

29 March 2021

## Submission on the Otago Southland 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.

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 and unformed legal roads (ULR) are available for public access with potential for walking and cycling.

### Support for the draft plan

We note the draft plan has been developed by Otago Regional Council (ORC) and Southland Regional Council (ES) jointly with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi). The Commission supports the approach of inter-regional collaboration and integration of land transport across the Southland and Otago regions. There are strong linkages in walking and biking access across the lower South Island including the Central Otago Trail Network Links project, Around the Mountain and the Te Araroa Trail.

The Commission supports the broad approach of the draft plan and, in particular, supports multi modal transport encouraging active transport such as walking and cycling to improve health, safety and sustainable travel while reducing dependency on private motor vehicles.

The Commission supports the vision of the draft RLTP - *A transport system providing integrated, quality choices that are safe, environmentally sustainable and support the regions wellbeing and prosperity.*

We note the following identified priority areas:

1. advocacy for transportation in the South Island, including tracking how Central Government investment including the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) etc. is being allocated across the country;
2. resilience of the transport network;
3. freight journeys across the South Island;
4. tourism journey improvements across the South Island;
5. an enabling funding approach for innovative multi-modal (road, rail, air, sea) solutions;
6. explore opportunities for inter-regional public transport.

The Commission supports these priorities where they seek to provide a more equitable and active transport network that benefit the health, environment and general wellbeing of all communities.

The Commission acknowledges that, as a result of Covid-19, the tourism landscape has changed significantly in the south. This is an opportunity to provide better travel choices, that are more affordable than driving, to ensure continued access for those who may have their incomes reduced.

## Recommendations

### 1. **Objective 1 – Prioritise high risk areas to create a safe transport system free of death or serious injury.**

Speed is a risk factor on urban and rural roads not only for vehicle drivers but active transport users. The Commission recommends:

- Speed reductions on urban residential roads to improve safety for active transporters.
- Infrastructure that provides separation between active transporters and vehicles.
- Ensuring rural road corridors used by trail users or active transporters are fit for purpose.

### 2. **Objective 2 - Prioritise maintenance and renewal to ensure the road network is fit-for-purpose and resilient.**

This should include prioritising provision of active transport infrastructure on urban and rural road corridors.

### 3. **Objective 3 - Develop a range of travel choices that are used by communities and business to connect.**

- Public transport – will be an increasingly important travel mode. The Commission recommends that integration, perhaps through smart technology, with other modes such as cycling is given higher priority to facilitate more journeys. For example, buses in the Wakatipu carry bikes but capacity is often limited.
- Active transport – will be increasingly important for the huge benefits that it will provide to individuals, community and the environment. The Commission recommends infrastructure

to support this such as covered bike parking, e-bike/scooter charging stations and pedestrian crossing islands. The Commission notes research by the Electric City project on increasing e-bike use (see below) and journal article *Cyclists are the happiest commuters* as supporting evidence.

**4. Objective 4 - Facilitate understanding and support responses that help meet environmental and emissions targets.**

Climate change – a radical transformation of people and goods movement will be required in order to meet anticipated government climate change goals. The Commission recommends a greater share of funding is invested in active transport to assist in achieving these goals and that this is clearly articulated in the RLTP as a proportion of overall spend, increasing over time.

**5. Objective 5 - Position the regions to ensure proactive responses to change and challenges**

- Regional and district plans – the movement of people, vehicles, goods and services cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider planning context. Tight integration with urban and regional development plans is essential to address immediate need and to provide for future needs. The Commission recommends provision of active transport in all new developments and connection to existing networks.
- The development and investment in joined up active transport infrastructure is key to creating change.

In addition, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

6. Unformed legal roads – the Otago Southland district has a substantial network of unformed legal roads. These have significant current and potential future value particularly for active transport. The Commission recommends that the Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plan commits to creating an unformed legal road policy that requires all potential applicants to consult with the Commission prior to submission and that all formal applications are evaluated by the Commission.
7. The Commission notes that while public transport uptake in Dunedin and Queenstown has increased it has decreased in Invercargill. Research into the barriers to residents using PT is warranted to determine if resources could be more successfully applied to active transport given that Invercargill's topography lends itself to cycling and it has a significant portion of students.

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**Electric City's 10 recommendations:**

1. Provide more separated cycle lanes.
2. Provide free-flowing, protected cycle highways within the 15km e-bike 'goldilocks zone'.
3. Separate pedestrians from cyclists where possible.
4. If an e-bike speed cut out is introduced, it is recommended that it be 32km/hr rather than 25km/hr.
5. Reduce the speed limits on more urban roads to 30km/hr.
6. Provide opportunities for people to try out an e-bike for a trial period of two weeks.
7. Reduce the cost of e-bikes.
8. Create a new 'E-bikes at work' website
9. Investigate opportunities to make e-bikes available to low-income people.
10. Provide more secure bike parking, with e-bike charging facilities.

<https://www.bikeauckland.org.nz/electric-city-academic-research-tells-us-future-e-bikes/>

*Cyclists are the happiest commuters* <https://cpb-ap-se2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.auckland.ac.nz/dist/c/520/files/2018/06/Why-are-cyclists-the-happiest-commuters.pdf>