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TRANSPORT ISSUES IN THE MANAWATU-WANGANUI REGION

**Initial Consultation Paper for
Regional Land Transport Strategy Review**



July 2009

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INTRODUCTION

1. Legislative Context of the Regional Land Transport Strategy

The Regional Transport Committee (RTC) is a committee of Horizons Regional Council and is made up of representatives of the regional, district and city councils, the NZ Transport Agency, and other representatives of the government's transport objectives.

The Land Transport Management Act 2003 requires regional transport committees to prepare a Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) for the Region.

Core requirements for regional land transport strategies include the following:

A regional transport committee must, when preparing a regional land transport strategy on behalf of a regional council (section 75 of the Act):

- a. ensure that the regional land transport strategy:
 - i. contributes to the aim of achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system; and
 - ii. contributes to each of the following:
 - a. assisting economic development;
 - b. assisting safety and personal security;
 - c. improving access and mobility;
 - d. protecting and promoting public health;
 - e. ensuring environmental sustainability; and
 - iii. is consistent with any;
 - a. national land transport strategy; and
 - b. relevant national policy statement or any relevant regional policy statement or regional plan that is for the time being in force under the Resource Management Act 1991;
 - iv. avoids, to the extent reasonable in the circumstances, adverse effects on the environment; and

- b. take into account:
 - i. the relevant GPS;
 - ii. any national energy efficiency and conservation strategy; and
 - iii. any relevant district plans.

Under section 77 of the Act, a Regional Land Transport Strategy must contain the following matters:

- a. inter-regional and intra-regional transport outcomes relevant to the region;
- b. the strategic options for achieving those outcomes;
- c. an assessment as to how the regional land transport strategy complies with sections 75 and 76 (refer to Appendix 1 for section 76 obligations);
- d. a statement of any relevant regional economic or land-use considerations, and the likely funding of any land transport infrastructure associated with those considerations;
- e. a demand management strategy;
- f. an assessment of the appropriate role for each land transport mode in the region;
- g. an assessment of the role of education and enforcement in contributing to the land transport outcomes;
- h. a statement that identifies any strategic option for which co-operation is required with other regions;
- i. a statement that identifies persons or organisations who should be involved in the further development of strategic options;
- j. measurable targets to be achieved to meet the outcomes of the regional land transport strategy;
- k. a statement provided by an independent auditor of how the process followed by the regional transport committee complied with the requirements of this Act; and
- l. a summary of the policy relating to significance adopted by the regional transport committee under section 106¹.

¹ The regional transport committee must adopt a policy that determines significance in respect of variations made to regional land transport programmes and regional land transport strategies.

1.1 The 2006-2015 Regional Land Transport Strategy

The current Regional Land Transport Strategy was adopted in March 2006 and was valid for a period of ten years, but had to be kept current by being reviewed within three years.² This timeline required an updated strategy to have been in place by March 2009. However an extension of time has been granted by the Minister of Transport, until May 2010.

The 2006-2015 RLTS review was a back-to-basics review of the format and content of the regional strategy, in order to fulfil the requirements of the legislation. It was preceded by a regional transportation study³ to identify key transport issues and trends in the Region.

The RLTS has now been in place for three years. Many of the actions identified for implementation by the various parties to the Strategy are only in their beginning stages and there are still eight years of the “life” of the Strategy to implement. However, the review of the RLTS seeks to determine whether the transport issues and trends identified in 2006 are still timely and relevant and whether the means to address these should change.

In addition to those key issues identified by the last review, there may be other serious challenges for the Region and the nation which may need a greater emphasis in the new strategy.

The Government has updated the New Zealand Transport Strategy in order to better reflect key national and global challenges, particularly the challenge of making New Zealand a truly sustainable nation. The Updated New Zealand Transport Strategy contains clear targets for its key objectives and all regions will need to contribute to these by reflecting these targets in their own regional strategies. Ensuring that our strategy truly reflects national as well as regional priorities will therefore be one of the major challenges of this review.

With the passing of the Public Transport Management Act 2008, regional councils are now required to produce a Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP). Under previous legislation producing an RPTP was not mandatory and the RPTP may have been included as part of the RLTS however, a separate RPTP will be produced in the future.

The 2006-2015 Regional Land Transport Strategy may be downloaded from www.horizons.govt.nz, or a copy obtained by phoning Horizons Regional Council on 0508 800 800.

1.2 Format of Review

We are commencing our review of the RLTS with the release of this paper to discuss transport issues in the Region.

² Since adoption of the RLTS the Land Transport Management Act has been amended. The RLTS must now be valid for a period of 30 years and must be reviewed every six years. Progress reports on implementation of the RLTS must be prepared every three years.

³ The Manawatu-Wanganui Integrated Transportation Study 2004

Its purpose is to:

- examine the vision and objectives from the 2006 RLTS and determine whether these still fit with the region's aims for its transport system;
- outline the transport issues identified during the 2005-06 review;
- examine progress towards resolving the issues since then; and
- revise the key issues to be addressed in the new strategy.

Submissions on this issues paper will be analysed and incorporated into a draft RLTS. The draft will be released for public consultation in late 2009 and it is hoped to have the revised strategy adopted by the RTC in May 2010.

1.3 Questions for Consideration

This document incorporates a number of questions aimed at guiding feedback.

We would like you to include answers to these specific questions in your submission, but you do not have to limit your submission to addressing these points only.

2. Setting the Scene – The Manawatu-Wanganui Region

In order to consider and understand trends and issues for the transport system in the region, it is important to consider the demographic and economic trends which will influence our demands on the transport network.

2.1 Geography

The Manawatu-Wanganui (Horizons) Region is the second largest local authority region in the North Island and the sixth largest in New Zealand, with 10% of New Zealand's land mass contained within its boundaries.

There are seven local authorities that are almost completely contained within the Region, with small portions of Waitomo District, Stratford District and Taupo District also included within regional boundaries.

The seven main authorities are:

- Horowhenua District
- Manawatu District
- Palmerston North City
- Rangitikei District
- Ruapehu District
- Tararua District
- Wanganui District

The Region's physical geography is relatively varied, with the volcanic plateau to the north, the alluvial plains of the Manawatu River to the south and the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges bisecting the length of the Region. Both the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean border the Region.

The Region's climate is comparatively mild with greater extremes of temperature inland. Sunshine hours are in accordance with the national average, with the exception of Palmerston North, which experiences a greater proportion of cloudy days. Rainfall is below the national average, with Palmerston North receiving 960 mm per annum. Rainfall through the rest of the Region varies between 1,000 mm and 2,000 mm per annum.

2.2 Population

At the 2006 Census, the usually resident population of the Region was 222,423⁴, which is a 1.2% decrease on the 1991 population of 225,528.

Table 1 below outlines the population of each district and shows population change since 1991.

⁴ The regional total figure varies slightly from the total population of the seven territorial authorities shown in Table 1, due to differences in district and regional boundaries. For example, part of the Rangitikei District lies within the Hawkes Bay region.

| Territorial Authority | 1991 | 1996 | 2001 | 2006 | Percentage Change since 1991 |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ruapehu | 16,863 | 16,743 | 14,292 | 13,569 | -19.53% |
| Wanganui | 44,703 | 45,042 | 43,269 | 42,636 | -4.62% |
| Rangitikei | 16,578 | 16,356 | 15,102 | 14,712 | -11.26% |
| Manawatu | 27,132 | 28,080 | 27,510 | 28,254 | 4.14% |
| Palmerston North | 70,320 | 73,080 | 73,122 | 75,543 | 7.43% |
| Tararua | 19,851 | 19,068 | 17,859 | 17,634 | -11.17% |
| Horowhenua | 29,811 | 30,147 | 29,820 | 29,868 | 0.19% |
| TOTAL | 225,258 | 228,516 | 220,089 | 222,423 | -1.26% |

Table 1: Usually Resident Population by Territorial Authority.

Statistics New Zealand's population projections (medium growth scenario) indicate an expected increase in the Region's population to an estimated 235,900 people by 2031.

Within this, Palmerston North and Manawatu Districts are expected to show population increases, with the remaining districts likely to continue to experience population decline.

Statistics New Zealand has projected population growth of 15,100 between 2006 and 2031 (medium growth projection) for Palmerston North City, with the city population reaching 93,600 by 2031. The projections show continuing urban drift, with large cities growing faster than smaller cities and rural towns. The medium growth projections for Palmerston North are slightly lower than the national average but are much higher than other regional cities that are smaller than Palmerston North.

All territorial authorities within the Region will have a greater number of people aged over 65 years in 2026, when compared with 2001. This is a reflection of the national trend which will see the national median age rise to 46 years by 2051, compared with 35 in 2004.

This overall aging of the population will have a major influence on the predicted population changes for districts within the Region, with the greatest effects noticeable in the districts which are likely to have the highest median ages. Statistics New Zealand's medium population projection scenario for the Horowhenua District predicts that 34.9% of the population in the district will be over 65 by 2031, up from 19.9% in 2006. Such changes in demographic structure are likely to have a significant impact on the transport needs of the population. Palmerston North will have 18.9% of its population aged 65 and over, compared with 11.46% in 2006.

2.3 The Region's Economy

The Region's economy has performed well in recent years. The growth in Gross Domestic Product to June 2004 was the sixth highest in the country at 5% and significantly above the overall national growth rate of 4.3%.⁵

⁵ National Bank figures

Significant contributors to the Region’s economy are outlined below.

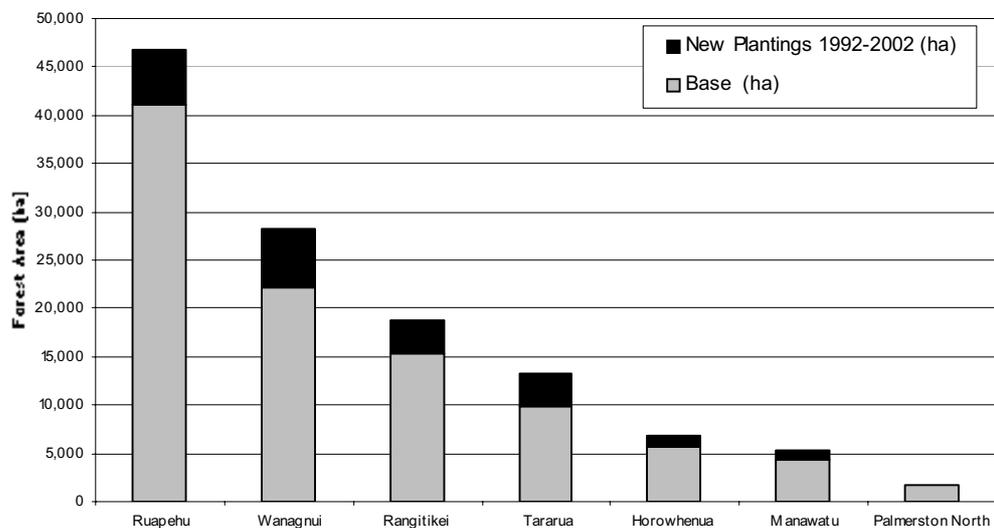
2.3.1 Farming

The Region’s economy is very reliant on agricultural enterprise. Farmland is now used more intensively than in the past, with increased dairy farming (the number of dairy cattle in the Region has increased by 50% over the last ten years) and more intensive drystock production.⁶ Such intensification of land use is likely to have implications for transport networks, with increasing numbers of heavy vehicles servicing these industries.

