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Review of the Land Use Recovery Plan
Environment Canterbury

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NZCID Feedback on the Land Use Recovery Plan Review Consultation Document[1]

The New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development (NZCID) welcomes this review of the Canterbury Land Use Recovery Plan (the Plan).

Introduction

Canterbury plays a critical role in the New Zealand economy and we consider this document to be an important tool to facilitate the full recovery of New Zealand's second largest urban area in a timely fashion.

Our evaluation of the monitoring report and supported by feedback we receive through our activities, including engagement with key personnel involved in the recovery, is that the Plan has, overall, performed well. That is, broadly speaking, sufficient land of an appropriate quality has been made available to development in an acceptable timeframe.

However, as the peak infrastructure industry body in New Zealand, our focus is less on land use provisions specifically and more on the impacts of growth on current and planned future infrastructure. And to this end the Plan's performance is mixed.

Transport and land use alignment

While our interests in land use and infrastructure span the full range of infrastructure services, our principal objective in reviewing the Plan is thus to understand whether and where the pressures on transport infrastructure created by land use provisions are sustainable.

Transport demand and outcomes are intimately related to land use decisions so it is of the highest importance that transport network performance is a central tenet of land use decision making.

To this end, we note that Figure 2 of the Monitoring Report[2] shows noticeably worse congestion across the Christchurch road network today compared to a fairly constant pre-2011 "base". The Monitoring report identifies access along Brougham St as a particularly congested corridor, but highlights reduced access generally across Greater Christchurch.

[1] This submission represents the views of NZCID as a collective whole, and may not necessarily represent the views of individual member organisations.
[2] Land Use Recovery Plan Monitoring Report for the Year ended December 2014, p. 14.

The Monitoring report attributes much of the current pressure on the road network (and particularly the Brougham St corridor through to Lyttleton Port) to a temporary increase in road demand from heavy vehicles supporting the rebuild.[3]

The combination of this activity, road closures and repairs and a sizeable fall in public transport patronage[4] does indeed support the contention that some congestion pressures are temporary.

While we support authorities 'looking beyond' short term pressures, it is important that trends with longer duration impacts are recognised and addressed in a timely manner.

We would, for example, urge caution with respect to assumptions over the pace at which public transport patronage will return to pre-earthquake levels.

As noted in the Monitoring Report, population growth in areas like Rolleston has been extremely strong since the earthquakes. Many of these new residents will previously have been public transport users in Christchurch. Unless they have also relocated employment closer to their new home, and evidence suggests[5] only some have, it is likely that these former public transport users are now long distance car users.

Additionally, the dispersal of employment around Greater Christchurch where public transport service provision is less concentrated and the unclear timetable for employment restoration in the well-connected CBD compounds impacts on longer term PT demand.

At the same time as PT patronage has shrunk, dependency on road access has increased markedly.

Many commuters are now travelling much longer distances to work than they did before the earthquakes, either because their place of work has shifted or their home. This increases the impact of each trip on the road network.

Thus the Christchurch transport network is currently being required to accommodate both an absolute decline in PT patronage and proportionately greater private vehicle use.

