

Submission

Draft Canterbury Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-34

PREPARED BY: Ashburton District Council

SUBMITTED TO: Canterbury Regional Transport
Committee
via email to

Contact: Mayor Neil Brown

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1. Ashburton District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit feedback on the **Draft Canterbury Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-34**. This submission has been prepared by Council officers and has been endorsed by the Mayor and Councillors.
 2. Ashburton District (the District) is located in the middle of Canterbury, an hour's drive south of Christchurch and an hour's drive north of Timaru.
 3. More than 36,300¹ residents live in our district. Approximately 50% of our residents live in the main town of Ashburton, with the rest of our residents living rurally or in smaller towns or villages across the district. Ashburton District has experienced moderate and sustained population increase since the mid-1990s, increasing by 22% between 2006 and 2013 (a 3.3% increase per year). Since 2013, this growth has slowed slightly, with an average growth of 1.9% per year since 2013².
 4. We acknowledge the large increase in investment planned for the next decade, to almost double the funding outlined in the previous plan. This is a good step towards enhancing Canterbury's land transport system.
 5. We endorse and support all the ten-year transport priorities as currently stated in the draft plan and cannot offer any improvements in this area.

Second Ashburton bridge

6. We are wholeheartedly supportive of the inclusion of the Ashburton-Tinwald Connectivity (Second Ashburton Urban Bridge) project as the top ranked project in the region. Council has been advocating for funding towards the second bridge for more than 10 years, and is delighted that these efforts have finally been recognised.
7. We are glad to see there has been \$130 million assigned to this project in the draft plan. Our community regards the current bridge as an enhancement to State Highway 1, and therefore we believe that the second bridge project should be wholly funded by Central Government.

¹ Statistics New Zealand Estimated Population 30 June 2022

² Ashburton District Council Environmental Scan 2023

8. The existing Ashburton River bridge on State Highway One is a very real and pertinent reminder to us of the vulnerabilities of our critical infrastructure. The bridge has been closed on two separate occasions within the past 2 years because of high river flows, severe flooding and subsequent build-up of debris. This severed connections in the South Island, ground traffic flows to a halt and heightened concerns about just how vulnerable we are to the loss of infrastructure that we assume will always be accessible.
9. These events highlighted the importance of building a second bridge, for the connectivity and resilience of the entire transport network along Te Wai Pounamu. This is further accentuated by the acceleration of impacts because of climate change, causing more frequent flooding events of greater intensity. Based on the trigger levels in the Waka Kotahi Trigger Action Response Plan (TARP) for the Ashburton Bridge, we note that future flooding events will result in bridge closures much more frequently, further reducing connectivity. Closures of the bridge may also result in significant economic impacts throughout Te Wai Pounamu, as well as nationally.
10. The impacts of having only a single connection between Tinwald and Ashburton go beyond just traffic congestion issues. The wider effects on travel choice, resilience, community severance, safety and freight movement are also significant. The focus is around achieving a total transport system solution which provides better connectivity and travel choice while improving resilience, safety and economic prosperity. The second bridge will also unlock land for future housing.

Final Comments

11. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Canterbury Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-34. We look forward to the next stage of this work.

Kā mihi,

Neil Brown
Mayor

Hamish Riach
Chief Executive