

# **GREATER WELLINGTON PROPOSED NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN HEARING STREAM ONE**

## **Executive Summary of evidence of Neil Walker for the New Zealand Transport Agency**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Neil Walker. I am the New Zealand Transport Agency's (*Transport Agency's*) State Highway Manager for the Wellington Region.
2. I have overall responsibility for management of the State highway network within the Wellington, Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough local government regions. This includes:
  - a. the operation, maintenance and improvement of the State highway network;
  - b. liaison with local authorities regarding the operation of the local roading network; and
  - c. delivery of the Wellington Northern Corridor Roads of National Significance (*RoNS*).
3. The focus of my evidence is the strategic context of the Transport Agency's position with respect to the Greater Wellington Proposed Natural Resources Plan (*Proposed Plan*).

### **WHO WE ARE**

4. The Transport Agency is the Crown entity responsible for delivering transport solutions for a thriving New Zealand. We do this by:
  - a. managing almost 11,000 kilometres of state highways
  - b. funding local roads and public transport
  - c. managing driver testing, licensing and vehicle regulation
  - d. running advertising and education programmes to keep transport safe
  - e. funding land transport research.
5. The Transport Agency works with our investment partners to provide integrated connections across networks, modes and services when customers need them.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRATEGIC TRANSPORT NETWORK**

6. The 'Strategic Transport Network' is made up of the region's key railway lines, certain cycleways and shared paths, State highways, those major local roads serving an arterial purpose and the supporting/auxiliary infrastructure. In the Wellington roading context, this includes State Highways 1, 2, 53, 58 and numerous strategic local roads within the various districts within the Wellington Region.
7. The Strategic Transport Network makes a substantial contribution to the country's ongoing economic growth and productivity. It provides intra and inter-regional connections and essential links for emergency services and social, cultural, community and educational needs.

8. In the Wellington region, a key function of the Strategic Transport Network is linking the region's centres and important destinations such as the Wellington City CBD, regional centres, CentrePort, Wellington International Airport and Wellington Regional Hospital.

#### **WELLINGTON REGION TRANSPORT**

9. 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.
10. The compact nature of Wellington City, the regional topography and coastline create constraints for linear transport infrastructure and have 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). The 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.
11. The Regional Land Transport Plan (*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 is jointly developed by the Transport Agency and local councils.
12. 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.
13. 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.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE STATE HIGHWAY NETWORK**

14. The Transport Agency owns, operates and maintains approximately 230km of State highway network within the Wellington Region.
15. The efficient and safe operation of this network requires the regular maintenance of hundreds of ancillary structures such as tunnels, bridges, retaining walls and culverts. Many of these essential maintenance activities involve works in or around waterways and in coastal marine areas. Such activities can include clearing culverts, abrasive blasting of bridges and building seawalls.

#### **UPGRADE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELLINGTON STRATEGIC TRANSPORT NETWORK**

16. The Transport Agency also has a significant planned investment programme aimed at improving economic growth and productivity, safety, and value for money.

17. 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.
18. The Transport Agency is investing in a number of projects, which will further define the Strategic Transport Network in the Wellington Region.
19. 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 Government has identified this programme as critical to improving economic growth and productivity.
20. There are also a number of other planned projects within the Wellington Region that will deliver the economic productivity, safety and resilience outcomes sought by the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport.
21. Key investment and routes by the Transport Agency in the Wellington Region also include cycleways/shared paths. In 2015 the Transport Agency gained the ability to designate for cycleways which shows that we also have an interest in developing the wider transport network. 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.

#### **APPROACH TO THE PROPOSED PLAN**

22. 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.
23. 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 Land Transport Management Act (LTMA).
24. 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 where reasonably practicable.

25. 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. As such, the Transport Agency supports in principle the recognition of mana whenua values contained within the Proposed Plan, as well as the protection of other high value or sensitive environments.
26. However, the Transport Agency seeks changes to the Proposed Plan to better recognise and provide for the critical role that regionally significant infrastructure, including the transport network, plays within the Greater Wellington Region.
27. Therefore, the Transport Agency seeks that the Proposed Plan:
- a. 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;
  - b. Provides certainty for infrastructure providers to enable investment in the State highway network, and wider transport network;
  - c. Recognises the need to make efficient use of existing infrastructure as well as the critical need to improve existing infrastructure;
  - d. 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;
  - e. 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
  - f. Recognises the need to protect existing State highway infrastructure (including its maintenance and improvement) from reverse sensitivity effects.