

18 February 2020

NZ Transport Agency  
Arataki Project Team

File ref: TTP 02 01  
LMS

Via email only  
[arataki@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:arataki@nzta.govt.nz)

Dear Sir/Madam

## **HORIZONS REGIONAL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE FEEDBACK ON ARATAKI VERSION ONE**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the first version of Arataki. This feedback is made on behalf of the Horizons Regional Transport Committee (RTC) which consists of representatives from:

- Horizons Regional Council;
- Horowhenua District Council;
- Manawatu District Council;
- Palmerston North City Council;
- Rangitikei District Council;
- Ruapehu District Council;
- Tararua District Council;
- Whanganui District Council; and
- The New Zealand Transport Agency

On the whole we support the concept of Arataki in setting the long term view for land transport in New Zealand. We have focussed our efforts and comments on the Regional Summary for the Manawatū-Whanganui region.

We consider the Regional Summary provides a reasonable outline of the current state and pressures for our region, however the future focus doesn't seem to fully align with this or our own strategic view. There are a few key projects that are either not included or adequately emphasised. With this in mind, the RTC makes the following notes and comments:

- The regional summary talks about supporting regional development and recognises the strategic role the region plays in the movement of people and freight north, east, west and south. However, it does not mention or recognise the importance of tying all of the links together via the Palmerston North Integrated Transport Improvements, specifically the Regional Freight Ring Road. This project is critical to ensuring safe and efficient movement of freight and people around our region, particularly from the east (once the Te Ahu a Turanga project is complete), from the South (once the Otaki to North of Levin highway is in place) and to the north west through the increasingly congested Sanson to Bulls corridor. It will also be crucial in ensuring the significant investment central government is putting into the Kiwirail Regional Freight (Rail) Hub is successful. Put simply,

the Regional Freight Ring Road is a strategically vital piece of the puzzle and without it, the NZ Transport Agency's goals of supporting regional development and improving road safety will not be achieved.

- Further to the above, it is noted that the Capital Connection passenger rail service (or passenger rail in general) has not been identified in the Regional Summary. The capital connection service provides an important link between Palmerston North and Wellington for weekday commuters. It also provides transport choice, which, given the congestion and resilience issues on State Highway 1 between Levin and Wellington is vital. Significant investment at both the local and central government level has been committed to enable this service to continue in the short term while a longer term solution is identified and able to be implemented. This signals the value of the service from both a local and national perspective.

While not as much energy or funding has been committed at this point, we also see passenger rail to the north of our region to also be important long term to provide another mode of travel on a network that already exists and could support the tourism industry in the Ruapehu district as well as reducing emissions and improving road safety.

For this reason, we consider that passenger rail and its importance for the region should be included in the regional summary as an area of focus for our region.

- The summary has identified significantly reducing harm (e.g. improving road safety) as a medium priority. It is our view that this should be given a high priority rating, particularly since the summary identifies that the road safety record for our region is 'poor'. Further to this, the summary highlights that focus is needed on the Palmerston North, Whanganui and Levin urban areas and the state highways that link them. This however is not translated in the areas of focus at the rear of the summary. The focus appears to be on high risk rural roads, but this needs to be extended to local roads and connecting state highways as the issue isn't exclusive to rural roads.

It should also be recognised that good connections (e.g. the Regional Freight Ring Road) and better use of other modes such as rail and public transport will increase the safety of our urban and local roads by lessening the pressure on these corridors.

- The regional summary projects moderate population growth for Palmerston North and lower growth for Levin (with an ageing population forecast for the Horowhenua). This does not then flow on to the areas of focus. The goal of transforming urban mobility is given a medium priority and lists the matters NZ Transport Agency will focus on supporting. While the RTC supports this, it is noted that the only reference to urban growth is in Whanganui, implying that some of the initiatives that will be supported only apply to Whanganui. This does not match with previous commentary in the regional summary which refers to growth in Palmerston North and Levin.

It is our strong view that this section needs to also refer to Palmerston North, Levin and possibly Feilding (given it is a satellite town for P.N) as areas of projected population growth and the demand this places on the region's networks. This will ensure that improvements to walking and cycling networks and public transport services also applies to our other main centres. This will in turn improve road safety and help tackle climate change (other areas of focus identified in the regional summary).

Further, it is noted that our region has been identified as one of five surge regions by the Government, due to forecasted high population growth. The RTC notes this is not translated in the regional summary and consider that it should be as it tells a more accurate story of projected growth in our region.

- The issues associated with lack of access for an ageing population is identified in the regional summary. However, in the areas of focus, only Horowhenua is identified as a focus for improving mobility for senior residents. Given the isolation of some of our

northern communities who also face an ageing population, this needs to refer to the Ruapehu district as well.

- The summary highlights that the region has a high unemployment rate and comparatively low median household income. It notes that access to education, employment and healthcare must improve, particularly in the North and East of the region. The RTC agrees that this is needed and support the area of focus included under the 'Transform Urban Mobility' priority/focus.
- The RTC notes that the regional summary identifies our region as having twice the national average of journeys to work by foot or bike. This is excellent but momentum and focus on this area should remain to ensure active transport continues to increase and be a viable mode of transport in our urban centres, particularly given our vehicle emissions are higher than the national average.

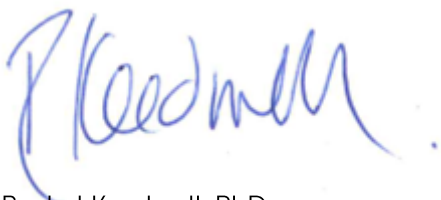
The RTC would like to see greater focus on enabling walking and cycling, as well as other active transport modes in our region included in the areas of focus in the regional summary.

- The RTC notes the regional summary highlights that transport carbon emissions are higher than the national average, likely due to the volume of through traffic and freight using our networks. While this may be the case, a focus on providing other lower carbon emission options for freight and other vehicle movements is important so that we can aim to reduce the carbon emissions in our region as well as nationally.

Overall, the RTC generally supports the regional summary for the Manawatu-Whanganui region and thank the NZ Transport Agency for signalling its commitment to supporting improving transport outcomes in our region. With some fine-tuning we are confident the regional summary will reflect both the government and our own strategic goals for land transport in the region.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet and further discuss the matters raised in this letter. To arrange a meeting or for further information on the matters raised, please contact Horizons Regional Council's Transport Services Manager, on 0508 800 800.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Keedwell, PhD  
CHAIR  
HORIZONS REGIONAL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE