



1 March 2021

Submission on the HBRC Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 Draft for consultation

Introduction

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission Ara Hikoi Aotearoa is the Crown agent responsible for providing leadership on outdoor access issues.

Our role is to provide New Zealanders with free, certain, enduring and practical access to the outdoors.

We administer a national strategy on outdoor access, including tracks and trails. We map outdoor access, provide information to the public, oversee a code of responsible conduct in the outdoors, help resolve access disputes and negotiate new access.

The Commission has a team in Wellington and a network of regional field advisors. An independent board governs our work. Our governing piece of legislation is the Walking Access Act 2008.

Much of our work focuses on active transport. We support the creation, maintenance, enhancement and promotion of walking and cycling both for recreation and for commuting to local destinations such as schools, places of work and shops.

Support for the draft plan

We note the draft plan has been developed by the Hawke's Bay Regional Transport Committee, which is a joint committee of the region's councils, as well as Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.

The Commission supports the broad approach of the draft plan with its emphasis on multi-modal transport encouraging active transport. Active transport such as walking and cycling improves health, safety and sustainable travel.

The Commission notes the statutes and policy and planning documents (chapter 4) that provide the legislative and policy context for land transport planning and investment at the national, regional and local level. These have informed the development of this Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP). Walking and cycling priorities support the RLTP Regional Policy Statement objectives. These include reducing dependency on private motor vehicles and promoting the use of active transport modes, with the Regional Cycle Plan providing priorities.

Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy 2017 includes the following key approaches for transport that involve walking and cycling:

- encouraging public transport, walking and cycling in urban areas
- ensuring that suburban areas have well-planned and connected transport networks, including providing for walking and cycling
- recognising the positive relationship between increased residential densities and greater use of public transport, walking and cycling

District plans realise these objectives. We encourage local authorities to include objectives, policies and rules in their plans that achieve links and connections for walkers and cyclists through good urban design and tracks and trails planning. Open space, parks and reserves can provide safe off-road links. Unformed legal roads are available for public access and offer potential for walking and cycling.

We support the policies (chapter 6) that the Regional Transport Committee and the member organisations consider walking and cycling when making decisions that affect transport networks. These policies help achieve safe transport, resilience, carbon neutrality, transport choices and land use planning.

We note the Prioritised Programme of Significant Activities (chapter 9) includes specific walking and cycling implementation. We suggest that the plan should include capacity for walking and cycling in the design of other new and improved roading projects at the conceptual stage. This will future proof them against RLTP objectives.

Recommendations

Road safety: The plans 10-year transport priorities (chapter 7) set out the most urgent and significant problems that require management action over the next 10 years. Road safety is one of the priorities. The region's extensive rural road network is a huge resource for potential walking and cycling connectivity. Poorly maintained rural roads affect the safety of active transport. They also create a greater road-safety risk for road users in general. This region has a poor road safety record. We recommend that the plan ensures there is sufficient funding to maintain and protect the roading infrastructure, so the safety of rural roads does not impact active transport and recreation.

Transport Priority 3: The Commission is interested in transport choice. Hawke's Bay has a substantial network of unformed legal roads managed by its councils. It is important that councils retain these unformed legal roads as they have significant value. In some locations, they could provide the opportunity to develop alternative off-road routes which allow people to cycle and walk safely. This results in a greater likelihood of increased trips. To help achieve

the objectives in the plan the Commission recommends that the HBRC and Waka Kotahi encourage the local councils within the region to have access-friendly policies on managing and retaining unformed legal roads and access-friendly policies for road stopping. We have expertise in each of these areas and would be happy to help the councils develop policies where they do not have them. We can provide examples that other councils have adopted.

For more information, please contact:

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