

Hon Simeon Brown

Minister for Energy
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Transport
Minister for Auckland
Deputy Leader of the House



COR064

Daran Ponter
Chair
Wellington Regional Council
Daran.Ponter@gw.govt.nz

Dear Daran,

Thank you for your email of 1 December 2023 about your local government and transport concerns. I appreciate you providing me with the attached transport and local government briefing. I have passed it onto my officials for their information.

I have responded to each of your concerns below as you have listed them.

Public transport

Halt the degradation of Wellington's Rail Network infrastructure

We all want to see Wellington's metro network running reliably. I understand officials from the Ministry of Transport, the New Zealand Transport Agency, KiwiRail, and the Wellington Regional Council (the Council) have been working proactively to clarify the problems and decisions that need to be made.

Unlock housing growth through additional public transport funding

To make sure we fully maximise our existing and planned investment in public transport, we want to see local government increase mixed-use, medium- to high-density development at transit stops, city and metropolitan centre zones, and along key public transport corridors.

Partner with our region to leverage Roads of National Significance for housing and industrial growth

The Government is committed to unlocking land for urban development inside and around our cities, building infrastructure, and making sure communities share in the benefits of growth. The re-introduction of the *Roads of National Significance* programme will ensure that key connections are provided so that Kiwis can get to where they need to go, quickly and safely.

Invest more in public transport to reduce transport emissions

We are committed to delivering improvements to increase capacity and reliability on Lower North Island train services for passengers and freight.

My officials have work underway on developing the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, as well as the second Emissions Reduction Plan. I encourage the Council to engage with the draft content in these documents and provide feedback to officials.

Reduce congestion and emissions through national road pricing (congestion charging).

I am working with my officials to look at what opportunities exist to help manage the demand of our transport networks during peak times.

Second Mount Victoria tunnel and Basin Reserve Upgrade

I am aware the Basin Reserve improvements are a priority for you and the Wellington City Council. The Government also considers this a priority and will be working on this and an additional Mount Victoria tunnel, as part of developing the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport.

Cook Strait ferry terminals

We have recently announced that an expert advisory group is being established to provide the Government with independent advice and assurance on KiwiRail's inter-island ferry service. We have also asked the Ministry of Transport to lead an assessment of long-term requirements to ensure a resilient connection across the Cook Strait, to connect people and enable freight.

Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi – RiverLink

We understand the Hutt City Council is facing affordability challenges for its share of the project. Given cost escalations for the Crown share of the project, we have recommended further value engineering to identify possible project savings which would assist the Hutt City Council to meet its funding share.

Optimising outcomes from state highway investment

Halt ferrets and other pest migration into Wellington via State Highways

Officials from the Ministry of Transport are not aware of any issues regarding ferrets and other pests accessing the Wellington region using the State Highway network.

Enable public good outcomes on Transmission Gully Motorway land surplus to requirements

This property remains with the Transmission Gully Project as there are still project obligations to be completed.

Marine transport safety

Maritime Inspection is a key part of Maritime New Zealand's role as the regulator for maritime and port safety, security and the environment. Maritime New Zealand reported in its 2022/23 Annual Report that 83.52 percent of ships inspected met its Port State Control high-risk criteria against a target of 70 percent.

Local Government

I understand that local government faces funding challenges, as well as the issues regarding three waters and flooding infrastructure. I appreciate the clear message we have received through this briefing.

You have also noted that you are interested in city deals and regional deals. Standing up this model is a priority for the Government this term, and we are committed to exploring what this looks like in a way that best fits the needs of each community and region.

At this stage, the Government is committed to progressing the contents of the 100-day plan. I look forward to discussing the other issues you have identified when further progress on these priorities has been made.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simeon Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Local Government