

Regional Transport Policy Workshops — Summary of Engagement with Local Government

Reason for this briefing	The Ministry visited 14 regions across New Zealand to engage with local government on elements of our policy work programme. This briefing provides a summary of key themes, discussions and further actions we are taking following the visits.
Action required	Agree for this briefing to be proactively published on the Ministry's website.
Deadline	No immediate deadline or urgency.
Reason for deadline	N/A

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

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MINISTER'S COMMENTS:

Date:	10 May 2019	Briefing number:	OC190359
Attention:	Hon Phil Twyford (Minister of Transport) CC: Hon Julie Anne Genter (Associate Minister of Transport)	Security level:	N/A

Minister of Transport's office actions

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| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Noted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seen</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Approved</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Needs change</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Referred to</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Withdrawn</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not seen by Minister</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Overtaken by events</i> |

Purpose of report

1. To provide you with a summary of our discussions with council officials, technical council staff and other stakeholders during the Ministry of Transport regional roadshows.

The Ministry visited 14 regions to discuss transport policy with local government

2. We have a significant programme of work that traverses a range of issues. A number of the projects involve, influence, impact local government operations. We identified an opportunity to align many engagement processes, highlight our work programme, and seek input from stakeholders on a number of our policy projects.
3. Between 25 March and 12 April 2019, we visited 14 regions hosting full-day workshops on:
 - 3.1. *The Transport Outcomes Framework* — a discussion to explain the Outcomes Framework to those who were unfamiliar with it, and its potential future uses.
 - 3.2. *Horizon scanning* — in this exercise we asked attendees to identify the key challenges facing their transport networks over the next 30 years.
 - 3.3. *Road Safety Strategy* — we presented on the work we have done developing the next Road Safety Strategy, and asked attendees for their feedback on the approach.
 - 3.4. *Transport data and appraisal* — we presented on the data and information that the Ministry makes available and how we use it, and sought feedback on how to make it more useful. We also gave an overview of what we are doing to improve the effectiveness of transport decision making.
 - 3.5. *Future of Revenue* — we outlined the work we are doing on the sustainability of the current funding system for transport, and sought feedback on the proposed approach for the project and how we could involve local government in future.
 - 3.6. *Government Policy Statement on land transport (GPS)* — we outlined our proposed engagement approach and timeline for GPS 2021 development, and discussed with attendees where they thought the GPS 2018 is effective and how we might seek to improve it.
4. Our workshops were targeted towards local and regional council officials. In some instances there were elected council members present, and we extended the invitations to the NZ Police, NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) staff, and other key stakeholders in some regions (e.g. the AA).
5. The key messages summarised in this briefing outline what we heard from those attending. The views were not the official views of the region, but of the representatives in attendance at the time. We will continue to engage across local government and stakeholders to ensure we fully understand and can accurately reflect agreed positions.

Key messages from the Transport Outcomes Framework and Horizon Scanning sessions

6. A relatively high number of attendees across the workshops were familiar with the transport outcomes framework. Feedback was similar to that received when we engaged on it in its development, but the framework has now had an opportunity to begin to be integrated into planning.

7. Local government still broadly agrees that the framework provides a structural, logical and enduring way of considering transport strategy and initiatives. In particular, they were interested to see how it might support consistent planning through their 10 year Long Term Plans. Some of the smaller and rural representatives commented that they were not clear on how the transport outcomes framework reflected issues like regional development, or how it will improve the transport networks in the regions.
8. There were comments at some of the sessions where attendees had not seen any evidence that the transport outcomes framework is being implemented. This may be because much of this work is still at a relatively early stage. Other attendees suggested a solution to this could be embedding the outcomes in the GPS 2021, such as aligning the outcomes more closely to the strategic priorities or objectives.
9. The horizon scanning exercise revealed that local government officials are contemplating similar issues to what we have been thinking about. A wide range of issues were raised, and we have captured the top four most common below.
 - The ageing population is resulting in new and different demands on the transport network, and will present challenges if we want to provide inclusive access to all.
 - We have fast uptake of new technologies, such as electric scooters, which will require a legislative framework and a nationally-led policy to be faster and more flexible than it has been in the past.
 - Regions with built-up coastal areas expressed concern around coastal erosion and climate change, looking for a government-led strategy to proactively protect the coast, mitigate the risks, and take a more proactive role in urban planning for the future state.
 - Regions with forestry resources have concerns that their state highway infrastructure (state highways in particular) is insufficiently prepared for the additional heavy vehicle trips that are expected once the forests mature.
10. We are considering the range of issues raised and will work them into our future advice and policy development, including on the GPS 2021.

