

Report from the Wairarapa Corridor

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to give feedback to the Committee from a recent discussion aimed at defining stakeholder perspectives on what are the particular land transport needs of the Wairarapa Corridor.

2. Background

The August Regional Land Transport Committee meeting discussed how best and when to address Wairarapa Corridor Issues. The proposal to address them as part of the Hutt Corridor study was not supported, but an alternative proposal to address the Wairarapa Corridor through a separate process was agreed as the appropriate action to be taken.

A meeting was convened in Masterton on 21st September 2000 with representatives of the Wellington Regional Council, Masterton District Council, Carterton District Council, South Wairarapa District Council and Transit New Zealand. The specific objective of this meeting was to initiate discussion on what are the particular land transport needs of the Wairarapa Corridor.

3. Comment

The notes of the meeting of 21 September are **attached**.

The meeting addressed issues of:

- Transport needs generated by population changes
- Protection of the rail corridor
- Transport impacts arising from changes within agriculture
- Transport impacts arising from forestry harvesting cycles
- Differing transport standards/expectations of tourists on both arterial and local roads
- Service levels of public transport, especially rail
- Actual road safety risks in the Wairarapa
- Maintaining an adequate level of arterial roading access
- Whether the proposed timing of priorities (into 2004, beyond 2004) truly reflect the level of need
- Whether the proposed “project-list” is adequate and/or realistic
- To what extent there are local issues rather than corridor issues.

My assessment of the initial discussion was that it tended to indicate no major gaps in the content of the RLTS. However, it remains that follow up discussion is required with key local transport operators, and there is also a need to determine whether or not existing implementation plans are actually dealing with identified Wairarapa Corridor needs and issues.

Determining the effectiveness of the existing plans will involve specific assessment of each of the Transit New Zealand/Local Authority/Wellington Regional Council programmes to determine that they are compatible, adequate and appropriate to meet needs for upwards of the next 5 years, and beyond. This phase of activity will require co-ordination and input at the officer level, and remains as a key matter on which further action is required prior to reporting further to the Committee on Wairarapa Corridor Issues. The shape and timing of the further action required to be taken will be developed in conjunction with the Wellington Regional Council.

4. **Recommendation**

That the information reported herein be received.

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**NOTES OF A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE WAIRARAPA CORRIDOR HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MASTERTON DISTRICT COUNCIL BUILDING
ON THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2000**

Present

Mayor Bob Francis (Chair), Councillors R T McKenzie, D H Payton, P J Taylor and R L Wagg (MDC); Mayor Martin Tankersley, Councillor B Cameron, George Rink and Mike Charteris (CDC); Mayor John Read, Councillors Mike Gray and Bev Clark (SWDC); Councillors Rick Long, Ian Buchanan and Terry McDavitt (Chair, Regional Land Transport Committee), Nicholas Manson (WRC); Dave Rendall (Transit NZ); Manager Assets and Operations and Committee Secretary.

Introduction

Meeting to consider the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS), and to specifically discuss stakeholder perspectives on what are the particular land transport needs of the Wairarapa Corridor.

Transit NZ SH2 Strategy Study, Dave Rendall

- The section of SH 2 under consideration was the 65 kms between Mount Bruce and Featherston.
- Transit was looking at the long term strategic needs (25 years) for deviations, junctions, alternative routes and the like.
- The route contained four towns and five rivers, and had a rural/urban mix of traffic.
- The traffic profile involved long distance, urban and a commuter role (particularly between Carterton and Masterton).
- Traffic growth though modest at 2-3% per year, was higher than SH1.
- The review identified the trend for increased log truck movements.
- Weekly variations in traffic volumes showed an increase in summer with a January peak.
- Speed profiles indicated an average of 105-108 kph on rural sections of the route.
- Safety - the accident rate was higher at the northern end of the route and lower to the south of Masterton compared with the national average.
- Graphs showing the level of service showed that the level of service was expected to decline in the future (the ability to drive at the desired speed) with increased congestion. This was based on a growth rate of 3% pa and a mix of vehicles - heavy and light. The level of service was expected to remain satisfactory around Masterton and to the north, but would be unsatisfactory around Carterton and to the south where by-passes and re-routing would have to be investigated.
- A deficiency analysis was being used to show the deficiencies in the roads.
- Masterton issues:
 - The establishment of the heavy vehicle route to the west had taken the pressure off the urban route and improved the level of service on Chapel Street.
 - An eastern bypass would be anticipated to relieve pressure on that section of the highway through the urban area.

