

# MANAWATŪ -WHANGANUI

## AT A GLANCE

Our focus in Manawatū-Whanganui is on supporting urban growth and regional development initiatives. We will work with partners to encourage increased use of public transport, walking and cycling, particularly in Palmerston North, manage the impacts of climate change, deliver safe and reliable inter-regional journeys and provide appropriate levels of service across all transport networks.



### IMPROVE URBAN FORM

Much of the region's growth is expected on the edge of Palmerston North and Feilding, and in Levin.



### TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY

Massey University creates significant daily transport flows between city and campus. Selected free bus services have helped increase use of public transport. Journeys to work by foot or bike are twice the national average at 14%.<sup>40</sup>



### SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS

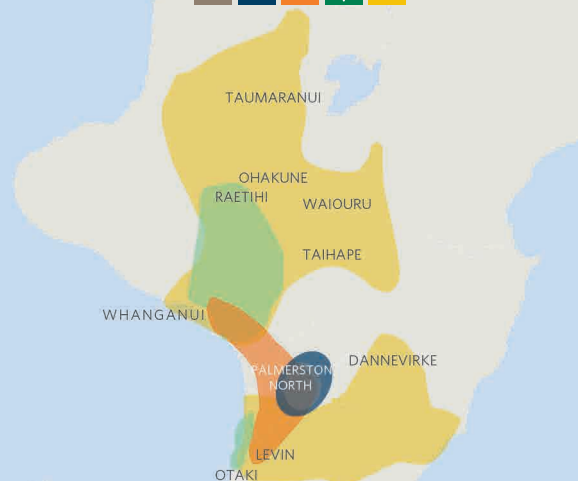
The Manawatū-Whanganui safety record is relatively poor. Head-on and run off road crashes, high risk intersections and driver behaviour are primary contributors.<sup>36</sup> Focus is needed on the Palmerston North, Whanganui and Levin urban areas and state highways that link them.



### TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

The impacts of climate change will make managing network resilience increasingly challenging. Rain and drought conditions will affect highly-erodible land, while sea level rise will impact coastal communities. Transport carbon emissions per capita are above average, reflecting the volumes of through traffic, particularly freight using the region's road networks.<sup>37</sup>

#### KEY



### SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The region has high unemployment rates and comparatively low median household income.<sup>38</sup> Access to education, healthcare and employment must improve, particularly in the north and east of the region, to deliver better social and economic outcomes.

The region has nationally significant connections for the movement of freight and tourists. We will continue to support inter-regional connectivity, especially road and rail freight connections to key ports and hubs. Our focus is also on providing appropriate infrastructure and services to support visitor destination management initiatives.



**238,797**

REGIONAL  
POPULATION<sup>17</sup>

**7.2%**  
REGIONAL  
POPULATION  
GROWTH  
2013-18<sup>17</sup>

**5.1%**  
OF NATIONAL  
POPULATION<sup>17</sup>  
2018



**7.7%**  
OF NATIONAL  
DEATHS  
& SERIOUS  
INJURIES (DSI)<sup>36</sup>

**202** TOTAL DSI<sup>36</sup>  
2017/18



**6%**  
OF NATIONAL  
VEHICLE  
EMISSIONS<sup>37</sup>



**3.8%**  
OF NATIONAL  
GROSS  
DOMESTIC  
PRODUCT  
YEAR END  
MARCH 2018<sup>38</sup>

**5.2%**  
REGIONAL  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE

**4.1%**  
NATIONAL RATE  
YEAR END  
JUNE 2019<sup>36</sup>

## MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI TODAY

MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI IS THE SIXTH-MOST POPULOUS REGION IN THE COUNTRY WITH AROUND 238,000 RESIDENTS.<sup>17</sup> IT IS A LARGE, DIVERSE REGION EXTENDING FROM LEVIN IN THE SOUTH TO TAUMARUNUI IN THE NORTH, AND FROM WHANGANUI IN THE WEST TO THE EAST COAST.

Palmerston North is the largest centre and provides a service hub supporting surrounding areas. Tertiary education, research, logistics and military activities are significant contributors to Palmerston North’s economy. Whanganui, Levin and Feilding are the region’s other main urban centres. Outside of the main urban areas, primary production is the key economic driver with tourism critical to the economy of the Ruapehu District.

