

19 March 2021

# Submission on Proposed Te Taihu Regional Land Transport Plan

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

Our role is to provide advice on 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 to resolve access issues 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 access, both for recreation and for commuting to local destinations such as schools, places of work and shops.

## Support for the Strategy

The Commission notes that the Proposed Te Taihu Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) has been developed by Waka Kotahi, the Marlborough District Council and the Tasman District Council. The Commission supports the approach of inter-regional collaboration and integration of land transport across the Tasman and Marlborough regions and Nelson district. There are strong linkages in walking and biking access across Te Taihu including three Great Rides, Heartland Rides, Te Araroa Trail, and planned Whale Trail from Waitohi/Picton to Kaikōura. Active transport promotes health, minimises carbon emissions and provides “slow” tourism opportunities for visitors from other parts of New Zealand and potentially overseas.

The Commission supports the vision of the RLTP - to have a safe and connected region that is livable, accessible, and sustainable (p2)

## Recommendations

The Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough District Councils have a substantial network of unformed legal roads. These have significant current and potential future value, playing a central role in RLTP plans to develop a network of connecting trails and access points which allow people to get around the area by bike and foot. It is important that these unformed legal roads be retained.

**Recommendation 1:** The Commission recommends that the Te Taihu Regional Land Transport Plan commit to creating an access-friendly unformed legal roads policy.

The Marlborough and Tasman District Councils and Nelson City Councils already ask parties wanting to stop legal roads to first contact the Commission for feedback. Only once that is received, can they apply to the relevant Council. The Commission requests that this practice become policy.

Auckland Transport, Hurunui District Council and Rangitikei District Council and Taupō District Council (the latter following a submission from the Commission) have similar well-formed policies that Te Taihū could draw upon. We recommend using the Commission’s Guidelines for the Management of Unformed Legal Roads as a best practice template.

### Priorities/focus

Walking and biking has been omitted from shared priorities of the South Island Regional Transport Committee Chairs Group (Foreword, RLTP p3). This is out of step with central government thinking and priorities especially around climate change. The Commission recommends the insertion of:

*Increasing and improving the connectiveness and safety of cycling and walking routes across the South Island, within and between settlements. (Recommendation 2)*

Walking and biking access has also been omitted as a focus in the RLTP which includes supporting economic and population growth; improving safety; improving travel choice and resilience (P7) The Commission suggests the addition of:

*safe provision of active modes of transport (biking, walking, skateboards, scooters, e-bikes etc) within and between regions. (Recommendation 3)*

### Key transport issues

**Key transport issues** are identified in the Te Taihū Draft RLTP. The Commission supports bullet points 2 and 3 (p7):

- safety on our roads
- the design of our transport system is constraining access for those wanting to use more sustainable modes

### Strategic context (pp11-15)

The Commission recommends opening this section with the following (based on the Taupō District Council Draft Transport Strategy) to broaden context:

*Transport is our means of connecting to people and places. It connects us to job opportunities, education, health services, shops and essentials – like groceries and medicine. It connects us to our friends, families and communities. It connects us to social and cultural places – like marae or church. It connects us to and provides recreational experiences and social activities. It connects our goods to our customers, supporting our jobs and livelihoods. (Recommendation 4)*

The Commission notes that transport challenges are included solely in the preamble to the report. It is recommended that challenges be added to strategic context including the following relating to active transport:

## Challenges

Significant safety challenges will be faced in achieving the targets<sup>1</sup> of increasing walking, biking and other forms of active transport while improving safety given:

- projected 15% population growth over the next 15 years (p11)
- significant residential growth in townships surrounding urban centres, (p12)
- a steady increase in the 65+ age group, which, at 21 percent, is much higher than the New Zealand average of 15 percent (p13)
- a 43% increase in road travel from 2001-2018 at a time when population increased 23% (p16)
- projected 19% growth in freight volumes from 2022 to 2042 with an accompanying 4-5% growth in heavy vehicles, 35% growth in Cook Strait traffic (p20)
- Cyclists as are identified at being at higher risk in Te Taihū than most other regions (p25) (Recommendation 5)

## Tangata whenua (p 14)

Te Taihū tangata whenua are listed but there is no mention of how they will be included in active transport planning or benefit from results. The Commission recommends that the following be added:

*That Te Taihū tangata whenua be consulted on Land Transport policies and encouraged to participate in planning for active modes of transport/cultural trails etc. (Recommendation 6)*

## Crash History (p 17)

We note the significantly higher number of fatal and serious injury crashes involving vulnerable users (partially obscured by the variable graph scales) and suggest that these statistics are not adequately addressed in the Te Taihū Draft RLTP.