Where to from here with the SH2 Strategy Study?

- Consultation had been completed and the draft report was in the final stages of preparation. It was expected to be sent out in a month's time. This would be published as an Executive Summary accompanied by a detailed technical report.

Discussion

- Level of service with an increase in heavy transport? There would be a need to focus on access to a by-pass
- The bypass west of Masterton appeared to be acting as a relief valve. If more subdivisions occurred in the area access control would have to be tightened. If the level of service was reduced other options would have to be created such as a second bypass.
- Access control was tied to subdivisions and restrictions on commercial access.
- Eastern bypass of Masterton by heavy traffic (logging trucks): Transit had not done a study.
- Designation within District Plans: not done because options were too formative. Priorities had to be worked out.
- Bypass designations: Transit had relinquished these in 1992.
- What was the relationship between the SH2 Strategy and the RLTS? The RLTS was to define the key strategic land transport needs of the whole region, whereas the SH2 Strategy was a subordinate document which could not be inconsistent with the RLTS, although the two had to work together.

Wairarapa Corridor, Terry McDavitt

- The RLTS covered strategic policy direction and the identification of needs, and the various agencies worked from the bottom up catering for the defined needs.
- Land transport needs in the Wairarapa needed to be identified as to whether these were local or strategic issues.
- Was the work being done by Transit and the TLA's sufficient? If not, more corridor work should be defined and introduced into the RLTS as strategic issues.

Discussion

- Concern that public transport including the protection of rail services, and the Rimutaka Hill road were not adequately covered in the RLTS.
- The RLTS was noted not so much as being deficient, but that projects for the Wairarapa (eastern) corridor such as the Kaitoke and Rimutaka Hill roads should be identified and publicised, the same as the western corridor projects.
- The Western Corridor stretched from Ngauranga to Otaki. Why did the eastern corridor not stretch from Ngauranga to Mount Bruce? Terry McDavitt explained that the highways had been divided into sections with a common character. SH2 in the Wairarapa has a mix of rural and urban traffic issues. There was a need to create the most practical linkage into Wellington. There were particular difficulties in the Hutt Corridor with linkages from SH2 to the Gracefield freight area, so it was being kept separate at this stage.
- Concern was expressed that the RLTS should include reference to any integration issues which might exist in terms of the interface between Wairarapa and Wellington. The example was given

that aspects of the Wairarapa Corridor were felt to be held in abeyance until after the Rimutaka Hill.

- Dave Rendall observed that the SH 2 Strategy report would be integrated into the RLTS. The report contained the base planning documents for local projects to be progressed separately or in conjunction with the TLA's.
- Bob Francis believed there were strategic issues to be integrated into the RLTS such as levels of access etc, and if change was needed this should occur, recognising the circumstances.

Issues Needing Recognition in the RLTS

Changes in population structures and density

- Growth in South Wairarapa. Decrease in population numbers, but an increase in lifestyle blocks and tourism with cars coming over the Rimutaka Hill and using the unsealed access roads to recreation sites such as Waiohine Gorge and Holdsworth. Extension of the seal on these roads would be desirable. Traffic patterns were changing, with increased traffic on the Gladstone-Martinborough back road. If the Hutt Valley and Rimutaka Hill roads were able to be made more accessible then more growth would be anticipated in the Wairarapa. These sections of the main access route in and out of the Wairarapa were seen as a barrier by city folk, and therefore remedies for traffic growth and heavy transport were needed to overcome these impediments.

Rail Corridor

- Protection of the rail corridor was a need and issue to be amended into the RLTS.
- The need to protect Wairarapa rail services for commuters and freight may arise following the outcome of Tranz Rail's strategic review. WRC had to address the safeguarding and improvement to service especially the Wairarapa implementation issues via the Regional Land Transport Committee. Irrespective of the ownership of Tranz Metro, improving the commuter train frequency between Upper Hutt and Masterton will remain as an RLTS project. There was a problem for Tranz Rail with a one year contract term. A more desirable contract term for delivery of a rail service to the Wairarapa would be five years but this was understood to require a law change. A reconvened meeting between Mayors, Tranz Rail and Transfund to look at solutions to the problem was viewed as useful.
- Keeping the Wairarapa rail link open should be a Central Government concern.
- Agreed that the four Councils should write to Tranz Rail requesting that services be increased and timetables reworked. Petrol price increases would increase demand, and the Principals' Association had also recently advised they considered the rail link essential.

Agriculture Changes

- Probably none at this stage.
- The proposed international cargo hub had the potential to add value to horticultural produce from the Wairarapa, but it would have a significant influence on airfreight from Wellington which could create implications for the RLTS over the next 10 to 15 years.

Forestry

- JNL and private woodlots were coming on stream, for which rail use should be encouraged.
- Local studies had identified the uncommitted timber, but not where it would be marketed.

- Terry McDavitt commented that timber volume was expected to increase sevenfold and given the long lead time typically required to increase transport capacity urgent consideration of changes was needed.
- A significant issue for Councils and Transit was how timber should be transported given that markets are often not decided until forests mature. A best guess was needed of traffic on the roads and what the opportunities for product sale would be. Strategies were needed to deal with a maximum number of trucks, eg 100 more trucks on the Hill per day would have a huge impact.
- The TLA's needed to plan for local road capacity alongside the highway capacity issues.
- The timber industry was a good reason for maintaining the rail link to the north.
- Agreed that the strategies were in place, but needed strengthening and greater urgency.

Tourism

- A user pays issue? Tourists were expensive for the local ratepayers: could there be a change in funding of roading? – noted the extensive use of South Wairarapa district roads by outsiders with the increase in coastal subdivisions, and rural tourism operations.
- Demand for improved access to the Tararua Forest Park and the coast was a regional issue.
- The RLTS recognised changing needs due to the growth in tourism.

Road Safety Risks in the Wairarapa

- A meeting was to be held on 2 October with the LTSA to discuss the recent safety report, to confirm police hours and projects for 2001/02.
- Liquor Licensing changes - preference for a Wairarapa wide policy regarding hours.
- Support for more visible enforcement on the road. Speed camera fines should go to the LTSA.
- A recent Road Safety Issues report advised rural road and intersection crash rates in Masterton district to be higher than peer group and national averages.
- Stock movements a specific problem in the Wairarapa where you frequently had large trucks and tourists not accustomed to rural roads. Pastoral farming remained the core industry.

Adequate arterial roading access

- Should push for development of the Wairarapa (eastern) Corridor paralleling the action being taken on Transmission Gully. The WRC appeared to be promoting aspects of the Western Corridor and it was felt they should also be promoting the Hill Road as strategic access between Wellington and the Wairarapa. The projects all had a common problem of not meeting the current financial criteria.
- Changes in the B/C criteria may continue to prove beneficial for the timing of improvements.
- The process for the design and construction to 70 kph standard for the Rimutaka Hill road needed speeding up.
- Terry McDavitt noted that the RLTS was aimed at providing a planning framework to cater for land transport needs, and involved bringing together agencies to create the mechanism by which local projects could be pursued.

Conclusion

- Follow-up meetings to be held including representatives of key local transport operators (for example, Fearon Logging and Transit Coachlines), Tranz Rail and the four Councils.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm