



We are Generation Zero Ōtautahi, a group of young climate justice organisers focused on mobilising people around action-oriented campaigns of hope for a greener, more just planet. We wholeheartedly agree with the statement made by the RTC that people must be centred in the design of transport networks as these transport networks only exist because of people and for people. There has been an increasing trend of deaths and injuries on our roads - in comparisons of 2022 to 2017, car deaths have increased by 5.7%, with cyclist deaths increasing from 12 (on averages from 2017-2019) to 19 in 2022. The same data also shows that young people (those aged between 15-24) are at higher risk and have an overall higher mortality rate (Road Safety Country Profile, 2023). Additionally, and crucially, the effects of climate change are intensifying, with the second half of 2023 seeing an unprecedented almost daily breach of the 1.5C of warming target, as our emissions' reductions goals fail to be met (BBC, 2024). We know that according to Stats NZ (2020), Aotearoa's largest contributor to emissions is transport, contributing 38% to gross emissions. This is why we see the transport network as instrumental to a safe and sustainable future for all, and is why we demand change.

We are submitting our recommendations to urge the RTC to prioritise the wellbeing of people and the planet in its Regional Land Transport Plan for the 2024-2034. Our suggestions are as follows:

**1. Include a more thorough mitigation plan rather than solely focusing on an adaption plan.**

Although climate change adaptation is important to include in transport plans because the effects of the climate crisis are already being felt and will increasingly be felt, overfocusing on adaptation leaves very few resources for mitigation. Given that we are living in a 'code red for humanity' (IPCC), doing everything in our power to limit any further damage is absolutely necessary. We urge the RTC to adopt much more ambitious emissions reduction targets (AT LEAST 50% by 2035) and to substantially change the plan because it currently would increase the region's emissions as a whole. One effective way of doing this is by forcing a mode shift to limit the use of individual vehicles (see suggestion 2). Another way to help reduce emissions could be by introducing green infrastructure (e.g., lining streets with trees) which not only captures GHG emissions but also encourages slower speeds which make it safer for other road users and makes cycling and walking more attractive. By making the roads safer, the council can meet its Road to Zero goals and its mode shift goals.

**2. Realign priorities so that they truly force a mode shift.**

The priorities outlined in the current plan are misaligned and therefore fail to actually push for much needed changes to the ways we move around. In fact, 'focusing on improving roads' and 'maintaining the system' are very automobile-centric priorities and are incompatible with other priorities stated in the plan. For instance, another goal in the RLTP is 'managing the risk of exposure to extreme weather events'. Reality is, transport emissions in



Canterbury will inevitably increase with the projected population growth and will so more dramatically if personal vehicles are still considered the norm, accelerating climate change and the extreme weather events that are induced by it.

We suggest the following actions be adopted:

- De-prioritise funding for highways, as these will create more traffic
  - For instance, the Woodend bypass should have much lower priority.  
Generation Zero strongly disagrees that ‘a four lane bypass in Woodend is suitable’, and instead would like the RTC to recognise the *effect that adding highways has on changes to land use*.<sup>1</sup>
- Fund urban cycleways as these have tremendous benefit-cost ratios, particularly in areas where the community has missed out on having a cycleway. For instance, we urge the RTC to add these cycleways into the plan:
  - Pages Road cycleway to New Brighton;
  - Northeast cycleway to Shirley;
  - Northwest cycleway to Harewood.
- Fund and prioritise projects that make public transport more attractive than driving. We suggest funding dedicated bus lanes (and we suggest changing existing road lanes to become bus lanes rather than widening roads) as travel speed is often a barrier to mode change.
- The regional and local councils should be explicitly planning and preparing business cases for rail and rapid transit infrastructure upgrades (both big and small) and securing the corridors to enable this in the next 10 years, instead of waiting and hoping for some magical new transportation technology that will suddenly allow Canterbury to meet its emission reduction goals in time. The Canterbury region should focus on ensuring we have planned out how we want to grow and prepare shovel ready projects ready to go when government funding becomes available. A failure by the regional council to properly plan ahead and create concrete plans has meant we have been missing out on the majority of government transport funding which has instead been redirected to other regions.

### 3. Cease relying on innovative future technology for changes.

We need a system change which puts mass rapid transit, passenger/freight rail, and active transport as the core way of moving people and goods. We must stop making driving the most attractive option and stop making things easy for the environmentally and socially destructive automobile industry. We need safer and greener streets, as these are the ones that help to improve community health, reduce carbon emissions and improve community cohesion. We should be actively investing in rail infrastructure as the proven way to move people and freight in an efficient and low emission manner, while getting trucks off the road.

We find the scoring in Appendix 07 of the plan unacceptable. The Climate Impact Assessments indicate that *‘local road and state highway maintenance, operations and renewals maintains the status quo and scores slightly negatively (-1)’* on emissions impact

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<sup>1</sup> As we add highways, it induces more people to drive, allowing people to live further away from their daily needs (new residential subdivisions). Australian transport policy expert Litman (2024) states that *‘If road capacity expands, peak-period trips increase until congestion again limits further traffic growth. The additional travel is called “generated traffic”’* (Litman, 2024).

(more emissions). We would argue scoring -1 out of a scale of +3 to -3 is substantially negative, especially as we see the impacts of the climate crisis unfold. However, the conclusion by the RTC states that this negative score is acceptable because '*different vehicle technology could in theory support a more positive emissions outcome*'. This statement is unproven and uncalculated (how are the emissions and environmental impacts of building these new technologies considered here?)

By taking trucks off our roads and moving freight onto sea and rail, we will reduce our emissions and spend less on road/highway maintenance, allowing us to spend those funds elsewhere.

**Concluding remarks:**

Generation Zero supports an intentional, sustainable and people-centric approach to designing transport networks. We draw on the whakatauki He tangata:

*He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!*

*What is the most important thing in the world? It is people! It is people! It is people!*

We believe that it is strongly unacceptable to have a plan that does not prioritise projects/policy/planning to allow us to achieve the plan's headline of a 41% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, this plan results in a negative overall impact on emissions.

*The overall climate impact rating of the draft 2024-34 Canterbury RLTP investment programme is -0.51 (on a scale of -3 to +3). This is a slightly negative overall impact on emissions.*

We must act now, for our communities today.

We thank you for your consideration,

Carley Dove-McFalls, Nick Reid and Rosa Shaw for Generation Zero Ōtautahi.