2.3.2 Forestry

Plantings of exotic forests have increased considerably in the Region over the last ten years, with 20,000 more hectares covered in these forests than in 1997. However, the rate of new plantings has now decreased considerably and there are few new forests being planted.

The Integrated Transportation Study undertaken by Horizons Regional Council in 2004 indicates that while there have been significant new plantings in the Region during this period, any significant “wall of wood” effect is likely to be at least fifteen years away based on the age of the plantings, and that international markets will determine when the wood is harvested. As a result, the most significant effects of forestry will be on local road networks.



Source: Ministry of Forestry, 2003

Figure 1: Area of Plantings by Council (as at 1 April 2003).

⁶ Horizons Regional Council State of the Environment Report for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region 2005.

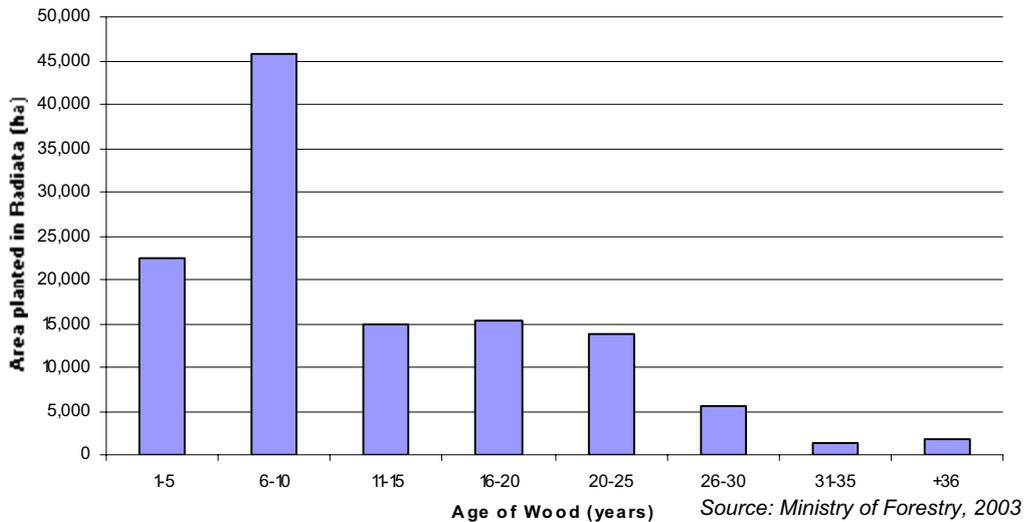


Figure 2: Total Area Planted in Radiata by Age (as at 1 April 2003).

As harvesting of the logs will be driven by national and international market prices, it is difficult to predict harvesting dates. Close liaison between forest owners and local councils will be required to ensure that the effects of harvesting are minimised, and that minor improvements to the network can be implemented where necessary.

2.3.3 Education

Education, particularly in the tertiary sector, is a major industry in the Region, especially in Palmerston North. Massey University, the International Pacific College and Universal College of Learning (UCOL) (previously the Manawatu Polytechnic) are large facilities that attract both national and international students.

Massey University in particular has a significant effect on traffic flows in Palmerston North, with approximately 8,000 students and staff travelling to Massey each day. As Palmerston North has only one river crossing, almost all this traffic flows down Fitzherbert Avenue, and across the Fitzherbert Bridge to Massey. This traffic, coupled with a large secondary school on the same route, causes some congestion at peak times.

The Region also has a significant number of highly regarded secondary schools with boarding facilities that attract pupils from all over New Zealand and overseas.

2.3.4 Tourism

Tourism within the Region accounts for 6% of the total New Zealand market, and is growing at between 0.9% and 1.5% per annum.

Total visits by travellers to Manawatu are forecast to rise from 2,770,000 in 2007 to 2,940,000 million in 2014 - an increase of 6.2% (172,600) or 0.9% pa, while Ruapehu will see the greatest increase – visitor numbers are forecast to rise from 684,100 in 2007 to 757,800 in 2014 - an increase of 10.8% (73,700) or 1.5% p.a.⁷

Within the Region, the principal areas of tourism are in the Ruapehu District (particularly tourism activities on the Volcanic Plateau), Whanganui River Region and Rangitikei.

Despite a decline in permanent population indicated by the Census statistics, Ruapehu District reports a significant increase in the number of building consents issued over the last three years, which may be linked with the Region's increasing popularity as a domestic tourism destination. It is likely therefore that the decline in permanent population is offset at certain times of the year by an increase in the number of visitors to the district.

Tourism in the Region is influenced by national tourism trends, particularly the trend to adventure tourism, and an increase in free independent travellers as opposed to tour groups.

2.3.5 Defence

There are three main defence facilities within the Region with an airforce facility at Ohakea and army bases at Linton and Waiouru.

Plans to make Ohakea the main airforce base in New Zealand, with the closure of Whenuapai Airforce Base in Auckland, have recently been shelved. It is not clear at present what further development may take place at Ohakea and what effect this would have on traffic flows near the base.

2.3.6 Health

Centralisation of health services in recent years has led to a reduction in the hospital services provided in a number of districts in the Region. This necessitates travel to major centres from smaller districts which were previously serviced by local hospitals and has caused transport difficulties for residents in these districts. While the introduction of health shuttles in the Tararua and Horowhenua areas has improved the situation in these areas, other districts such as Ruapehu continue to feel the effects of the withdrawal of hospital services.

2.3.7 Industry Clusters

A number of industry clusters are being promoted in the Manawatu area. These include biotechnology, information technology, call centres and defence supplies. Clusters encourage businesses from within the same sector to locate together, in order to achieve synergy and promote the Region as a centre for this activity. Wanganui, Palmerston North and Feilding are home to a number of significant manufacturing and processing plants.

⁷ Ministry of Tourism Regional Tourism Organisation forecasts 2008-2014

3. Vision and Outcomes of the 2006 Regional Land Transport Strategy

3.1 Vision Statement

The vision statement developed for the 2006 RLTS was:

“A safe transport system that provides choices and opportunities, and contributes to the Region’s economic vitality and easy lifestyle”.

The vision statement reflects the Region’s desire to provide a safe transport system that stimulates growth while maintaining the ease of living which is a key advantage of this Region. It also reflected the desire to provide our residents with transport choices, and to enable them to make full use of the work, social and recreational opportunities provided in this Region.

Question 1 – RLTS Vision Statement

| |
|---|
| <p>i. Does this vision statement still fit with where you would like to see our transport system in the long-term?</p> <p>ii. What else should it include or how should it be altered?</p> <p>iii. How do changes in our Region and in national priorities since 2006 affect this vision?</p> |
|---|

3.2 Objectives

The 2006 RLTS contained the following objectives:

- 1. An efficient, affordable and sustainable transport system that supports economic growth, including tourism.**

This outcome recognises the crucial role that effective transport systems play in supporting the Region’s economy, while acknowledging that this growth cannot be supported by an unsustainable transport system implemented at tremendous financial and environmental cost.

2. An integrated, responsive transport system that provides access by a variety of transport modes, to work, social and recreational opportunities for all sectors of the community.

This outcome recognises the varied transport needs of the Region's residents, some of whom have a high degree of choice and flexibility, and others who have limited options for getting around. It acknowledges the need for increased choice of personal transport in order to reduce dependence on car travel, and recognises the Region's desire to see all residents able to participate fully in daily activities and live healthy, fulfilling lives. It also recognises the need for the transport system to be adaptable to changing circumstances and to respond to the needs of the Region's varied communities.

3. A safe transport system

This outcome recognises that road crashes have a huge social and economic cost to the Region, and that the use of some other modes of transport is declining because of concerns about safety and personal security, whether real or only perceived.

4. A transport system that protects and promotes public health

This outcome recognises the effects that a largely car-based personal transport system is having on our health.

We are less and less physically active, and our transport choices are contributing to this inactivity. The link between physical activity and good health is now well documented, and the use of active transport modes could enable many people to build more physical activity into their daily routines.

Vehicle emissions and other pollutants in some specific locations may reach significant concentrations and contribute to chronic ill health and premature deaths. While the level of transport emissions is not a significant health issue for much of our Region, we must nevertheless acknowledge the likelihood that there are pockets of our urban areas where residents' health is potentially at risk. We need to ensure that this risk does not increase with time.

5. A transport system that protects cultural values and the environment.

This outcome recognises the value the Region places on maintaining and improving the quality of its physical environment and protecting the cultural values of its residents. The transport system must be environmentally sustainable, should not contribute to the degradation of the quality of the environment and should not be in conflict with the cultural values of the Region's peoples.

Question 2 – RLTS Objectives

- i. Are these objectives still relevant?
- ii. Do they place sufficient emphasis on the transport issues the Region is facing in 2009?
- iii. What needs changing? What else is becoming important?

4. Transport Issues in the Manawatu-Wanganui region

4.1 Issues we are already working on

In 2004, a high-level study of our transport system identified a range of transport issues affecting this region, and public consultation through the RLTS development process further defined these key issues.

The table commencing on Page 15 sets out the transport issues identified in the 2006 RLTS, sums up what has been done to address the issue since then and outlines the current situation, including current trends which may have an influence on our transport system into the future. Discussion of emerging national/global issues follows.

We would like your opinion on these transport issues. We would also like to know if there are other transport issues which you feel should be addressed by the revised RLTS.

Please use the questions after the tables to guide your submission.

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Road Safety</p> <p>Further improvements are needed to meet national targets.</p> | <p>Ongoing programmes of road safety education, engineering improvements to regional roads and state highways, and police enforcement programmes.</p> | <p>Deaths and serious injuries in the Region have remained steady over the last five years, i.e. No further improvements in casualty rates have been achieved and the number of casualties in the Region in 2007 was consistent with the five year average.⁸ However, further improvements are required if the Region is to meet its national road safety targets.</p> <p>The Government is commencing its review of the national road safety strategy and its early discussion paper identifies five level priorities to 2020. These are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the impact of drink/drug impaired driving • Increasing the safety of young drivers • Achieving safer speeds • Increasing the safety of motorcycling • Achieving safer roads and roadsides |

⁸ Land Transport New Zealand - Horizons Region Road Safety Report 2003-2007.