## Active transport (p 23)

The RLTP says:

*Te Taihū ... has a significantly higher proportion of commuting cyclists than the New Zealand average, with Nelson having the highest proportion of employees travelling to work by cycle in NZ (6.6% vs 2.2%) reflecting substantial investment in cycling networks over the last 15 years. Many cycle to education (11.1% vs 3.8%). Urban cycle facilities, including on-road and share path facilities, often do not join up to create a cohesive network ..."*

In Tasman and Marlborough, the percentage biking to work (4.4%, 3.6%) is closer to the national average (p23). The proportion biking to education is similar across the regions and significantly above the national average (9.2%, 10.7% vs 3.8%) although still behind Nelson.

The Commission recommends that this information be used to inform objectives, targets and priority investment areas. (Recommendation 7).

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to amended targets, p6 in this submission

Insertion of the following is recommended. (Recommendation 8)

*“RTL investment in doubling active travel in Te Taihū will prioritise Tasman and Marlborough, drawing from learnings in Nelson.” (also include this in table 6, p 36)*

The RLTP says:

*“Urban cycle facilities, including on-road and share path facilities, often do not join up to create a cohesive network ....”*

The Commission recommends insertion of the following:

*“RTL investment in increasing doubling active travel in Te Taihū will prioritise the connecting of cycle on-road and share path facilities, especially urban routes.” (Recommendation 9, also include in table 6, p 36)*

Table 6 (p23) highlights the lack of cohesive network but is inaccurate.

*The Commission recommends that this be replaced. (Recommendation 10).*

For example, Table 6 does not show the formed cycle route from the northern entrance to Blenheim to Spring Creek or the planned 210km Whale Trail connecting coastal communities from Picton to Kaikōura (although the Whale Trail is included in the table showing regionally significant expenditure from other funding sources, p58).

The omission of the planned Whale Trail is surprising given that over one third of the route is owned by KiwiRail, Waka Kotahi NZTA, NCTIR and the Department of Conservation. The project gained \$18 million from Government’s Infrastructure Industry Reference Group and \$2 million from the Marlborough District Council (Marlborough Express 4/12/21) with the Marlborough District Council to contribute \$2 million in 2020-22 and MBIE’s Covid-19 Response and Recovery Fund \$18 million. Work is underway with contractors currently sought for vegetation clearance, earthworks etc. on the Picton to Seddon section.

### Walking (p 24)

The Te Araroa Trail (TAT) passes through the Nelson and Marlborough Districts including sections on formed road where multiple walkers are exposed to danger – from Havelock to Kaiuma Bridge, for example. The Link Pathway on the secondary road from Picton to Havelock also has off-road access gaps.

The Commission recommends the following insertion:

*Most urban areas have pedestrian footpaths along both sides of a road ... Rural areas generally do not have any walking facilities and pedestrians have to share the road, often in high-speed environments. Sections of long-distance walking and biking trails are on busy highways and secondary roads. Intersections, driveways, lack of ... for vulnerable users.” (Recommendation 11)*

Amend table 6 (p36) to include the following (Outcomes/Healthy and safe people/ RLTP Priority investment areas): *shifting nationally and regionally significant walking trails off-road.* (Recommendation 12)

### Outcomes – residential growth (p 27 and p 36 Table 6 RLTP priority investment areas)

The Commission supports investment in outcomes including good walking and cycling corridors in high density areas and connectivity. It supports working alongside other key land use strategy documents to achieve these outcomes.

The Commission agrees that lack of connectivity in cycling routes is a problem, e.g., people must bike on SH1 through Blenheim to reach the cycle track which starts at the town's northern entrance at the old Grove Bridge, cycle lanes to the western entrance to Blenheim are not continuous.

### Outcomes – active transport demand (p 29)

The Commission supports investment in outcomes including good walking and cycling corridors in high density.

### Strategy, vision, targets, objectives and policies (p 29)

The Commission supports the following strategic objectives and related policies with the following inserts/deletions. (Recommendation 13):

Objective 1: Mode choice – Communities are connected with access to a range of travel choices to meet social, economic, health, *recreational* and cultural needs.

Policy 1. Include appropriate facilities for cyclists, pedestrians and mobility device users within the transport network. *Extend and connect walking and cycling routes.*

Policy 2. Encourage and support people to choose walking and cycling for an active and healthy lifestyle *by investment in infrastructure to create new walking and cycling routes, connect existing routes, education programmes targeted at encouraging more people to walk and cycle, setting, implementing and reviewing strategic direction at regular intervals*

Objective 2, safety and related policies

Policy 1: Increase safe travel through improvement of transport networks. *Identify roads requiring engineering intervention to reduce cycle/pedestrian serious injuries and deaths<sup>2</sup>*

Objective 4: Supporting economic *prosperity* through providing better access across the Top of the South's key journey routes (*comment – given necessary response to climate change, growth may become an outdated target*)

Objective 6: environmental outcomes, add:

*Policy 4: encourage and support people to choose walking and cycling to reduce road traffic and carbon emissions*

### Targets (p29, Table 6, pp 36-37)

The Commission supports the following RLTP target: 50% reduction in deaths and serious injuries on roads by 2030.

And suggests that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the reduction of these injuries involving vulnerable users.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer RLTP p45

Public transport and active travel are different targets requiring different policies. For this reason, the Commission requests that the active travel/public transport target be separated as follows: (Recommendation 14)

- Double the use of active travel mode share by 2030
- Double the use of and public transport mode share by 2030

### Vision (table 6, pp 36 and 37)

The Commission supports the RLTP vision of a safe and connected region that is liveable, accessible and sustainable

Healthy and safe people – the Commission supports this priority investment area but recommends the following insertion (Recommendation 15):

*safe and connected cycling and walking routes within and between settlements*

Inclusive access – support

Environmental sustainability – the Commission supports this priority investment area but recommends the addition of cycling *and walking* networks (Recommendation 16)

### Programming and funding /significant-other activities (pp53-58, p14, Ten-year forecast table, pp 59-61)

Funding allocated by the Marlborough District Council to walking and cycling improvements from 2021/22-2030/31 (approximately \$6.7 million) is significantly less than from the Tasman District (approximately \$36 million) and Nelson City (approximately \$40 million) Councils. Based on a population of 54,600 for Nelson, 52389 for Tasman and 47,340 for Marlborough, this equates to: Nelson \$732/head, Tasman \$687/head, Marlborough \$141/head (or \$184/head if Whale Trail Council expenditure is added).

Given that percentage of people biking to work in Marlborough is considerably behind Nelson and Tasman and percentages biking to education also lag, the Commission is concerned at this discrepancy. About 4 to 5 times more is spent in Nelson and Tasman than Marlborough. The Commission recommends that:

*More equitable funding be dedicated to walking and cycling improvements across Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough with a considerably increased budget in Marlborough. (Recommendation 17).*

The Commission notes that works to improve motorists' safety on roads may increase the level of danger to cyclists and pedestrians. Road barriers, such as those on SH1 between Tua Marina and Picton, are an example.

*The Commission recommends that this is taken into account when planning and implementing safety improvements. (Recommendation 18)*

### Monitoring indicator framework (pp 64,65)

Objective – inclusive access, healthy and safe people. Support, but *recommends that these support specified targets*, e.g., doubling of walking and cycling, 50% reduction in deaths and injuries by 2021. (Recommendation 19)

The Commission would welcome to opportunity to speak to our submission.

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