington Region and beyond; and
- 14.3 The Transport Agency's approach to the Proposed Plan.

STATUTORY ROLES, FUNCTIONS, POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 15 The Transport Agency is a Crown entity,³ with the sole powers of control for all purposes of all State highways.⁴ The Transport Agency provides integrated transport solutions for a thriving New Zealand including investing in public transport, walking and cycling facilities and local road networks, and the construction and operation of the State highway network. For the purposes of the RMA, the Transport Agency is a "requiring authority" and "network utility operator".⁵
- 16 The Transport Agency's objective, functions, powers and responsibilities are derived from the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (*LTMA*), and the Government Rounding Powers Act 1989 (*GRPA*), which requires the Transport Agency to:

*"undertake its functions in a way that contributes to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest."*⁶

and

³ Section 93(2) LTMA.

⁴ Section 61 GRPA.

⁵ Section 167 RMA.

⁶ Section 94 LTMA

"manage the State highway system, including planning, funding, design, supervision, construction, and maintenance and operations, in accordance with this Act and the Government Roading Powers Act 1989".⁷

- 17 The LTMA requires that in meeting its objective and undertaking its functions, the Transport Agency must "use its revenue in a manner that seeks value for money".⁸ To achieve this, the Transport Agency must ensure investment in the transport network is necessary, strategic and financially sound.
- 18 In addition, the Transport Agency must give effect to the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (2015/16-2027/28) (*GPS*).
- 19 The GPS outlines the Government's strategy to guide land transport investment over the next 10 years. Each GPS is in place for a period of 6 years, but must set out the results that the government wishes to achieve over a ten year period from the allocation of funding.
- 20 The objectives of the GPS are for a land transport system that:
- (a) addresses current and future demand for access;
 - (b) provides appropriate transport choices;
 - (c) is reliable and resilient;
 - (d) is a safe system, increasingly free of death and serious injury;
 - (e) mitigates the effects of land transport on the environment; and
 - (f) delivers the right infrastructure and services to the right level at the best cost.
- 21 While the GPS provides a national picture for investment, the detail of how funding is allocated to specific activities is the responsibility of the Transport Agency. This is expressed in the National Land Transport Programme (*NLTP*) which is published every three years.
- 22 The Transport Agency must develop a NLTP every 3 years to give effect to the GPS. The Programme sets out the specific activities that will be funded to give effect to the GPS.

⁷ Section 95(1) LTMA.

⁸ Section 96(1)(a)-(b) LTMA.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRATEGIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

- 23 The strategic transport network is of national significance. It makes a substantial contribution to the country's ongoing economic growth and productivity (through the efficient movement of freight and people) and provides intra and inter-regional connections essential to the social and economic well-being of all New Zealanders.
- 24 Safe and efficient transport routes are critical arteries for the economy and business and provide essential links for emergency services and social, cultural, community and educational needs.

WELLINGTON REGION TRANSPORT

- 25 Wellington is a key transport connection between the North and South Islands and a critical gateway for freight. An efficient, safe and sustainable transport network is vital to support the growth and prosperity of the Wellington region and beyond.
- 26 The compact nature of Wellington City, the regional topography and coastline creates constraints for linear transport infrastructure and has shaped the Wellington transport network. Constraints on Wellington's road corridors and limited alternative routes into and out of the Wellington CBD mean that the Wellington transport system has poor resilience to unplanned events (whether they are caused by natural hazards or network incidents such as crashes). Close proximity of road and rail corridors exacerbates resilience risks. Unplanned events can impact the operation of both road and rail, which has significant impacts for the region.
- 27 The Regional Land Transport Plan (*RLTP*) is jointly developed by the Transport Agency and local councils and informs the development of the NLTP. The RLTP lists the planned transport activities for a region for at least 10 years and is used to prioritise applications for Government funding through the Transport Agency. The RLTP must be issued every 6 years and reviewed every 3 years and must be consistent with the GPS.
- 28 The current Wellington RLTP focuses on the provision of a resilient and reliable transport network that will keep the Wellington region moving and enable it to grow and meet future needs.
- 29 The Wellington region's forecast investment over the 2015- 2018 period is \$1,439 million. This includes \$114m for State highway maintenance, \$49m for cycling and walking, and \$456m for public transport.

UPGRADE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELLINGTON STRATEGIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

- 30 Growth projections indicate that strong demand from customers to commute will continue in the future. In the next 30 years 85% of employment growth within the Wellington Region is forecast to occur in Wellington City. Wellington City and Hutt City will remain the largest urban centres, with secondary centres in Porirua, Kapiti and Upper Hutt. In line with its statutory obligations, the Transport Agency must ensure that the strategic transport network is developed to accommodate this growth and improve economic growth and productivity.
- 31 The Transport Agency is investing in a number of projects, which will further define the strategic transport network in the Wellington Region. The RoNS are routes that have been identified by the Government as being critical to improving economic growth and productivity.
- 32 The Wellington Northern Corridor RoNS programme is to develop the State Highway 1 (*SH1*) route between Wellington Airport and north of Levin to provide safe, efficient and reliable travel for people and freight between and within centres. The Wellington RoNS improvements are being constructed across different sections as noted in Appendix 1.
- 33 In addition, there are a number of planned projects within the Wellington Region to deliver the outcomes sought by the GPS including economic productivity, safety and resilience. Examples of these include, but are not limited to:
- (a) The Petone to Grenada Link Road;
 - (b) State Highway 58 Safety Improvements;
 - (c) Let's Get Wellington Moving; and
 - (d) Wellington to Hutt Valley resilience and cycling improvements
- 34 Key investment and routes by the Transport Agency in the Wellington Region also include cycleways/shared paths. This follows the Government's announcement of the Urban Cycleways Programme which will help to establish cycling as an integral part of New Zealand's transport network. Making urban cycling a safer and more attractive transport choice is a key priority for the Transport Agency. The Urban Cycleways Programme forms part of roading projects included in the RoNS.

35 A summary of the key investment and routes in the Wellington Region within the next 3 years, inclusive of RoNS projects and other capital projects, is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



FIGURE 1 - Key routes and investments

36 It is my understanding that KiwiRail will be presenting evidence to the Panel on their forward infrastructure programme. This is a further critical element of achieving a safe, effective and resilient land transport network.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE STATE HIGHWAY NETWORK

- 37 The Transport Agency owns, operates and maintains approximately 230km of State highway network within the Wellington Region. This includes hundreds of ancillary structures such as tunnels, retaining walls, culverts and bridges.
- 38 The efficient and safe operation of Wellington region’s State highway network requires the Transport Agency to undertake a number of ongoing essential activities, including:
- Abrasive blasting for bridge cleaning and maintenance;
 - Dispersing calcium magnesium acetate for de-icing;
 - Clearing debris from in and around bridges and culverts;
 - Weed spraying;
 - Maintenance and replacement of structures (culverts, retaining walls, rock revetment etc.);
 - Emergency management; and
 - Stream diversions.

APPROACH TO THE PROPOSED PLAN

- 39 Given the critical support the strategic transport network provides to social and economic well-being in the Wellington Region, it is crucial that the Proposed Plan recognises and enables the operation and maintenance of existing transport infrastructure and the development of new infrastructure.
- 40 The Transport Agency recognises that the need to provide for infrastructure must be balanced against appropriate protection of the environment. The Transport Agency must “exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility” when undertaking its functions under the LTMA. As such, the Transport Agency supports in principle the recognition of mana whenua values contained with the Proposed Plan, as well as the protection of other high value or sensitive environments.
- 41 The Transport Agency generally supports policies, objectives and rules that give effect to national policy, deliver sound environmental benefits, and are supported by robust evidence.
- 42 The Transport Agency has developed a suite of internal environmental policies to help support its statutory social and environmental obligations, and strives to continually improve its environmental management systems. The Transport Agency also

has a programme to progressively reduce the adverse effects of existing infrastructure.