Key messages from the presentation on the Road Safety Strategy

11. The Road Safety Strategy sessions provided both an opportunity for regional stakeholders to see the direction of travel of the strategy and for officials to hear wide-ranging feedback on the proposed framework.
12. Local government were particularly interested in investment to support the ambitious nature of a vision zero approach, both in terms of funding levels and sources (for example, asking how increased investment levels will impact on local share). There was some concern expressed about the short duration of the planned public consultation phase (four weeks), particularly given the need for councils to formally consider submissions and the alignment of this process with their meetings, which often take place on a 4–6 week cycle (we are now giving stakeholders notice of the intended consultation period, as a mitigation).
13. In terms of the initial actions in the strategy, there was particular interest in the Tackling Unsafe Speeds proposal. Local government were supportive of efforts to streamline the speed-setting process and requested clear leadership from central government to support a more consistent and simple process for local government to implement.

14. Generally, there was broad support for the key elements of the strategy as drafted, and a lot of interest in remaining well informed about the strategy. We will ensure all attendees receive future communications about the strategy.

Key messages on the transport data and appraisal session

15. In this session, we discussed the transport sector data that we hold and collect, and explained the Ministry and NZTA's decision making and assessment processes that are currently under review. We also used this as an opportunity to engage again on the GPS 2018 results measures and the transport outcomes indicators.
16. Attendees were supportive of our willingness to discuss the information with them. There was a desire for a more accessible central repository of data that could be disaggregated to a local level. This would help councils on many fronts, including in preparing business cases.
17. Attendees were very interested in the review of the NZTA's investment decision making tools. These tools have a strong influence on how regions' projects are assessed and considered for inclusion in the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP), and historically small changes have meant significant differences in outcomes for local government. The main points relating to this included:
 - concerns the business case processes required by the NZTA are extensive, costly, and time consuming, which increases the cost and scale of projects, and puts pressure on council resources
 - appreciation for the increase in the cap for low cost, low risk activities, meaning that councils can now progress small projects without meeting the usual business case requirements
 - a strong feeling that the system needs to be more transparent and provide more feedback. Councils commented they are undertaking a lot of time and effort preparing Regional Land Transport Plans (RLTPs) and business cases and are provided with very little sight or understanding of how investment decisions are being made in relation to funding.
18. With regards to the discussion on transport data and analysis, attendees noted:
 - some of the data we collect is new to them, and we need to be more clear and transparent about what we hold to ensure that it is freely available for use
 - concerns around the way that the NZTA requires particular data at a regional level to feed into business case processes, and rather than seeking economies of scale by having the NZTA or the Ministry analyse the data at a lower level. Individual councils need specialist staff to do the project-level analysis, which further stretches limited resources (e.g. business cases need to include crash data, but the NZTA's analysis of the Crash Analysis System is restricted to the national level, and regions)
 - where they are obligated to provide data to the Ministry or the NZTA, they would like to ensure what is being collected is meaningful and used given that councils are taking the time to report on it
 - ongoing capability concerns, particularly in relation to the availability of analytical and modelling skills.

Key messages on the Future of Revenue presentation

Valuable feedback on local issues related to revenue and also thinking for a future system

19. While there was awareness of the current national revenue tools (e.g. fuel excise duty, road user charges), there was a limited understanding of how these tools operated, their advantages/disadvantages, and what challenges these particular tools might face in the years ahead. The visits provided us with a good opportunity to give local government representatives an overview of the current national system and the kinds of questions that the project is intending to answer.
20. Some of the key points on future trends included:
 - the ongoing difficulty for local government to raise revenue for its share of transport infrastructure investment and maintenance within the region
 - increasing tourism has resulted in larger numbers of visitors using the road network who do not directly contribute to investment and maintenance
 - industries using heavy vehicles, particularly forestry, were causing strain on and damage to their local roading networks, with the burden for the maintenance costs for local roads falling on ratepayers rather than heavy vehicle operators
 - increasing vehicle travel in their regions, which will put more stress on their networks
 - interest in the potential opportunities that a new national revenue system and developing technology could potentially enable for them (e.g. potentially enabling them to know more about the use of their networks if vehicle location is part of the future system)
 - the amount of revenue generated from road use in some regions was not reflected in the level of investment in their regional networks.