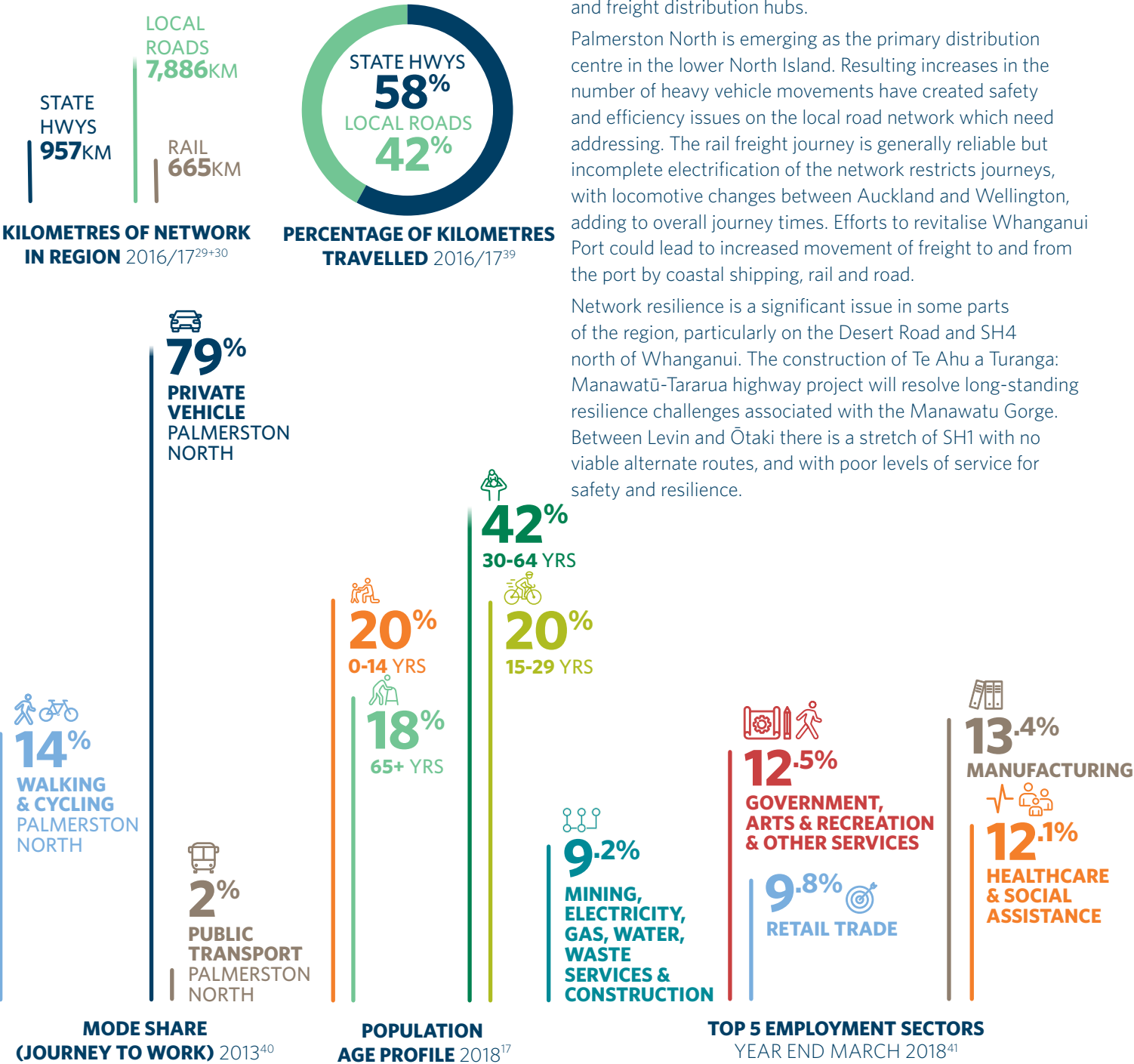
The region has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, the second-lowest median household income. Manawātū-Whanganui is a surge region, identified by the government as needing investment and eligible for investment from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF).

While the region generally has good access to essential services, communities in the north and east face some challenges accessing specialist services located in Whanganui and Palmerston North.

The region is located at the centre of the road and rail networks which connect Hawke’s Bay, Wellington, Taranaki and the upper and lower North Island. These connections are a key economic lifeline, enabling the movement of people and goods between key centres of production, consumer markets and freight distribution hubs.

Palmerston North is emerging as the primary distribution centre in the lower North Island. Resulting increases in the number of heavy vehicle movements have created safety and efficiency issues on the local road network which need addressing. The rail freight journey is generally reliable but incomplete electrification of the network restricts journeys, with locomotive changes between Auckland and Wellington, adding to overall journey times. Efforts to revitalise Whanganui Port could lead to increased movement of freight to and from the port by coastal shipping, rail and road.

Network resilience is a significant issue in some parts of the region, particularly on the Desert Road and SH4 north of Whanganui. The construction of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawātū-Tararua highway project will resolve long-standing resilience challenges associated with the Manawatu Gorge. Between Levin and Ōtaki there is a stretch of SH1 with no viable alternate routes, and with poor levels of service for safety and resilience.



## MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI TOMORROW

The region's population is projected to grow by approximately 17,000 to 248,000 in 2043, with most of it located in Palmerston North and Feilding.<sup>1</sup> Low-growth or decline is projected in all other parts of the region, but it is possible that Levin could continue to grow with the spillover of growth from Kapiti.<sup>1</sup>

The region's population is getting older, consistent with the national trend. The Horowhenua District, and in particular Levin, is actively positioning itself as a destination for retired residents. By 2043, 36% of the district's population is forecast to be over 65-years. Enabling access for senior residents will be important.<sup>1</sup>

The aging population and the region's high unemployment rate will place even greater pressure on councils' ability to maintain and fund new infrastructure and provide appropriate services to residents.

The regions' economic drivers are expected to remain relatively consistent. Employment in service industries will grow in the larger urban centres, with primary production important in other areas. Improved inter-regional connections will support Palmerston North's growing distribution function, although a shift to rail might be needed in the transition to a low-emissions economy. Tourism is forecast to grow in the short-term.

Improved access to data and information will help us better manage the existing transport system and share information with customers. The potential of emerging technologies such as shared transport to move people around is yet to be determined.

Increased coastal erosion, sea level rise, storm surges, flooding, and storms are predicted to intensify over the next 30 years increasing risk to the road and rail network, parts of which are already vulnerable.

### KEY INSIGHTS

- Palmerston North is forecast to receive moderate levels of growth. Levin is also growing as housing supply and rental affordability pressures push lower-income residents out of Wellington. It is important that growth in housing and employment, and the location of new facilities is accommodated in a way that minimises the need to travel long distances and reduces private vehicle use in the urban area.
- Palmerston North is emerging as the primary distribution centre for the lower North Island. Increasing heavy vehicle movements are reducing safety and efficiency of local road networks. The potential development of a direct rail siding into the distribution area in the north-east would enable rail to play a greater role in the movement of freight.
- Due to its central location the region's networks carry significant volumes of through traffic. Providing safe and reliable links south to Wellington and east to Napier Port is particularly important to enable movement of people and goods.
- The region's safety record is relatively poor in terms of total deaths and serious injuries, with a need to focus on the Palmerston North, Whanganui and Levin urban areas, the state highways that connect them, and high-risk rural roads.
- Network resilience is a particular issue and more intense storm events resulting from climate change will worsen existing challenges, including areas with unstable terrain north of Whanganui. The impacts of sea level rise will also increase for low-lying coastal communities.
- Forest harvests across the region are increasing freight movements and impacting on the condition of local road networks.
- Transport can support improvements in regional development by improving access to employment and essential services for remote communities in the north and east of the region, and by supporting industry growth.

## FOCUS OF EFFORT: 2018-21

Working with industry, local government and local communities we will look to progress the Palmerston North Integrated Transport Improvements project to assist in building resilience and providing a safer, more effective connection between key industrial areas, and improve access and safety for those travelling by foot and bike.

The Urban Cycleways Fund will accelerate projects in Whanganui and a new pedestrian and cycle bridge, and new shared paths in Palmerston North to link the main residential areas and central business district with Linton Military Camp, the Crown Research Institutes and Massey University.

Manawatū-Whanganui has been the recipient of substantial PGF investment for several projects such as a cycle-walkway strategy, a NZ Supply Chain Study Funding, and implementation funding for a farmer-driven programme to improve the cultural, environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the Rangitikei district.





Delivery of safety upgrades on SH1 from Ōtaki to Levin and along the southern portion of SH57, as well as advancing the designation for a new SH1 corridor from Ōtaki to north of Levin.

Work is continuing on Te Ahu a Turanga (SH3 Manawatu Gorge Highway), which will provide a safe and reliable connection to Hawke's Bay.

The revitalisation of the Whanganui Port Area will contribute to the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the Whanganui area. There is a need to identify and secure existing and future uses of the port area, including upgrading Wharf One.

### LEGEND

-  Safety project
-  Walking and cycling project
-  Resilience project
-  Access project

-  Key routes
-  Project delivered
-  Project underway
-  Project in pipeline



## SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (HIGH)

Manawatū-Whanganui is a priority for support through the PGF, particularly areas outside Palmerston North and Manawatu District. To support regional growth, enable improved access to education and employment, and to help raise standards of living, we will:

- continue to support inter-regional connectivity
- contribute to visitor destination management plans and provide transport infrastructure and services that improve access and mitigate the impact of increased visitors
- support freight initiatives that are multi-modal, efficient and safe, such as the Whanganui Port revitalisation and Central North Island Regional Growth Hub
- complete and promote walking and cycling trail plans such as the Tararua Tourism and Trails Strategy and a connected network of cycle and walking trails
- Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū-Tararua highway project and Ōtaki to north of Levin are the top priorities for the region.

## SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS (MEDIUM)

We will support implementation of the Road to Zero Safety Strategy for New Zealand and regional strategies, with an emphasis on:

- safety interventions targeting high-risk intersections, and run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads
- target road policing and behaviour change programmes with a focus on alcohol and drug impairment, people not wearing seatbelts and speeding
- speed management to provide safe and appropriate speeds on high-risk rural roads. Targeted use of safety cameras to reduce speeding.

## HEALTH

Our primary focus around health is reducing harmful emissions in urban areas through improved urban form, increasing access to and use of public transport, walking and cycling, and other initiatives to reduce overall emissions. We will also continue to work to ensure that the noise impacts of transport are appropriately managed through a mix of land-use planning and mitigation works.

## TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY (MEDIUM)

Projected population growth in Whanganui will increase travel demand on the region's networks and provides opportunities to support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Our focus will be on supporting:

- improvements to walking and cycling networks, with a focus on providing safe and efficient access to and within main activity centres and to education facilities, and linking existing infrastructure to provide connected networks

- public transport services, including on-demand, where they provide access to employment and essential services, are a more affordable transport option and/or help shape a more thriving city
- proposals to address the increasing need for services targeting mobility for senior residents, particularly in the Horowhenua
- development of the Palmerston North Network Operating Framework as a tool for optimising network performance
- opportunities to increase the proportion of freight on rail as part of improving access growing distribution hubs.

## IMPROVE URBAN FORM (MEDIUM)

While our focus is on multi-agency partnerships in major urban centres, we recognise the potential for growth in and around Palmerston North to support a safe and thriving city, with increased access to public transport, walking and cycling options and reduced carbon emissions. We will:

- engage in planning processes to ensure that land-use patterns reduce dependence on private vehicles, limit the need to travel long-distances to access employment and services, and limit carbon emissions
- influence land use decisions and integrate land-use and transport planning to support safe and efficient freight movements to key freight hubs.

## TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE (MEDIUM)

We will continue to work to understand the opportunities to support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### ADAPTATION

We will focus on:

- working together on implementing Horizons' 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy
- engaging locally in area and climate change planning to discourage location of development and infrastructure in high risk locations
- enabling continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance and renewals
- enabling rapid recovery following disruption to the land transport system.

### MITIGATION

We will focus on:

- ensuring planning for growth supports reduced carbon emissions by reducing the need to travel, and average trip length
- ensuring network design makes the best use of existing systems to manage demand and reduce emissions by prioritising the movement of public transport and low emission options, and actively managing speed, urban freight and congestion
- challenging transport and urban development proposals, including investment for infrastructure and services, that are projected to increase emissions in the long term.