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Dear David

### **Comment on ideas for Road Safety to 2020**

Thank you for your letter of 27 April 2009 seeking comment on initial thinking around the new 2020 Road Safety Strategy. Our next meeting of the Regional Transport Committee is 23 June and I understand that David Eyre from your team will be presenting to the meeting. We will then also be in a position to give you an official response for input into your strategy. In the meantime I thought it might be useful to give you the following personal comments which reflect previous discussions of the committee.

#### **Wellington's Concerns**

Wellington's Regional Transport Committee is very concerned at the lack of sustained improvement in road safety for much of the last decade. A recent report<sup>1</sup> highlighted the following issues:

- Urban local roads are the main incident site
- Human/driver factors are the main causal factor
- Vulnerable road users, especially cyclists, must be better catered for
- Enforcement resource has not kept pace with population increase
- The fleet is getting older, meaning a lag in the uptake of safety technology
- Young drivers are particularly vulnerable especially when alcohol and speed are added to the mix.

These issues are similar to those you have identified as national issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Wellington Road Safety Investigation 2008. (Available from our website [http://www.gw.govt.nz/council-reports/pdfs/reportdocs/2009\\_169\\_2\\_Attachment.pdf](http://www.gw.govt.nz/council-reports/pdfs/reportdocs/2009_169_2_Attachment.pdf)).

## Vision

Turning to your proposal document, I support the longer term vision of “*a safer road system that is increasingly free of road deaths and serious injuries*”. However, I believe it is essential that meaningful targets are also set to direct 2020 safety outcomes.

I support the proposed “*safe system*” approach. It is well understood that the 3Es (engineering, education and enforcement) systems approach has been used for at least 20 years in New Zealand. Given the lack of safety improvement, particularly over the last five years, it is clear that insufficient resources have been applied to the road safety problem in recent times. The challenge going forward is to identify how to shift the 3Es to E<sup>3</sup>, and to secure appropriate funding. A few more cents on fuel excise for safety now will save many lives and dollars later.

## Priorities

I support the five high priority focus areas that have been identified. I note that progress with implementing median and side protection barriers, particularly on high speed, high volume roads has been slow and would like to see quicker progress in this regard. I note that rules around setting of lower speed limits make this a difficult task for most road controlling authorities to tackle and believe there is much to be gained by getting this right. I wonder how the inherent risks of motorcycling can be addressed, particularly given the risky behaviours often seen on our roads.

In the Wellington region cycle safety must be a high priority concern. In 2007 there were 150 cyclist casualties, by far the worst annual outcome for over a decade. These casualties accounted for nearly 10% of the region’s total and leads to a regional risk profile<sup>2</sup> higher than that of motorcyclists nationally.

The rapid adoption of new safety technology into the vehicle fleet is hampered by various policies, and particularly cost structures as you have identified. The relatively high cost of new vehicles is a major barrier. This cost could be significantly bought down by reducing taxes associated with new vehicle purchase and offsetting this by increased running costs (essentially fuel and RUC). This proposition could be designed to be cost neutral. Tax reductions could also be targeted to encourage the take up of the most safe and efficient vehicles. The associated increased running costs will have a higher impact on less efficient vehicles and is likely to encourage more sustainable travel patterns thereby reducing greenhouse gas and harmful emissions. Regulations should be reviewed to ensure only appropriate vehicles come into the fleet.

## Other matters

Are the Police doing the right things at the right times? The advent of risk targeted patrol plans is a sound concept but I am not sure if the enforcement resource is being directed to best effect.

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<sup>2</sup> Source Ministry of Transport.

In recent years road controlling authorities have been encouraged to develop Safety Management Systems. Most authorities in the Wellington Region report having such a system in place. However, given the poor outcome record of recent years it must be asked whether this approach is working properly.

At a data collection and management level, a review of the CAS and CARD systems seems to be required in order to achieve faster availability of crash data. The current process usually produces a lag of around six months and this is increasingly unacceptable. A review and upgrade of these systems should be part of the plan for the next ten years.

I reiterate that we are very concerned about these issues and look forward to the release of the discussion document in July and to contributing to your review. Should you wish to discuss any matters raised in this letter please contact Joe Hewitt, Manager Transport Strategy Development 381 7777 or Joe.Hewitt@ gw.govt.nz.

Regards

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