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Committee Regional Land Transport Committee
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Draft submission on Sustainable Transport, Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy Discussion Paper

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's agreement to a submission being made to the Ministry of Transport (MoT) on the *Sustainable Transport, Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy (Sustainable Transport)* Discussion Paper (attached for your information in **Attachment 1**). The draft submission will also be considered by the Council's Transport and Access Committee. Recommendations from both Committees will be considered by the Regional Council, before approving a final submission.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3) (b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

This year the government intends to publish an Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy (UNZTS). According to MoT officials, this update is intended to:

- *“provide direction for the transport sector until 2040 in the context of the government’s sustainability agenda and other government strategies in the areas of energy and energy efficiency;*
- *translate that direction into high-level targets for the transport sector and intermediate targets for sub-sectors (air, sea, road, vehicle fleet, rail, freight, public transport, walking and cycling) to help achieve the high-level targets;*
- *provide clearer guidelines for decisions about funding allocations; and*

- *contain an action plan, including accountabilities for actions, reflecting how it is intended to reach the transport targets.”*

The MoT has released a discussion document, Sustainable Transport, which it says is “*an important first step towards updating the New Zealand Transport Strategy (NZTS). Its purpose is to set out the issues and propose a series of transport specific targets already decided by the government in the areas of sustainability, energy and climate change*”.

The discussion document will be of particular interest to the Regional Land Transport Committee given the potential implications for the direction of future Regional Land Transport Strategies (RLTS) and funding of the Regional Land Transport Programme. The Transport and Access Committee will also be considering the discussion document with its particular interest in the public transport local share funding implications that will come from the discussion document.

The MoT has signalled that this may be the only significant opportunity that stakeholders will have to submit on this important update. The closing date for submissions is 29 February 2008. The draft submission is in **Attachment 2**.

4. Comment

The discussion document is intended to build on the current NZTS’s direction of “*creating a sustainable transport system that is also affordable, integrated, safe and responsive to our needs*” through the five objectives of:

- Assisting economic development;
- Assisting safety and personal security;
- Improving access and mobility;
- Protecting and promoting public health; and
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.

These objectives are contained in the Land Transport Act 1998 as matters RLTS must take into account.

The submission notes concern about the complexity of transport planning and the need for Central Government to provide clear policy. It does not appear this clarity, especially the identification of Government priorities for the transport investment, will be achieved through the update. The issue of affordability has not been addressed by the discussion document and this has been identified as a significant issue for the Wellington Region.

The draft submission notes that given the comprehensive list of proposed targets set out in the discussion document, it is questionable whether the government should in fact be developing a National Land Transport Strategy. Including the proposed targets as part of a National Land Transport Strategy would mean that the relevant transport agencies would be required by the Land Transport Act to develop their strategies consistent with achieving the proposed targets, whereas a NZTS holds no statutory weight.

Regarding the objectives of the NZTS, the draft submission notes that it would be more appropriate to consider “prioritising” the NZTS objectives to clearly signal central government’s expectation for the transport sector. The draft submission suggests that from a strategic transport perspective, the paramount objectives of the NZTS should be ‘improving access and mobility’ and ‘assisting economic development’, noting that when implementing these two objectives we must take account of the need to support public health and safety objectives and to minimise the impact on the environment.

Whilst the draft submission generally supports the myriad (65) of proposed targets, many of which seek ambitious increases in passenger transport and active mode shares, we note that there will be significant local share funding issues with achieving the targets for passenger transport and cycle and pedestrian mode share. Rates and fares are the key funding sources which are already being stretched to fund rising operating costs and extensive infrastructure renewals.

The draft submission also notes the recent Local Government Rates Inquiry undertaken by the Department of Internal Affairs that found that under current practices, rates will be unsustainable in 10 years’ time. In addition, passenger transport users in the Wellington Region have faced significant fare increases over the past 15 months and the increases are likely to continue due to increasing operating costs. Therefore, the region strongly supports the review of financial assistance rates, particularly in relation to passenger transport and active modes.

The draft submission notes that some of the proposed targets are similar to targets in the Wellington RLTS, but even these often use slightly different criteria and will require new and different methods of collecting data for monitoring purposes. Requiring regional and local authorities to monitor a new set of indicators is likely to have additional resource and cost implications for those organisations.

Finally, the draft submission notes that there are also a number of targets that relate to matters outside the scope of local government responsibility (eg. fuel efficiency and occupant protection rating of the vehicle fleet).

5. Communication

The final submission will be sent to all Regional Land Transport Committee members, once approved by the Regional Council.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. **Receives** the report;
2. **Notes** the contents of the report;
3. **Recommends** to Greater Wellington Regional Council the submission set out in Attachment 2; and
4. **Notes** that the Regional Council may amend the submission following consideration of the draft submission by the Transport and Access Committee.

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Attachment 1: Sustainable Transport: Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy Discussion Paper

Attachment 2: Draft submission on “Sustainable Transport: Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy Discussion Paper”