



Friday, 9 April 2021

Fiona McTavish
Chief Executive – on behalf of the Regional Transport Committee
Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana
PO Box 364
Whakatāne 3158

Tēnā koe Fiona,

Whakatāne District Council submission on the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-31

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-31 (RLTP). Whakatāne District Council (WDC) would like to make the submission points outlined on the following pages.

WDC wishes to be heard in support of this submission, and will elaborate on the key points in this submission at that time.

Ngā mihi,

Judy Turner

Mayor, Whakatāne District Council

The Bay of Plenty Region is growing rapidly, and there are significant economic investments underway and planned in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Maintaining safe and reliable transport connections is crucial to support this development and unlock opportunities in this area.

WDC is especially interested in working collaboratively on projects that:

- Address the challenges of climate change for the Bay of Plenty;
- Support and promote use of alternate modes of transport;
- Increase the frequency and accessibility of public transport services.

Topic 1: The draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 aims to shift the focus of our investment strategy to better provide for alternative modes of transport (buses, walking, cycling and micro-mobility) and move away from continued car dependency.

Do you think this is a positive shift, and what do you think the key priorities should be?

WDC strongly supports this shift. This approach aligns with several of the Council's key strategic documents, including the Active Whakatāne Strategy and the Whakatāne District Council Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan - Transport.

WDC also strongly supports the renewed investment strategy for this RLTP, moving from a focus on road network capacity issues to a greater emphasis on investment in the whole transport system, and the range of benefits this will provide. In particular, WDC supports the investment strategy outcome of protecting people from harm as a result of vehicle crashes.

WDC supports road safety as a key objective of the 'Healthy and Safe People' theme of the RLTP and as a criteria for prioritising significant activities.

Topic 2: The impacts of climate change – such as extreme weather and sea level rise – pose a significant challenge to our region.

Do you think the draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 does enough to support changing the way we travel, improve network resilience, provide more sustainable forms of transport, and assist in reducing emissions to contribute to our climate change responsibilities?

WDC strongly supports the RLTP's focus on addressing the challenges that climate change poses for the Bay of Plenty. WDC has a Climate Change Action Plan for Transport, which lists specific actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Several of these list BOPRC as a key partner. WDC looks forward to continuing to work alongside BOPRC on climate change initiatives, and suggests that BOPRC adds the Climate Change Action Plan – Transport to Appendix 6 (Evidence Base) of the RLTP.

The Action Plan can be found here:

<https://www.whakatane.govt.nz/sites/www.whakatane.govt.nz/files/documents/climate-change-action-plans-transport-final.pdf>.

Whakatāne District Council is also working collaboratively across the region on a local approach to climate change risk assessment and adaptation and it is envisaged that this project will prove invaluable for transport planning across the region.

Topic 3: The draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 includes a number of projects within the list of activities that aim to further utilise alternative modes of transport and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Do you think the list of activities will help to achieve these desires?

WDC supports the intention to mitigate the effects of climate change, acknowledging that transport emissions are high contributors to our current carbon footprint. WDC commits to working with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC) where possible to reduce emissions. This may include partnering in projects that support and promote use of alternate modes of transport. We would also be appreciative if BOPRC offered to support such initiatives financially as well as offering strategic and planning support. WDC welcomes higher-level discussion around additional initiatives to encourage the necessary mode-shift towards a low emission future across the Bay of Plenty Region. E.g through increasing the frequency and accessibility of public transport services, electrifying fleet etc.

For some of our communities, it is not the cost but the accessibility and frequency of a public transport service that hinders a higher use rate.

WDC welcomes discussion around the creation of new transport routes and consideration of alternative public transport solutions to service more areas in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, as well as running existing services more frequently. It is acknowledged that any public transport solution must be cost effective and that transport options for smaller communities can be a challenge using traditional large buses. However we strongly support investigating alternative options that will provide responsive, affordable, cost-effective transport options. It is also requested that the RLTC advocate to central government to be more enabling with funding for alternative public transport options. Providing public transport to our smaller rural communities can provide a critical lifeline for our people, in particular investigating options that provide a link from the South of the Whakatāne District to the Whakatāne township.

WDC supports BOPRC's efforts to electrify its public transport fleet and wonders whether further electrification has been considered? WDC is currently working towards further electrifying its fleet and keen to share learnings between councils.

WDC also suggests that the RLTP could include consideration of subsidies or funding for domestic EV charging stations, for secure E-bike storage in urban areas, and for contributing towards cycle infrastructure

WDC supports climate change mitigation initiatives which promote increased bus patronage, especially where lower socio- economic communities struggle to access core services because transport costs are a factor.

Topic 4: Other thoughts on the draft Regional Land Transport Plan.

Do you have any other comments you would like to make regarding the draft Regional Land Transport Plan 2021? Are there any transport opportunities we have missed, or you think should have more emphasis?

In general, WDC supports the investment opportunities and commitments into the Eastern Bay of Plenty as identified in the RLTP.

WDC would like to highlight some points that are of particular importance.

1. Building the resilience of our transport infrastructure

WDC requests that the RLTP include a second bridge into Whakatāne as a priority. Having a single point of access across the river creates considerable vulnerability, particularly in case of emergencies or natural hazards. Increased congestion due to population growth is also an increasing issue for our community.

WDC requests that the Regional Transport Committee continue to advocate to Waka Kotahi on this key resilience and security project for our community.

WDC requests that a project to upgrade the Pekatahi Bridge to become two lanes is considered for the programme of works. The bridge is a critical piece of transport infrastructure, and it is important that it is fit for purpose.

However, WDC would also like to acknowledge that our Iwi partners have aspirations regarding transport infrastructure and that ensuring meaningful engagement on all projects is essential with Iwi and our wider community.

2. Improving road safety by reducing speed

WDC would like to see more emphasis in the RLTP on reducing speed in key areas, and in particular around townships such as Matatā.

3. Maintaining Special Purpose Roads

WDC suggests that maintenance costs cannot be met affordably by local communities. WDC would like to see ongoing conversations at a national level about funding options and opportunities for maintaining these roads, and would like to be part of these conversations.