We received a range of options for how we could engage with local government going forward

21. We received a range of views at the meetings about what local government groups might be appropriate for involvement in the project. This included Regional Transport Committees (including sub-committees that are focused on policy issues), Transport Special Interest Group (TSIG), New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM), and to a lesser extent Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ).
22. Following the regional visits we have met separately with LGNZ and received some good insights into the different local government groups and how LGNZ could assist us with getting time with these groups and others. It also offered to use its existing communication channels to keep different local government groups informed of the project. We have also arranged to meet with TSIG for another perspective on what group or groups might be most appropriate.

Key messages from the GPS discussion

Broad support for GPS 2018 direction, with calls to give changes the opportunity to take effect

23. The majority of attendees at the workshops were supportive of the intent of the GPS 2018, both for its strategic direction and for the increases in local road, walking and cycling, and public transport activity classes. Many commented that the new direction is more consistent with their regional transport priorities than the previous GPS.

24. There was a lot of feedback that as the change has been significant, it needs time to take effect and be fully reflected in RLTPs. There was general support for not progressing a no second stage GPS 2018, and some went further to ask that there are no further step changes in GPS 2021.
25. Many representatives stressed the importance of releasing the GPS 2021 at least a year of it coming into effect. Given the reduced timetable for GPS 2018, some regions were concerned that they had insufficient time to implement the changes it brought in, which could have reduced the impact of GPS 2018.
26. Local government were especially positive about the inclusion of funding for footpath maintenance accompanying the increased walking and cycling funding.
27. Some attendees in smaller regions were concerned that the principle of mode neutrality is irrelevant for lower populated parts of the country. Many people living outside of main cities will never have access to public transport or alternative transport options, and private vehicles will remain their only viable transport choice.

Concern for lack of funding availability in the NLTP

28. There was a lot of feedback that funding is insufficient to support the ambition of GPS 2018, and many regions expressed disappointment over the funding that they subsequently received from the NLTP for particular activities.
29. Of note was the reduced funding availability for state highway improvement projects. Regions emphasised the importance of state highways for their networks, and in some cases the reduced funding has resulted in deferring their greatest regional priorities. While extra local road funding was appreciated, attendees argued that it will not solve their key transport issues.
30. There was concern for the funding pressures facing the current NLTP. Many attendees noted that in the development of the NLTP, the NZTA's regional staff had encouraged new projects, with confidence that funding would be available, but eventual funding demands across all regions meant projects were not included. Representatives of smaller regions felt that their priorities had been crowded out by projects put forward by metropolitan areas.

Suggestions and requests for policy to be included in GPS 2021

31. We received valuable feedback on what local government representatives expect to be considered for GPS 2021.
 - Increased recognition of the importance of RLTPs. This would mean the NLTP could take account of regional priorities when it assess a project, rather than looking solely at the project's fit with the national priorities. Currently regions feel that their own Long Term Plans, transport strategies and priorities are overlooked, even for local road projects for which they are a co-funder.
 - A continuation of the Targeted Enhanced Funding Assistance Rate (TEFAR) policy. While this is the NZTA's own policy to incentivise spending on high-priority projects with regional contributions, the GPS could go further to mandate that it continues.
 - Additional support for Mobility as a Service schemes that provide additional access choice to people in areas that are not well served by public transport.
 - Increased support for regional economic development, to ensure that projects are prioritised that will improve regional economic growth.

- Funding across the activity classes is at about the right level, except for state highway improvements, which needs additional support than it has in GPS 2018.
- Greater transparency around funding availability throughout the NLTP so that local government has an understanding of what is committed, and where there is flexibility.

32. We will advise you throughout the development of GPS 2021 on our progress on each of these issues, and how you should consider them alongside your other transport priorities.

Value of the roadshow and next steps

33. Attendees appreciated our proactivity in organising the workshops. Initial feedback suggests that the value for attendees was mostly in sharing information on some of our key policy projects. We had some requests for us to run similar workshops on a regular basis. We will be undertaking surveys of attendees to get feedback to inform our approach to future sessions (including content and frequency).

34. For us, we now have a strong understanding of the local views on the policy issues that we discussed. This information is being fed into the appropriate policy development processes and will ensure that our upcoming advice will be able to consider the diverse views we have heard. We will continue to engage with Regional Transport Committees to better understand the views of elected members.

35. We have committed to provide a summary of the feedback received from the workshops to those who attended. We would like to publish this briefing on our website to fulfil this commitment.

Recommendations

36. The recommendations are that you:

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| (a) | agree to the Ministry proactively publishing this briefing on its website | Yes/No |
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MINISTER'S SIGNATURE:

DATE: