



31 October 2003

Transport Futures

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FROM GREATER WELLINGTON TRANSPORT

After a quiet time, transport policy is now in for a busy period, and we plan more frequent issues of Transport Futures. This one, prepared by the Chair of the Regional Land Transport Committee, outlines the impacts of new legislation and other exercises (FAF, JOG, MPR).

Land Transport Management Bill reported back

This trigger event has enabled several forecast steps to be scheduled. These include the need for agencies such as Transfund and ourselves to realign strategies and mechanisms.



The reported Bill maintains the thrust of the introduced Bill, and responds to core concerns of submitters. Unsurprisingly the Bill does not address the overall quantum of funding or evaluation mechanisms. We are advised that work continues separately on these related

matters, eg through Transfund's review of the Funding Allocation Framework (FAF) and the Joint Officers' Group (JOG), and to expect further announcements on them "soon".

The Bill

- Establishes a national strategic framework for all transport programmes
- connects funding processes to the same strategic framework
- identifies (and interconnects) key documents as instruments for achieving the above: the NZTS, transport programmes (ie Transfund's, Transit's, and local authorities') and Regional Land Transport Strategies (RLTSs)
- tightens development procedures, especially consultation, especially for RLTSs
- specifies a multi-modal approach, ie whole-of-transport rather than roading alone, including for example a

requirement for RLTSs to provide for Travel Demand Management (TDM)

- provides for 10-year horizons for planning and funding forecasts (now in Schedule 1 rather than the main Act)
- establishes connections with the Local Government Act (LGA) and its processes
- provides for debt-funding, tolling and its variants (includes congestion tolling), and PPPs ("concessions") for *new* roads, loosening both the approval process and the definition of a new road
- enables "procurement" to pursue best value
- recognises "efficiency" but as an operator goal rather than a national objective
- provides for transitional processes and periods, recognising that mechanisms to implement the new framework will be quite different from those received
- enables regional councils (perhaps in conjunction with local authorities) to own *any* public transport infrastructure *or service* via a LATE, after normal LGA process.

Future plans

- **GWRC** plans a presentation on the Bill to next RLTC, concentrating on impacts on RLTC and RLTSs.
- **Transfund** plans a seminar on the implications for FAF (includes benefit-cost, prioritisation etc) in mid-November.
- **LGNZ** plans a national forum on the whole Bill in late November. Part of this Forum will deal with aspects the Bill does not address (eg funding).

RLTS review developments

The reported Bill introduces a new clause describing the scope and duties of an RLTS: it has 16 subclauses (previously 5). Plus there is an entirely new clause on consultation for an RLTS, and a challenging rewrite of the composition of RLTC. RLTSs now "must be taken into account" by (all) funding and programming agencies, and RLTC requests for information "must" be complied with "promptly".

Even a preliminary look at the new Bill indicates the development of our next RLTS is going to be complicated. For this reason we have already indicated to GWRC schedulers that we will need to **double the provision for RLTC events**. This does not mean doubling the number of formal meetings. We anticipate more workshops and briefings, some with invitation lists going beyond RLTC. There is a more extensive list of specified consultees for RLTSs in the Bill – adjoining regional councils, district health boards, ACC, Historic Places Trust, “Maori of the region”, “every affected community” (on some matters) and “the public in the region”. The constitution of the next RLTC will also need careful consideration.

New policy areas for the next RLTS – vulnerability, freight

The recent appearance of a regional cycling strategy signals the beginning of a number of policy areas that will be taken through the process *separately*, to enable focussed discussion. Others likely in this series are walking, public transport, freight, road safety, and possibly TDM (in two bites?: pricing and non-pricing). Many will be reformatted existing policy but some will need to be extended as well.

We will need to establish and maintain consistency between these policies, in format and levels of detail. It is worth remembering that an RLTS is primarily concerned with the regional strategic network (ie *not* local roads), with stating and reviewing regional transport needs and priorities (ie *not* simply regional councils), and with establishing “measures” to implement and monitor agreed objectives and priorities effectively (legitimising but *not necessarily* detailing allocation of resources).

Freight in particular will need thorough attention, not only because the new legislation significantly widens the scope (eg coastal shipping/connections to adjacent regions are now included), but also



because monitoring indicates we have substantial growth and challenging distributions of road freight (eg SH1 Porirua-Kapiti, Petone-Gracefield, and CBD-Airport all have high and climbing freight numbers). The next RLTS will need to do a lot more than the present *for* freight in all its forms.

RLTC members will also recall that last year we identified a need to develop new policy around the vulnerability of our network to events and incidents that cancel route reliability. Recent events have traumatically underlined this need. Officers are preparing specific and substantive draft policy to take through the process. We hope a draft can be tabled at next RLTS.

Regional Transport Programme: transport funding gap

The new Bill specifies for RLTSs a 10-year horizon, “taking into account the funding likely to be available”. FAF expects RLTS/RLTC processes to prioritise capital works on the regional strategic network annually. The 2003 round saw the first ever indications of what the funding likely to be available over 10 years for strategic roading needs actually was. In the end that amount was *at least* \$100 million short of the amount

necessary to achieve the *proffered* 2003 programme, itself a very short list containing only the first few elements of RLTS priorities. The full list in the current RLTS would cost *at least* \$1 billion more, admittedly spread over an indeterminate timeframe rather than 10 years.

There is a need to sort the current RLTS list into a programme (ie, a multi-modal package) that recognises both a 10-year horizon and “the funding likely to be available”. This is a key task that the Auckland RLTS has completed. Early in 2003, RLTC rated it a priority. The Bill (and FAF and JOG) now underline the need.

Possible responses are to cut the list; re-phase the list into a) 10-year and b) beyond 10-years, with reduced expectations of what is achievable inside 10 years; increase the funding available; or some combination. *Every* option (including doing nothing or delay answering) has serious consequences for the region beyond transport.

Officers have been working on papers setting out a more detailed estimate of this region’s transport programme and funding gap. The work encompasses public transport programmes (including rail) as well as roading. The papers, even in version 1 form, need to be presented to an RLTC workshop as early as possible in the RLTS review – after all, RLTC has to repeat the FAF exercise by March 2004.

Corridor plans

Hutt and Wairarapa corridor plans approach formal adoption at the next RLTC.

Western corridor implementation review

This review started when we expected the Bill to be reported in July and cost and benefit refinements to be reported in September/October. Delays in both have led to the review being stalled. The intended process remains the same: subcommittee commissions, receives and discusses key reports; subcommittee prepares a draft review for RLTC; RLTC consults on the draft review; RLTC recommends amendments to be incorporated into the next RLTS.

Key reports awaited are:

- GWRC/Transit: Applied timelines report (ie best estimates of durations required to process Transmission Gully (TG)/alternatives through required stages; report expected February)
- GWRC/Transit: Status of alternatives to TG (report expected February)
- Transit: Land acquisition process and progress (report expected February)
- Transit: Refinement and update of TG costs (report expected late March)
- GWRC: Refinement and update of traffic projections (benefit-review, report expected late March)
- GWRC: Review of feasibility of tolling TG, given the new legislation, updated costs and traffic figures (report expected later than March).



Wellington City corridor planning

The Hutt corridor plan report is the most recent formal report to identify the need to complete regional corridor plans by progressing the Wellington City corridors. Work on this had been suspended while Wellington City prepared its own City Transport Strategy, and by delays around the Inner City Bypass (ICB). Wellington City's Transport Strategy has now appeared and is in process, and the major projects review (MPR) is scheduled to report on ICB in December.

Paradoxically, the *lack* of a proper Wellington City corridor plan impacts on the ICB review.

Consequently it will be timely to revive work on Wellington City corridors, to bring such work into line with that done on the other corridors. Both Hutt and Western corridor work anticipate long-term needs, consider the whole alignment, and include non-roading programmes for instance. An equivalent for Wellington City would require consideration of the level of SH1 to Airport required to meet 2016 projections (includes freight needs), similar levels of transport linkage required for the (new) Hospital, among other matters (eg mode and location of future public transport spines in the CBD, treatment of major intersections, future of waterfront route).

The original plan was to conduct this work in two stages – CBD to Basin, then beyond the Basin. Recent discussion has suggested combining the two into one, as any exercise doing one without the other leaves important questions hanging. Like other policy and corridor work, any Wellington City corridor planning would have its own process, allowing for focussed consideration and consultation. It would be incorporated into the RLTS at time of adoption.

Conclusion

This discussion refrains from introducing public transport issues, but they too will come to a head in the near future, most notably the immediate needs (“rescue package”) and longer-term arrangements for Wellington's passenger rail.

I am happy to discuss the nuances of any item, or any unanswered questions.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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