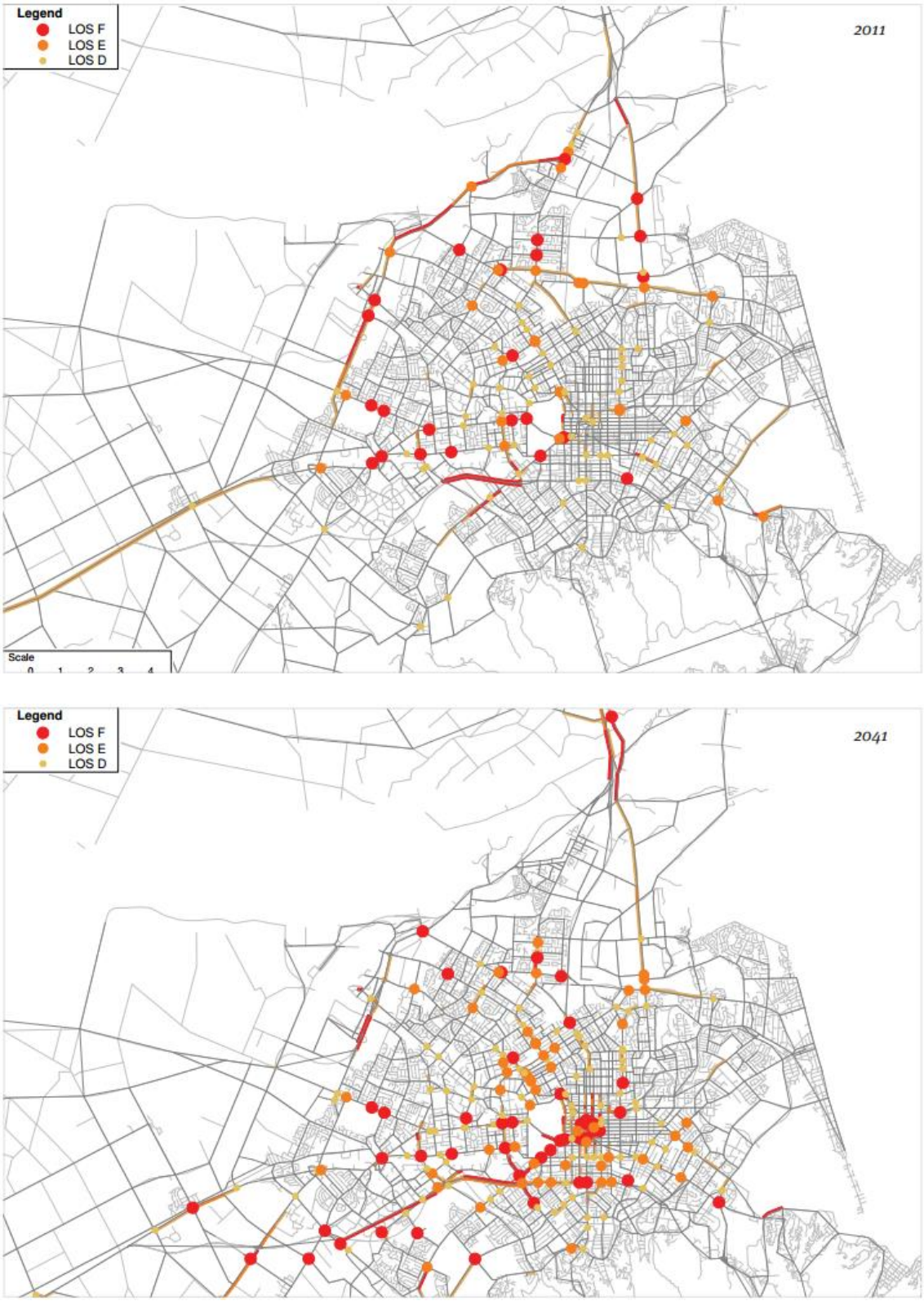
Such trends have emerged at pace, but may be slow to unwind. It should be expected that new home-to-work travel patterns have longer term consequences for land use and transport than rebuild activity.

Existing evidence suggests that transport and land use are becoming less, not more, integrated, with the result that congestion is projected to worsen noticeably.

Figure 1 illustrates congestion points in Christchurch during the afternoon peak in 2011 and 2041, where levels of services (LOS) D, E and F indicate increasing congestion, respectively.[6]

[3] Monitoring Report, p. 16.
[4] Monitoring Report, pp. 14-15.
[5] Monitoring Report, p. 45.
[6] Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan 2012-2042, p. 15.

Figure 1 Congestion in Christchurch during the afternoon peak 2011-2041



The corridor connecting Canterbury with Lyttleton Port can be observed to become much more congested in the future, while access in the north of the city improves significantly.

Figure 1 strongly suggests that current experience congestion along the Brougham St corridor is not temporary and instead reflects the level of growth planned for the south-western parts of the city.

Roads around Hornby and the existing southern motorway appear particularly badly impacted which, given the presence of commercial activities, is likely to have a deleterious effect on regional productivity.

In addition, the corridor connecting Christchurch to the north is projected to come under increased pressure and will require new capacity.

Either provision must be made for additional transport investment in these areas in the nearer term, or land use provisions revised to reduce pressure on transport services.

We would finally add that infill will add to congestion pressures if it is not carefully aligned to public transport and other urban amenities.

Thus we encourage authorities not to view infill as an outcome in itself, but an option which, when aligned to public transport, can lead to reduced pressure on the road network.

We thank Environment Canterbury for this opportunity to provide feedback on the Land Use Recovery Plan Review.