

Submission to the Transport and Industrial Relations Select
Committee

In the matter of the

Road Traffic Reduction Bill 2002

From *Local Government New Zealand*
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D R A F T

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for Regional Land Transport Strategies and the National Land Transport strategies provide measures to reduce motorised road traffic. Submissions are being sought on this Bill in parallel with submissions on the Land Transport Management Bill 2002. However, this Bill is inconsistent with many of the provisions of the Land Transport Bill 2002. The Land Transport Bill 2002 is linked to the New Zealand Transport Strategy and together provide a transport policy hierarchy that considers the wider national transport network across all modes.

This Bill on the other hand, is narrow considering road traffic in isolation and suggesting that a reduction of this traffic will enhance environmental quality and the health, safety and well-being of people and of communities. It does not recognise that multiple objectives are required to obtain these outcomes and in some cases trade offs and prioritisation are required.

The Bill does not recognise that National Land Transport Strategy and Regional Land Transport Strategies have limited ability to influence road traffic volumes. There are many influences on road traffic volumes in society, most of which are beyond the direct control of either the Minister of Transport, Government, or Regional and Local Government. Therefore the ability to develop effective measures to reduce traffic is very limited.

It is suggested that the policy instruments currently being developed in conjunction with the Land Transport Management Bill 2002 will be a more effective way of achieving the government's transport objectives.

One aspect of the Bill that could be included in the Land Transport Management Act is the requirement for Regional Land Transport Strategies to include measures and targets. The provisions are currently not in the Land Transport Act 1998, or the consequential amendments to that Act in the Land Transport Management Bill.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for regional councils and the Minister of Transport to put in place measures to reduce motorised traffic. According to the Bill, this will enhance environmental quality and the health, safety and well-being of people and communities. The Bill is a Private Members Bill (Jeanette Fitzsimons) with a closure date of submissions to the Select Committee of 28 February. This paper contains *Local Government New Zealand's* draft submission on the Bill, to assist in formulating a *Local Government New Zealand* submission the Select Committee and to assist in the process of local authorities preparing their own submissions.

2. Significant Issues

2.1 Inconsistent and Narrow Focus

The Bill seems to have been prepared in isolation from the Land Transport Management Bill and the New Zealand Transport Strategy.

The objectives of Transfund and Transit New Zealand under this Bill are to operate safe and sustainable transport systems at reasonable cost.

In contrast, under the Land Transport Management Bill, the objectives of Transfund and Transit New Zealand are to allocate resources to achieve an integrated, safe responsive and sustainable land transport system. Therefore the focus of this Bill is rather narrow, and is inconsistent with the Land Transport Management Bill.

Currently central government is developing a policy hierarchy of a New Zealand Transport Strategy, a National Land Transport Strategy, Regional Land Transport Strategies (the Land Transport Act 1998) and local Land Transport Programmes.

The narrow focus of “road traffic” and “reduction” is inappropriate in this wider policy context.

2.2 Single Objective Is Inappropriate

The objectives of the New Zealand Transport Strategy are economic development, safety and personal security, access and mobility, public health and environmental sustainability. These are to be underpinned by the principles of sustainability, integration, safety and responsiveness. Achieving these goals may on some occasions require trade offs between objectives. For example, achieving the economic development objective may require increases in traffic rather than reductions. Similarly, reduced traffic volumes can result in higher average speeds and increased accident rates. Therefore to have an Act with a single objective of reduction in isolation from the wider objectives of government may undermine the achievement of those objectives.

To consider a reduction in road traffic in isolation from the consideration of other modes of land transport, such as bus or rail, or in isolation from the consideration of transport by land and sea may also undermine the development of an optimal interrelated national transport network.

The design of such a network to serve the needs of the nation is best undertaken within a national transport strategy.

2.3 Influences on Motorised Road Traffic Reduction

The Bill requires that the National Land Transport Strategy provide for the reduction of road transport by stating targets, timetables and measures for the reduction of motorised road traffic on State Highways and such other roads as the Minister sees fit.

The Bill also requires that Regional Land Transport Strategies recognise and provide for the reduction of motorised road traffic stating targets, timetables and measures for the reduction of motorised traffic within the region and identify the most desirable means of achieving these targets.

However, both central government, through the National Land Transport Strategy and Regional Councils, through their Regional Land Transport Strategies, only have limited ability to influence the reduction of motorised road traffic.

At the macro level some of the influences on traffic volume are:

- Demographic – there are population movements nationally and within regions that influence traffic volumes;
- Socio-economic conditions;
- Vehicle ownership rates;
- Economic activity
- Employment patterns
- The exchange rate and vehicle prices

At the regional and local level, factors that influence motorised road traffic volumes are:

- Changes in land use patterns e.g. farming to horticulture;
- Growth in land use e.g. new industries;
- Changes to public transport services;
- Road pricing e.g. fuel prices and tolls;
- The degree of integration of modes e.g. public transport/car;
- New roads;
- Recreational needs;
- Trip reliability e.g. car/rail;
- Parking availability;
- Hours of work;
- Tele-commuting;
- Vehicle occupancy rates;
- The peak/interpeak/off-peak balance;
- Cycling and walking demand

It is clear that there are many influences on road traffic volumes in society most of which are beyond the direct control of either the Minister of Transport, Government or Regional and Local Government. Therefore the ability for the Ministry of Transport and/or

Regional Councils to develop effective measures to reduce traffic is very limited; if indeed that is a desirable outcome.

