

1 September 2016

Hon Simon Bridges  
Minister of Transport  
Parliament Buildings

Dear Minister

We write in our capacity as the Chairs of all South Island Regional Transport Committees (RTCs) about the Government Policy Statement on Transport 2018 (GPS 2018),

With the support of our seven regional councils and unitary authorities, we are cooperating on policy and strategy matters. This includes co-ordinating input into GPS 2018.

We appreciate the opportunity South Island RTC officials had to meet with Ministry of Transport officials on 28 July 2016, for a very positive discussion about GPS 2018. We now write to you collectively to outline the matters we would like you to consider for inclusion in GPS 2018.

Our particular interests are working with central government to:

- recognise the role that transport plays in enhancing tourism, and
- ensure a funding model is in place that enables us to invest in the most effective mode of transport, whether it be road, rail, sea and air.

#### **Transport is integral to the visitor experience**

A transport system that is responsive to the needs of visitors, allowing them to move in a safe and convenient manner, will add value to the tourism sector. We are concerned that neither local nor central government organisations sufficiently understand how the tourism task affects the transport system and how the transport system can support the visitor experience and boost the value of tourism to our economy.

We therefore consider that GPS 2018 should provide policy direction to NZTA on recognising tourism routes; on providing facilities and infrastructure for visitors on these routes; and on providing links between cycling and walking trails to form an integrated network of these trails, which are then linked to urban cycleways.

**Example: Tourism West Coast is aiming to achieve an increase in tourism expenditure on the West Coast from \$417 million to \$1 billion by 2025. As part of this, the Hokitika Gorge is being promoted as a new tourist icon for the region.**

NZTA funding was sought for improvements to the Whitcombe Valley Road to cater to increased tourism traffic visiting the Hokitika Gorge. There are also potential safety concerns with an increasing number of dairy tanker movements on this narrow route.

The project did not meet NZTA's criteria for funding. Westland District Council has therefore been funding the \$1.5 million project through debt. The recent announcement by NZTA to allow co-funding of tourism-related projects under the Visiting Drivers Project will now provide funds to assist with this project.

## **A funding model that enables innovative multi-modal solutions**

The funding model needs to support the adoption of the most effective solution to transport problems. The activity class structure and the prescriptiveness of GPS bands restrict NZTA's ability to develop innovative funding solutions in partnership with local government. The focus should be on developing a funding system that better meets the needs of users, and not on what workarounds might exist to support better outcomes.

We consider the GPS 2018 should clearly support multi-modal transport outcomes. As an export economy, New Zealand depends on the efficient movement of freight within and between regions to be globally competitive. The current approach to funding incentivises councils to focus exclusively on road transport solutions.

**Example:** The Marlborough RTC is dealing with the issue of log cartage from the Pelorus and Kenepuru Sound areas. Significant commercial forestry was established in these areas in the 1980s and 1990s, supported by government subsidy. These forests are now ready for harvest but the required infrastructure is not in place. The cost of upgrading the Kenepuru Road to an appropriate standard is around \$6.1 million.

In contrast, the cost of establishing a barging facility and upgrading roads to that facility is estimated at \$930,000. Barging the logs would also lead to less wear and tear on roads. Barging is also the cheaper option for forestry companies; although it requires double handling, the cost can be weighed against the distance trucks need to travel. The current GPS does not permit the funding of a barging solution.

The transport funding model also needs to recognise freight and tourism corridors, rather than segmenting off parts of these journeys. In particular, the current activities-based funding structure differentiates between local roads and state highways, but almost all freight and visitor journeys travel across both. GPS 2018 needs to acknowledge the linkages between state highways and local roads, and provide for consistent investment decisions across both. For example, journeys taken by Higher Productivity Motor Vehicles may start on or include local roads, and will have an impact on these local roads, as well as on state highways.

In addition, we consider that GPS 2018 should state the Government's policy on rail, air and sea, as they affect land transport. Without this inclusion, the GPS is only a partial policy statement on land transport.

### **Additional considerations for GPS 2018**

We consider there is a need for central and local government to work more collaboratively so that councils can be in a better position to respond to future changes in technology and take account of future trends when making investment decisions.

Access to data varies by council. There appears to be some significant gaps in information held or that can be accessed by local and central government organisations, particularly around freight and tourist flows. We consider the Ministry's work on the Transport Domain Plan, the Transport Research Strategy, and Transport Outlook, will be valuable.

However, there is a need for a common data platform, and common models (of freight and tourism flows for example), to improve the quality of and consistency in decision-making across the New Zealand transport sector and to support councils to make informed decisions about investment in local infrastructure.

As the population changes over the next few decades, meeting mobility needs will be a significant challenge. The aging population is already leading to changes in the demand for public transport and infrastructure which supports mobility equipment. To support older people to remain in work and avoid social isolation, GPS 2018 should permit:

- footpath maintenance and renewals to support pedestrians and the use of mobility equipment like scooters and walking frames (quality, grade and width of footpath)
- sidewalks with resting places for pedestrians in key locations.

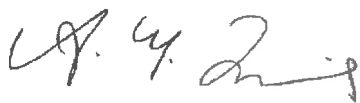
Finally, once the GPS is released, the Ministry of Transport needs an ongoing role in ensuring that NZTA's Investment Assessment Framework will deliver on the GPS. Past examples of challenges include:

- workarounds to obtain NZTA funding to deliver solutions for the visiting drivers programme not previously seen as solutions that could be funded
- expensive protraction of the Kawarau Falls Bridge designation, which Otago Regional Council challenged in order to have NZTA provide adequately for walking and cycling on this bridge (which is part of the Great Rides network).

We understand that the Ministry of Transport will be consulting on a draft GPS later this year. We would like to see the matters we have raised here incorporated in the draft GPS. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss these matters.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



**Ali Timms  
Chairman**



**Commissioner Rex Williams**

On behalf of the South Island Regional Transport Chairs Group

