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State Highway Classification
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Dear Sir/Madam

Greater Wellington's submission to: NZ Transport Agency's State highway classification – consultation draft

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the first phase of consultation on NZ Transport Agency's draft classification system for New Zealand's state highway network. This submission represents the views of the Wellington Regional Transport Committee (the Committee).

Purpose of the state highway classification system

It is unclear what the primary purpose of the state highway classification document is and how it will be used by NZTA. The intended purpose is critical to how the state highway classification system is presented and to how different parts of the highway network are categorised.

The Committee seeks clarification about whether the primary purpose of the classification is a tool for asset management, information for road users, or a guide long term planning and funding of the network. The document hints at all of these purposes.

While the proposed classification system may be useful for internal asset management purposes - as a system to inform the public it would need to be much simpler, with a fewer number of clearly differentiated colour layers and naming conventions suitable for this purpose.

If the intent is to use the classification system to link with NZTA planning and funding decisions, then a wider range of criteria should be used in addition to those proposed.

The Committee believes that the purpose of the proposed classification system should be for asset planning and management purposes only.

Categories and criteria

General

It is recognised that the threshold levels for each criteria step up significantly under each of the different state highway categories. Therefore, having four 'ticks' under one category for example, does not mean a particular section of state highway would meet the minimum number of ticks in the next category up. However, it would be useful to take a closer look at those sections of state highway which do score more ticks across criteria in a particular category than others, to test whether its categorisation is appropriate.

Contribution of rural state highways

The Committee would like to see criteria and thresholds which recognise export earning traffic movements to reflect the significant contribution of the rural sector to the national economy and the importance of rural state highways which serve these movements.

Freight

In relation to freight, the number of freight vehicles may not be the best measure on its own. If possible, it would also be useful to measure the economic value of goods that depend on a section of state highway network to access markets. Greater Wellington officers would welcome the opportunity to work with NZTA officers to investigate potential criteria.

In relation to freight tonnage and value through the Port, we recommend that NZTA checks this data directly with CentrePort to ensure that the information accurately reflects both domestic and international freight.

Other strategic issues

If the classification system is to influence planning and funding, then having criteria that reflect other strategic issues would become particularly important.

The contribution of a state highway route to network resilience is very important. Routes such as the Rimutaka Hill section of State Highway 2 may need to be elevated to a Nationally Strategic Route under resilience criteria given the lack of an alternative route at this location.

Other strategic issues such as forecast significant growth in population or freight in particular areas should be considered.

The impact of adjacent transport networks is also important. For example, the availability of parallel public transport services, adjacent rail freight opportunities, and availability of railway lines in the same corridor.

Tourism flows

We note that the assessment of SH1 Levin to Wellington does not have a tick under 'international tourism flows', whereas the map in Appendix 8 suggests that it should.

State Highway 58

As acknowledged by NZTA officers, State Highway 58 has been incorrectly classified as a Regional Connector Route in the consultation draft. State Highway 58 meets three of the criteria under Regional Strategic Routes (Freight, Traffic Counts, and Population) and as such falls within the requirements for this category. We trust that this error will be resolved.

State Highway 2 north of Melling

The Committee believes the National strategic route categorisation on SH2 between Ngauranga and Melling should be extended at least as far north as the intersection with SH58 for the reasons set out below:

The National strategic route classification at this location stops somewhat arbitrarily at the Melling interchange. The section of SH2 from Melling through to Woodville is then identified as a 'Regional strategic route' with four ticks against the relevant criteria.

However, the section of SH2 immediately north of Melling interchange exceeds both the traffic count threshold and the heavy vehicle threshold for National strategic routes at least as far north as Manor Park Road near the SH2/58 intersection. This section of SH2 also provides access at various points to the Hutt Valley, which if considered as one combined population centre of around 140,000 would comfortably exceed the population threshold for National strategic routes. SH2 through the Hutt Valley also provides a key connection to Wellington's CentrePort both in terms of freight from the Hutt Valley itself and log freight from Wairarapa. As such, we recommend that NZTA consider extending the National strategic route categorisation along this part of SH2.

Level of service

We note that a second phase of consultation will seek feedback on the appropriate levels of service for each of the different state highway categories. In the meantime, the Committee would like to suggest that the level of service for walking and cycling along and across state highways must be included in this work.

Fit with other NZTA documents

While the consultation draft briefly touches on the fit of this classification system with the 2007 National State Highway Strategy and the State Highway Network Strategy (currently under development), it would be useful to understand how it links and integrates with other recent NZTA documents such as the KiwiRAP Star Ratings for state highways.

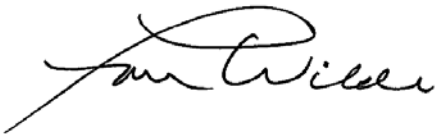
Appendix 7: Population centres

In the consultation draft, the population of Wellington urban areas are aggregated and identified as a 'Large urban area' with the exception of Kapiti which is shown separately as a 'Main urban Area' and Masterton which is shown as a 'Secondary urban area'. We recommend that, as Hutt Valley and Porirua are also separate centres of population, they should be shown as such.

The population number shown for Kapiti (38,000) appears to be too low. Statistics New Zealand data suggests that the Estimated Population for Kapiti was 47,000 in 2006 and forecast as 49,400 in 2010. The source referenced in the document confirms the latter numbers. While this does not change the classification under the current thresholds, it is important that the correct population numbers are included in the document.

We trust this feedback is useful and welcome any further opportunities to input into the development of this classification document.

Yours sincerely



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