

## Further Information on s 175 Assessment of Western Corridor Options

**TO: RLTC members, cc GWRC Councillors**

**FROM: Cr T McDavitt**

**20 April 06**

### **Attachment: Trial s 175 Assessment Template for Western Corridor options**

1. I am putting this together in response to questions raised, as I have access to the notes and background material required. The questions raised request assessment detail on s 175 matters, and (from LTNZ) how many s 175 criteria the TG option actually meets. The checklist attached is the quickest digestible response without writing a major essay. Each line has a story, but refer to the WCHS report for the authoritative story. The checklist format simply puts it all together on one page. The template presented is a typed version of one I made during WCHS deliberations after the hearings, checked against notes produced at the time.
2. Note though that the WCHS itself decided not to follow through the assessment template or even the checklist approach, which is why it is not presented, and is reported here as only a trial assessment. During hearings we had discussed the possibility of an assessment based more on the approach in the Major Projects Review than the Planning Balance Sheet, and that was why I was making notes in this format. But the same panel discussion concluded it was neither necessary nor possible in our circumstances to produce a satisfactory assessment. An assessment would require more technical analysis and resource than the WCHS had available to it, or brief for. Panel discussion had identified the key points of difference between the options, and the panel decided instead to take a layered narrative approach to presenting these. As the trial assessment records, those key points are 2 b iv (public health) and v (environmental sustainability), 2 e (avoid adverse effects) and f (views of communities), 2 d (funding available) and the RLTC insert (affordability/efficiency), hence the panel report stresses and weighs those key points of difference.
3. Advice to the WCHS (reported in 3.52 of the report), was that in the end it is for the decisionmakers to weigh the influence of all factors, having received as much information about each as they could reasonably get, and exercise their judgement transparently. Accordingly the WCHS reports its own summary of s 175 matters in 1.21 and 1.61 of the report.
4. Some explanatory description of the trial assessment is necessary. The issue being assessed was central section roading unreliability and periodic often offpeak congestion. The base comparison is against “2016 domin”, the projected situation in 2016 with the current route plus Mana clearways, Centennial Highway Median Barrier, and minor safety works. (There was modelling evidence around the effects of 2016 domin). The threshold for yes/no was whether the proposal being assessed would see an improvement over 2016 domin conditions on that criterion – there was plenty of evidence

around that. The packages assessed were the 3 that had degrees of technical or submitter support – “Coastal” is the full Coastal Upgrade plus rail improvement as in the proposed plan, “TG” is Transmission Gully plus the rail improvements in the proposed plan, and “Rail-only” is enhanced rail especially extended double-tracking and extra capacity, with domin minor safety works on the current road. Following the MPR approach rather than the PBS, there is no weighting – it is for decisionmakers to weigh factors. The panel did worry about double-counting – safety gets counted twice, the NLTS twice, and environmental matters three times – but that is inherent in the Act.

### Response to Particular Questions

5. In summary the trial assessment demonstrates that there are no perfect answers. This issue would have been resolved long ago if there were. Considering the entire range of s 175 and the objectives section 2b, the TG option is superior on a raw unweighted count, showing quite a few strengths and a major weakness around funding availability. (This answers the LTNZ question.) The assessment also demonstrates that the problem with the Coastal option is not that it is especially low on strengths, ie it is a reasonable option to consider, but that it has weaknesses around the social and environmental issues embedded in s 175 2 b, e and f. The Rail option also has acknowledged strengths, but when considered against the entire range of s 175 it also has weaknesses around accessibility, economic development, funding and responsiveness issues. Refer 4.113f of the panel report.
6. It is apparent that the template approach forced some assessment of each of the questions now raised by environmental sustainability representatives and advocates. Admittedly, answers are often “we simply do not have sufficient information to judge”, eg refer the Energy Efficiency Strategy line, where there was no information in the technical background, none in the submissions and no submission at all from EECA, so the trial assessment was we cannot determine. A similar situation occurred with the RPS line.
7. It is my interpretation from the report that the balance of the panel did not see these matters as “killers”. I record my doubt as to whether these factors can apply easily to assessing competing investment projects. My preference is that these factors apply to the RLTS as a whole, as in the approach taken to the process matters in s 175 2 h-q. NEECS for example applies to characteristics of the national vehicle fleet, and the same fleet would use either road.
8. In support of that and in conclusion I go back to the guiding advice. It is for decisionmakers to weigh the influence of all factors, having received as much information about each of them as they can reasonably get. I have to observe that each group that has assessed project options (MPR, project team, WCHS, RLTC) has come back to the 5 objectives in s 175 2 b as central, and that the TG option is the only one to “pass” all 5 in the trial assessment.

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