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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
from Howard Stone, General Manager

The Wishbone Study

1. Purpose

To present the findings of the Wishbone Study and confirm a proposed course of action to promote its recommendations.

2. Background

The Wishbone Study was commissioned to identify how to improve the way we manage and deliver land transport outcomes for the Wellington Region. The Study sought to have a fresh look at how things are done, what the problems are, and where improvements can be made. It was borne out of frustration that the Council has faced, and continues to face, as it attempts to deliver the land transport outcomes identified in the Regional Land Transport Strategy.

Dr. Wayne Hastie, Manager Resource Policy, was invited to undertake the study. As a respected policy professional not entangled directly in the land transport framework, he was able to undertake the analysis in an independent and objective manner. He sought to document in one place how things work now, what problems exist, and how things might be improved. The result is the Wishbone Study.

A small project team assisted Wayne, and a Steering Group convened by myself oversaw the work.

Copies of the Report have been circulated to Councillors previously.

3. Key Findings

Two key starting premises were that the land transport system is a multi-modal entity that must be planned for, developed, and managed in an integrated manner. And that in the Wellington Region at least, the planning must occur on a regional scale.

The Study found that there are a number of good things about the current land transport framework. These include:

- That safety is well dealt with, and is a common theme running through all of the agencies and organisations.
- That the framework provides for national and regional land transport strategies, albeit that a national land transport strategy has never been produced.
- That there is a dedicated fund.
- That there are special purpose agencies with well defined roles.
- That the framework is well set up for roading.

However, as anticipated, the Study identified a number of significant barriers to the successful delivery of land transport outcomes. These barriers are listed in summary form in Part B of the Report and in detail in Part D.

As an example, the Study looked at the funding and ownership issues surrounding public transport infrastructure. In order to overcome the barriers that the current framework imposes, the Study recommends that the Government remove the prohibition on regional council ownership of transport infrastructure.

This area is particularly topical with the current proposals by Tranz Rail to divest itself of the metropolitan services in Auckland and Wellington. The Regional Council has been paying for the progressive upgrade of the Ganz Mavag rail units, which continue to remain on the balance sheet of Tranz Rail and could now be sold off. Were it not for the legislative shackles, it is likely that the Council would have formed a partnering arrangement with Tranz Rail as long as seven years ago, thereby protecting the public's interest in the investment they have made. Unfortunately, no such arrangements have been possible.

Another key finding of the Study is the lack of a comprehensive requirement to implement the Regional Land Transport Strategy. As noted above, the requirement that regional councils prepare regional land transport strategies is

seen as a strength of the current framework, but their value is being undermined at the implementation stage. Changes are recommended to ensure that strategies can and will be delivered.

4. Communication

Copies of the Wishbone Study have been distributed to key stakeholders including the Minister of Transport, the Ministry of Transport, territorial authorities and members of the Regional Land Transport Committee.

It is proposed that Councillors use the Study as a basis for persuading the Government to modify the current framework along the lines recommended in the Report to achieve the transport outcomes that are so vital for the future prosperity of the Region.

5. Comment

To my knowledge, the Wishbone Study represents the first time a comprehensive statement of the Transport Governance framework has been compiled in one document.

In my view Dr. Hastie has provided a valuable input to the policy debate on transport in New Zealand. The Study is a credit to him

6. Recommendations

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- (i) Receive the Wishbone Study Report*
- (ii) Formally request a meeting with the Minister of Transport to discuss the Report.*
- (iii) Instruct officers to commence a process of engagement with stakeholders in an effort to gain support for the changes proposed.*

HOWARD STONE
General Manager