- 43 It is the Transport Agency's view that the Proposed Plan should include a focus on achieving the best practicable option for linear infrastructure, providing for a holistic approach to the development of options whereby effects are balanced against the benefits and costs.
- 44 To facilitate this, the Transport Agency has made submissions on a number of sections of the Proposed Plan. The Transport Agency is also working with other infrastructure providers to seek alignment, where possible, on the key provisions relating to Regionally Significant Infrastructure.
- 45 The Transport Agency seeks changes to the Proposed Plan to better recognise the critical role that significant infrastructure plays within the Wellington Region. This includes recognition of the need to enable provision of this infrastructure while appropriately protecting the environment.
- 46 Therefore, the Transport Agency seeks that the Proposed Plan:
- 46.1 Provides certainty for infrastructure providers to enable investment in the State highway network, and wider transport network aligned with agreed, national, regional and local outcomes;
 - 46.2 Recognises and provides for the key role that regionally significant infrastructure, including the transport network plays in providing for social, cultural and economic well-being of people and communities within the region and beyond;
 - 46.3 Recognises the need to make efficient use of existing infrastructure as well as the critical need to improve existing infrastructure to accommodate the demands placed on it by communities, including the business community;
 - 46.4 Recognises that the benefits of providing significant new transport infrastructure, including planned projects and ancillary/supporting infrastructure, required to support the region's growth aspirations and increase regional resilience need to be considered against any adverse effects on natural resources;
 - 46.5 Recognises that the linear nature of State highway infrastructure and the connected nature of the wider transport system often results in locational and functional constraints that can influence the nature and location of future infrastructure improvements; and

46.6 Recognises the need to protect existing State highway infrastructure (including its maintenance and improvement) from reverse sensitivity effects.

CONCLUSIONS

- 47 As the owners and operators of the State highway network, and key investors in the wider land transport network, the Transport Agency endeavours to deliver efficient, resilient, safe and responsible transport solutions for customers to support the growth and prosperity of the Wellington Region.
- 48 As such, the Transport Agency requires that the provisions of the Proposed Plan enable it to meet its statutory obligations effectively and efficiently.
- 49 This requires a planning and policy framework that sufficiently enables the provision of new infrastructure and reasonably provides for the maintenance, operation, upgrading and future development of the existing State highway network.

Neil Walker
5 May 2017

Appendix 1

The Wellington RoNS Improvements

Section	Length (km)	Description	Completion Date
Inner City RoNS projects.	2 km	Airport to Mount Victoria Tunnel Duplication of the Mt Victoria Tunnel, and widening of Ruahine Street and Wellington Road.	Further investigation to be determined by the 'Let's Get Wellington Moving' project.
	3 km	Tunnel to Tunnel A bridge on the northern side of the Basin Reserve, an underpass for Buckle Street (as part of the National War Memorial Park) and improvements to the existing Inner City Bypass.	
	3 km	Terrace Tunnel improvements Includes tunnel duplication.	
Aotea Quay to Ngauranga	4 km	Use of existing motorway shoulders as a "fourth lane", and the implementation of a new traffic management system.	2022
Transmission Gully	27 km	Four-lane expressway from north Wellington to MacKays Crossing.	2020
MacKays to Peka Peka	16 km	Four-lane expressway from MacKays Crossing to Peka Peka.	open
Peka Peka to Ōtaki	15 km	Four-lane expressway standard from Peka Peka to Ōtaki.	2020
Ōtaki to Levin	approx 30 km	A phased upgrade of the existing SH1 to four-lanes. First phase (to be completed 2019 - 2024) includes widening, improved passing opportunities and upgrades to narrow bridges and key intersections. Prior to this phase, minor safety improvements are also being considered.	2024