2.4 Requirements for Measures and Targets

The Bill provides that the National Land Transport Strategy must state targets, timetables and measures for the reduction of motorised traffic. In addition, it provides for regional land transport strategies to have targets, timetables, measures and means of reducing that traffic.

The framework of identifying objectives, measurable targets and means is a sensible approach and the existing legislative provisions have been checked to see if this is provided for.

The provisions for a National Land Transport Strategy under Section 170 of the Land Transport Act 1998, and this does provide for identifying goal objectives and measurable targets. Therefore the provisions of Section 6 of the Road Traffic Reduction Bill add no further value to the current provisions in the Land Transport Act 1998.

With regard to Regional Land Transport Strategies, these are provided for under Section 175 of the Land Transport Act 1998, and are the subject of consequential amendments in the Land Transport Management Bill. The provisions of the Land Transport Act 1998, and the proposed consequential amendments, provide for strategies to identify goals and objectives, (identifying needs of the region within the government policy context) and also provide for the strategy to identify the means of responding to those needs. The Bill requires as a consequential amendment that the regional council must be satisfied that it has employed best practice in preparing its strategy and many regional land transport strategies – if not all – have developed measures and targets for achieving their objectives. However, this is not explicitly required in the current and proposed legislation. Therefore it is suggested that the Land Transport Management Bill could be amended to include a requirement for regional land transport strategies to include measures and targets to monitor the achievement of regional transport needs identified in the Strategy.

3. Detailed Assessment

3.1 Section 4 Purpose – Relationship to Reduced Traffic

The purpose of reducing traffic is stated as being to enhance environmental quality and the health, safety and well-being of people and communities. This may not be a direct relationship, and hence developing measures to achieve these ends may be problematic.

3.2 Section 4 Purpose - In Rural Areas

Does reduced traffic achieve the purpose of this Bill in low traffic volume regions i.e. it seems to have an urban focus, whereas most of New Zealand is rural (45% of New Zealand roads by length are unsealed).

3.3 Section 6(3) Minister determines which roads

The Bill requires the New Zealand Transport Strategy to provide for the reduction of motorised road traffic on State Highways and other roads as the Minister sees fit. However “other roads” are owned and funded by local government with a contribution from central government. Therefore for the Minister to have a role in direct intervention of road traffic on local roads is a significant constitutional issue and raises local accountability issues.

3.4 Section 6 (3) and Section 8 (1) Targets and Measures

The Bill requires the development of targets and measures to achieve the targets but there are no sanctions for targets not being achieved. While the Explanatory Note for the Bill discusses binding targets, the Bill itself provides no way by which central government or regional government is able to be bound.

3.5 Section 6 and Section 8 Measuring Reductions

How can the reduction of road traffic within a region be measured? – Vehicle/kilometres travelled? Specific routes? Peak hour volumes? This will depend upon the purpose of the reduction. For example reduced traffic in peak hours can result in increased speeds, and higher accident rates.

3.6 Section 8 Regional Land Transport Strategies-Regional in Nature

Regional Land Transport Strategies are planning frameworks for developing an integrated regional land transport network. These strategies have limited ability to influence demand as current legislation only requires Transit New Zealand’s land transport programmes and local authorities land transport programmes to be not inconsistent with Regional Land Transport Strategies. This does ensure an integrated regional transport system but these Strategies are not able to directly influence improvements to the sub-regional network.

3.7 Section 8 Regional Land Transport Strategies – Minimal Influence on Existing Network

Regional councils do not own roads, hence a Regional Land Transport Strategy only influences alterations to the network at a macro level, and is unable to directly influence the performance of the existing road network.

3.8 Section 12 All forms of Land Transport

The Bill allows the National Rooding Programme to include outputs in capital projects for all forms of land transport. This clearly refers to the additional mode of cycling and pedestrian traffic. As most cycling and pedestrian facilities are funded by local

government from local rates, this new provision for all forms of land transport enables local authorities to apply for financial assistance for all cycling and pedestrian facilities.

3.9 Section 15 Principal Objective of Transit New Zealand

The principle objective of Transit New Zealand includes avoiding significant or irreversible disruption to ecologically sensitive areas or sites, and sites of heritage or cultural value, avoiding significant disruption to existing communities, and minimising the possibility of either increased traffic or more hazardous driver behaviour, and to manage motorised traffic on State Highways to minimise the exposure of vulnerable road users.

Most new roading projects do involve disruption to ecological sites and to existing communities and reconciling these disruptions with the benefit to the community of the project are usually addressed through the Resource Management Act processes. These clauses will essentially prevent most new projects from commencing.

4. Conclusion

This submission suggests that the narrow focus on a reduction of road traffic may not be an effective means of achieving the Government's transport objectives.

Also it is explained that a National Land Transport Strategy and Regional Land Transport Strategies are not particularly effective mechanisms of reducing motorised road traffic. There are many influences at work in society that have an impact on road traffic volumes.

Currently the government is developing a logical policy hierarchy of the New Zealand Transport Strategy, the National Land Transport Strategy, Regional Land Transport Strategies and the Local Land Transport Programme.

This is an appropriate way to achieve the Government's transport objectives and it is recommended that this Bill not be enacted.

Therefore it is recommended that the Government does not enact the Road Traffic Reduction Bill.