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Safety and capacity issues on SH1 south of Levin.</p> | <p>A number of small safety improvements have been undertaken on SH 1 since 2006. NZTA intends to undertake safety improvements at Muhunua Road intersection and a realignment of the Waiauti Bridge during the next three years.</p> | <p>Safety issues on this section of the network continue to be serious. The section of SH1 between Paraparaumu and Levin had 44 crashes between 2002 and 2006 and the accident risk per kilometre of highway is rated as "High", with an annual average of 0.33 serious injury and fatal crashes per kilometre of highway.</p> <p>Growth in average daily traffic on this section has levelled off since 2004⁹. However at certain times, congestion on this section of the route is significant (particularly at holiday times) and there is ongoing conflict between local and state highway traffic in Levin and Otaki, as well as in other residential areas further south.</p> <p>In March 2009, the Minister of Transport identified seven routes of national significance, and includes the Levin to Wellington Airport corridor as one of these routes. Of this route, the Levin to Otaki section is in the Horizons Region. The corridor provides a critical connection for transport movements for the western half of the lower North Island, and includes both rail and road infrastructure, as well as relevant provision for cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>The NZ Transport Agency is considering proposals for the upgrading of the corridor, with the short term priority (next five to ten years) being a range of lower cost solutions and developing a number of higher cost solutions for the longer term, including a mix of four-laning and passing lanes between Levin and Waikanae (including a short bypass of Otaki) and an eastern bypass of Levin, principally on the existing alignment of SH57.</p> <p>A major greenbelt residential area (the Gladstone Growth area) proposed alongside SH 57 on the outskirts of Levin is a significant factor for consideration in these developments.</p> |
| <p>Safety and capacity issues on SH1/SH3 between Bulls and Sanson.</p> | <p>NZ Transport Agency continues to monitor the need for further capacity or safety improvements.</p> | <p>Passing lane improvements and realignments completed in 2005 appear to have successfully lessened the crash rate on this section of the network. No serious or fatal crashes have occurred since 2005 and the number of minor crashes has also decreased.</p> |

⁹ State Highway Traffic Data Booklet 2004-2008

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Safety and level of service issues on SH4.</p> <p>Improvements are required to improve its suitability as a key link between the Wanganui and Ruapehu Districts.</p> | <p>A number of improvements have been incorporated into emergency works required after flood damage over the last three years</p> <p>Some improvements are planned for 2009-2012 including Hapokopoko Stream realignment and the Lismore Corner realignment</p> | <p>Safety issues continue to be prominent – the Kiwi Road Assessment Programme (KiwiRAP) puts the personal risk of having an accident on this route as “High” with 29 serious injury or fatal crashes on this route between 2002-2006.</p> |
| <p>Route efficiency</p> <p>The need to investigate rationalisation of the SH3 route between Mt Stewart and Manawatu Gorge.</p> | <p>No specific progress as yet. However, Transit New Zealand (now NZ Transport Agency) suggested a revised SH3 route between Mt Stewart and Manawatu Gorge in its National State Highway Strategy 2007 and has, in broad terms, described a future alignment for the route.</p> | <p>A bypass route from Mt Stewart which skirts Feilding, passes through Bunnythorpe and Ashhurst before reaching the Gorge continues to be used by a significant amount of inter-regional traffic, including heavy vehicles. However, this route is not at an appropriate standard to function in this manner. This or a similar route alignment may provide a more efficient way for inter-regional traffic to reach the eastern portion of the region than by following the current State Highway into Palmerston North.</p> <p>Horizons, Palmerston North City Council, Manawatu District Council and NZ Transport Agency have agreed to a joint study of the Palmerston North-Manawatu area between Sanson and the Manawatu Gorge. The aim of the study is to develop an evidence-based 30 year strategy to deliver a strategic transport network in this area. The study will test the validity of the proposed regional roading hierarchy and the NZ Transport Agency’s proposal for a State Highway link between Mt Stewart and the Manawatu Gorge (bypassing the Palmerston North urban area). A key outcome of the study report will be a programme of works for the upgrade of the strategic network over the short, medium and long term.</p> |
| <p>East West Connectivity</p> <p>The need to investigate improvements to secondary strategic links that are playing an increasing role as east-west links and alternative routes (Pahiatua Track, Saddle Road, Napier-Taihape Road, Route 40) and for tourism/economic development purposes (Whanganui River Road).</p> | <p>Whanganui River Road and Route 40 seal extensions have commenced and investigations into the Napier-Taihape Rd upgrade are complete. Tararua District Council has included a project to upgrade the Pahiatua Track between Pahiatua and the summit in its Long Term Council Community Plan for 2009-19.</p> | <p>Use of most of these routes remains low and other less direct routes are chosen by most heavy transport and private motorists, as planned improvements are not yet complete. However, those routes which function as alternatives in times of State Highway closure are doing so adequately.</p> |

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Economic Development</p> <p><i>The need to redefine and rationalise strategic links between Feilding and Palmerston North in light of the proposed airport extension and to cater for traffic growth in this corridor.</i></p> <p><i>Civil Aviation Rules have been altered to require a minimum Runway End Safety Area (RESA) at each end of the airport runway. Palmerston North Airport requires a minimum of 90 metres of RESA which must be in place by July 2011. Implementation of the RESA within the airport boundaries would shorten the operational length of the runway and preclude a return to international services, because reduced runway capacity affects the economic viability of these services.</i></p> | <p><i>Progress in resolving this issue has been slow.</i></p> <p><i>In 2006 Palmerston North Airport Ltd (PNAL) issued a Notice of Requirement for a designation over additional land at the western end of the runway to allow for the runway extension. Milson Line is affected by this designation, which is now granted but subject to conditions. PNCC, MDC and the then Transit New Zealand (now the NZ Transport Agency) were parties to the hearing process under the Resource Management Act 1991. There were 130 objections to the proposal to close Milson Line and upgrade other routes between Feilding and Palmerston North to mitigate the effects of this closure.</i></p> <p><i>The road controlling authorities have differed in their views on the best way to mitigate the effects of the runway extension, with Transit favouring a deviation route around the end of the runway. In 2007 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the three road controlling authorities agreeing to a package of works to upgrade routes between Feilding and Palmerston North to cater for the traffic diverted from Milson Line in the event of closure. However, progress on the planning for and implementation of these works was slow.</i></p> | <p><i>Horizons, Palmerston North City Council, Manawatu District Council and NZ Transport Agency have agreed to a joint study of the Palmerston North Manawatu area between Sanson and the Manawatu Gorge. The aim of the study is to develop an evidence-based 30 year strategy to deliver a strategic transport network in this area. The study will test the validity of the proposed regional roading hierarchy and the NZ Transport Agency's proposal for a State Highway link between Mt Stewart and the Manawatu Gorge (bypassing the Palmerston North urban area). A key outcome of the study report will be a programme of works for the upgrade of the strategic network over the short, medium and long term.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Average Daily Traffic counts on SH54 between Feilding and Palmerston North declined slightly between 2004 and 2008 at most points along this route. However Kairanga Bunnythorpe Rd shows 11% growth in traffic since 2004 and carries about 3800 vehicles per day. Commuter traffic from Feilding is a significant contributor to this. 2006 Census data shows that 46% of employed Manawatu District residents do not work within the Manawatu District.</i></p> <p><i>In 2009 the three road controlling authorities were party to a caucus of expert witnesses who collectively agreed that Milson Line could be stopped when a deviation (to an agreed design) around the end of the airport runway becomes operational. However there was also recognition that the authorities would like to progress the upgrade links between Feilding and Palmerston North and a number of amendments to the earlier Memorandum of Understanding were proposed.</i></p> <p><i>A draft Regional Roading Hierarchy endorsed by Regional Transport Committee has attempted to define the strategic network around this area. It is proposed to incorporate the hierarchy into the RLTS at this review. However there is concern that the rationale for some of the proposals reflected in this hierarchy is conceptual and needs to be tested against a thorough analysis of current and predicted transport movements in the area.</i></p> |

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|--|---|--|
| <p>The need to cater for the future growth of Palmerston North in the Eastern Growth Corridor.</p> | <p>PNCC has undertaken an investigation into a new crossing of the Manawatu River in the Te Matai Road area upstream of the city, including a full scheme assessment.</p> <p>A proposal to develop a substantial residential area and a recreational lake on the eastern side of the river has been placed on hold indefinitely and is unlikely to proceed further.</p> | <p>Greenfields residential land in Palmerston North city boundaries is diminishing, with an estimated supply for five years remaining. A decision not to proceed with boundary changes allowing further residential growth in the Cloverlea area of Palmerston North has increased the need for the City to identify other growth areas. However, the flood risk in the Te Matai Road area has caused the Council to request a re-examination of the urban growth strategy. At present there is no strategy for residential growth, although PNCC hopes to have an interim strategy for a further five years' supply of Greenfields land complete by end 2009. A full growth strategy is not expected to be complete before the end of 2011.</p> <p>A proposal to develop a substantial residential area and a recreational lake on the eastern side of the river has been placed on hold indefinitely and is unlikely to proceed further.</p> <p>Uptake of land in the relatively new North East Industrial Area has been substantial. The largest development there, a new Foodstuffs distribution centre, will contribute an estimated 350 truck movements to and from the site each day. The centre will be fully operational by early 2010.</p> <p>The medium population growth projection for Palmerston North is average annual growth of 0.7% between 2006 and 2031. This is only slightly below the national population growth projection of 0.8% per annum¹⁰.</p> |
| <p>Declining use of rail transport through the Region.</p> <p>Improvements are needed to rail network to increase the ability to carry freight.</p> | <p>Tunnel modifications in the Manawatu Gorge are well advanced and once complete will enable the carriage of modern Hi-Cube containers on this section of the network.</p> <p>Similar tunnel improvements at Kai Iwi on the Taranaki Line are expected to be completed in mid 2008.</p> | <p>Tunnel restrictions on both lines have now been corrected and freight movements using Hi-Cube containers are possible.</p> <p>Programmed improvements to rail services in the Greater Wellington region could affect the viability of the Capital Connection commuter train. Improvements including double-tracking and electrification as far north as Waikanae will allow services to operate half hourly to Wellington initially, with an eventual increase in frequency to every fifteen minutes. This provides opportunities for improved connections from Palmerston North to meet trains at Waikanae. Discussions will shortly commence with KiwiRail and other stakeholders about this.</p> |

¹⁰ Statistics New Zealand population projections

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|--|--|---|
| <p>The negative environmental and health impacts of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Declining walking and cycling activity. ▪ Declining use of public transport for commuter trips. | <p>Larger districts in the Region have developed walking and cycling strategies and are working to implement these. Both Palmerston North and Wanganui have implemented a programme of cycle lane construction.</p> <p>A number of walking and cycling programmes have been implemented in schools, including the successful I Move project. These aim to increase the number of children walking or cycling to school and to improve safety for those doing so.</p> <p>Route coverage improvements and increased frequencies have been introduced on the Palmerston North bus service.</p> <p>A number of commuter services have been contracted between smaller and larger centres.</p> <p>Further bus service improvements in Palmerston North are planned for 2009-10.</p> | <p>Journey to Work data from the 2006 Census indicates that in Palmerston North, cycling's share of trips to work has continued to decline.</p> <p>The percentage of people travelling to work by public transport showed an increase in Palmerston North in the 2006 census data of 50% over the 2001 census. However, the overall passenger transport mode share of work trips remains very low, with only 1.6% of trips taken by public transport.</p> <p>Passenger transport use in the region between 2007-08 and 2008-09 increased by 14.7%. Over the last five years the number of passengers carried on subsidised services has increased by 50.5%.</p> |
| <p>Access and mobility issues</p> <p>The ageing population requires more specialised transport services.</p> <p>The need to provide cost effective public transport in rural areas and towns too small to support conventional public transport services.</p> | <p>Total Mobility and specialised community services are provided in many of the region's small towns.</p> <p>A number of community supported public transport services have been initiated and financially supported by the Horizons Regional Council in small towns or between districts. These provide residents with some transport options at a reasonable cost to ratepayers and central government.</p> | <p>2006 Census data further reflects the trend to an ageing population in many parts of the region. Population decline is also being experienced by some of our small towns and provides further challenges for the provision of sustainable public transport.</p> <p>Community concern regarding lack of transport options in some small towns appears to have lessened with the introduction of health shuttles in Horowhenua and Tararua Districts.</p> <p>As the population in the region grows older, use of the Total Mobility scheme is increasing. This trend is also linked with policies to maintain older people in independent living for longer.</p> |

| Issue identified in 2006 RLTS | What has been done to address the issue? | What is the situation now? |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Land Use Issues</p> <p><i>Pressure on rural networks caused by forestry and agricultural traffic.</i></p> | <p><i>An investigative study into forestry issues has commenced in Wanganui District.</i></p> <p><i>Ruapehu District has completed a study into the effects of forestry on its rural networks.</i></p> | <p><i>Increasing intensification of land use (including rural subdivision) continues in the Region and contributes to pressure on rural networks. For example, rural residential development accounted for 13% of all residential development over the 10 year period 1998-2007 within the Palmerston North City boundaries.</i></p> <p><i>Increasing seasonal visitor growth is forecast to result in localised growth of 3% in traffic volumes on some tourist routes in the Ruapehu District.</i></p> |
| <p>Negative impacts of SH traffic on local communities and small town centres.</p> | <p><i>NZ Transport Agency has assisted with the re-development of town centres and improvement of traffic flows in Taihape and Dannevirke.</i></p> | <p><i>No significant concerns are now being raised by local communities.</i></p> |

Question 3

- i. Do you agree these issues are important to the Region?
- ii. Which issues should have the highest priority and why?
- iii. Are we doing enough to address these issues; if not what else should be done?

4.2 What else is important?

4.2.1 Integration of land use and transport planning

The number of cars registered in the region has grown by 18% since 2000. Coupled with high vehicle ownership, the way that cities and towns have developed over the past 50 years is a significant factor contributing to traffic growth on certain sectors of the network.

The mobility offered by motor vehicles supports the growth in low density housing around the periphery of urban areas. Similarly there is a dispersal of jobs and services from city and town centres to other locations. Such changes are associated with increased use of motor vehicles and make it increasingly difficult to provide other viable transport options. There has also been an increase in the number of rural residential developments and lifestyle properties throughout the region and this encourages more vehicle trips.

The ability to choose from a variety of transport modes is being diminished by this trend of dispersed land development. As residential areas move further from urban focal areas the distances become too great to provide viable public transport or for residents to walk or cycle.

It is vital therefore to integrate land use development with transport planning to ensure that the land transport system is protected, affordable and able to provide appropriate access to facilities by a variety of modes. Careful planning over the long term will help to reduce the need to travel and maximise the efficiency of the transport network.

4.2.2 Transport Contribution to Climate Change

Recent scientific evidence has confirmed the urgency of climate change issues and the contribution of transport emissions to this. This means that since 2005, the issue of global warming and the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions made by New Zealand's transport system has become a much higher national priority, and therefore needs to be given far greater prominence in regional strategies. This is especially true for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region where consideration of the environmental effects of transport in 2006 was largely restricted to the specific contributions of our transport emissions to air quality problems in certain parts of the Region.

The 2006 RLTS contained a modest travel demand strategy which the RLTC considered was appropriate to the Region and which was required under the Land Transport Management Act. This strategy contained a number of policies and specific actions aimed at reducing travel demand and encouraging the use of alternative transport modes.

A number of "soft" initiatives to manage travel demand are underway in the Region including:

- the successful iMove programme in schools;
- other school programmes such as Green Footprints in the Rangitikei area and Walktober in Wanganui;
- the trial of school and workplace travel plans in a number of areas; and
- publicity campaigns about sustainable transport options and reducing the need to travel.

Public transport promotion and walking and cycling engineering improvements have also been targeted at improving the use of these transport modes and thereby contribute to reducing car travel.

The revised RLTS should discuss in greater detail the Region's growing contribution to transport emissions. Although it does not face the congestion and network capacity issues confronted by the larger New Zealand cities, there are obvious trends showing that this region's transport contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is increasing also. While petrol sales in the Region have been relatively stable over the last ten years, there has been a significant increase in diesel sales, with 49.7% increase in the Horowhenua, Palmerston and Manawatu districts since 1997.¹¹ The number of vehicles registered in the Region increased by 18.8% between 2000 and 2008.¹² The Region therefore needs to consider what response, if any, it wishes to make to these trends.

¹¹ Fuel Sales Data Palmerston North City, Horowhenua and Manawatu Districts 1997-2009

¹² New Zealand Transport Agency Motor Vehicle Registration Statistics 2008

Question 4

- i. Do you agree that these are important issues for the Region?

- ii. Are there other transport issues which should have greater prominence in the revised strategy?

5. Summary

It is a relatively short time since the 2006-2015 Regional Land Transport Strategy for the Horizons Region was adopted by the Regional Land Transport Committee and Horizons Regional Council. However statutory requirements mean that the Region must review its strategy this year and there have been a number of changes in the region since 2006. We are therefore commencing this review process by taking a fresh look at the Region's transport issues.

Your feedback on what is important for transport in this region is vital. Please use the Submission Form in the back of this document or reproduce the questions asked in it on a separate sheet. You do not need to limit your submission to these questions only.

6. How to make a submission

You may make a submission by:

Email

You can email us your submissions at

rlts@horizons.govt.nz

Write to us

You can write your submission on the submission form overleaf and post it to us for free, or you can write us a letter and send it to

Freepost 217922
RLTS Submissions
Horizons Regional Council
Private Bag 11025
Manawatu Mail Centre
Palmerston North 4442

Submissions close at 5pm on 7 August 2009.

7. Appendix 1 Legislative Requirements

Section 73 Overview of regional land transport strategy

A regional land transport strategy, which is prepared by the regional transport committee on behalf of the regional council every 6 years and covers a period of at least 30 years, enables the regional council to provide guidance on the land transport outcomes sought by the region.

Section 74 Responsibility for preparing and approving regional land transport strategies

At least once in every 6 financial years, the regional council must

- ensure that the regional transport committee prepares, on the regional council's behalf, a regional land transport strategy that covers a period of at least 30 financial years; and
- approve the regional land transport strategy.

Section 75 Core requirements for regional land transport strategies

A regional transport committee must, when preparing a regional land transport strategy on behalf of a regional council, ensure that the regional land transport strategy contributes to the aim of achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system and contributes to each of the following:

- assisting economic development
- assisting safety and personal security;
- improving access and mobility;
- protecting and promoting public health;
- ensuring environmental sustainability; and

is consistent with any

- national land transport strategy;
- relevant national policy statement or any relevant regional policy statement or regional plan that is for the time being in force under the Resource Management Act 1991; and

avoids, to the extent reasonable in the circumstances, adverse effects on the environment; and takes into account

- the relevant GPS;
- any national energy efficiency and conservation strategy; and
- any relevant district plans.

Section 76 Other matters that must be taken into account

When preparing a regional land transport strategy on behalf of a regional council, a regional transport committee must also take into account:

- Any guidelines issued by the Minister of Transport for regional land transport strategies;
- The land transport funding likely to be available within the region for implementing the strategy during the period covered by the strategy;
- The views of affected communities;
- The views of land transport network providers in the region;
- The need to give early and full consideration to land transport options and alternatives in a way that avoids adverse effects to the environment and takes into consideration the views of affected communities;
- The need to provide early and full opportunities for persons and organisations listed in section 78 to contribute to the development of those regional land transport strategies; and
- The need to take into account the regional councils function under the Resource Management Act 1991 to consider the strategic integration of transport infrastructure with land use through objectives, policies and methods.

Section 77 Contents of regional land transport strategies

A regional land transport strategy must contain the following matters:

- inter-regional and intra-regional transport outcomes relevant to the region;
- the strategic options for achieving those outcomes;
- an assessment as to how the regional land transport strategy complies with sections 75 and 76;
- a statement of any relevant regional economic or land-use considerations, and the likely funding of any land transport infrastructure associated with those considerations;
- a demand management strategy;
- an assessment of the appropriate role for each land transport mode in the region;
- an assessment of the role of education and enforcement in contributing to the land transport outcomes;
- a statement that identifies any strategic option for which co-operation is required with other regions;
- a statement that identifies persons or organisations who should be involved in the further development of strategic options;
- measurable targets to be achieved to meet the outcomes of the regional land transport strategy;
- a statement provided by an independent auditor of how the process followed by the regional transport committee complied with the requirements of this Act; and

- a summary of the policy relating to significance adopted by the regional transport committee under section 106.

Section 78 Consultation requirements

When preparing a proposed regional land transport strategy on behalf of a regional council, a regional transport committee must consult:

- the adjoining regional councils and territorial authorities;
- the approved organisations in the region;
- the Secretary;
- the Agency;
- the Commissioner;
- the New Zealand Historic Places Trust;
- the New Zealand Railways Corporation;
- representative groups of land transport users and providers (including representative groups of coastal shipping users and providers);
- the Ministry of Health;
- the Accident Compensation Corporation;
- the district health boards in the region;
- affected communities;
- Māori of the region; and
- the public in the region.

In carrying out the consultation required above, a regional transport committee must:

- act in accordance with the consultation principles set out in the Local Government Act 2002; and
- use the special consultative procedure set out in the Local Government Act 2002.

A regional transport committee complies with the above if the required consultation on the regional land transport strategy is carried out in conjunction with the relevant regional council's consultation on its long-term council community plan or its annual plan under the Local Government Act 2002.

An approved organisation and the New Zealand Transport Agency must assist a regional transport committee that is preparing a regional land transport strategy by giving the regional transport committee any reasonably requested information that the regional transport committee needs in order to prepare the regional land transport strategy.

Section 79 Process for approving regional land transport strategies

A regional transport committee that has prepared a regional land transport strategy on behalf of a regional council must, after it has consulted under section 78, lodge the regional land transport strategy with the regional council.

The regional council may, after considering a regional land transport strategy that has been lodged with it decide

- to approve the regional land transport strategy without modification; or
- to refer the regional land transport strategy back to the regional transport committee with a request that the regional transport committee reconsider 1 or more of the aspects of the regional land transport strategy.

If a regional council refers a regional land transport strategy back to its regional transport committee, the regional transport committee may, after reconsidering the aspects referred back to it by the regional council in its request, forward to the regional council either or both of the following:

- an amended regional land transport strategy that has been consulted on in accordance with section 78:
- any additional information that has been requested by the regional council or that the regional transport committee considers will help the regional council with its decision.



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