greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Ngauranga to Wellington Airport - Draft Corridor Plan

1. Purpose

To obtain the Committee's approval to forward the draft corridor plan for the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor to the Regional Land Transport Committee so that it can carry out public consultation prior to final adoption.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

3.1 Process to date – overview

The Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Strategic Transport study was a joint study between Transit NZ, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Wellington City Council. It aimed to address transport issues between the bottom of Ngauranga Gorge and Wellington Airport and the hospital, and to plan for the city's expected growth. Transit is the lead agency, contributing 80% of the funding, with the other partners contributing 10% each.

The study commenced in 2006 with the release of a brochure seeking to identify issues and needs for the study area, 46 submissions were received. These submissions were used, together with technical input from the study consultants (Opus International) to generate a series of options and proposals. From 6 December last year to 22 February this year, the second stage of consultation was undertaken. Submissions received are summarised below (section 3.4).

The study has resulted in a draft plan for the corridor. It is the last corridor plan in the region. Other corridor plans include the Wairarapa Corridor Plan

(adopted in 2003); the Hutt Corridor Plan (2003) and the Western Corridor Plan (2006).

3.2 Strategic context and vision for the corridor

3.2.1 New Zealand Land Transport Strategy

The New Zealand Transport Strategy (NZTS), adopted by the Government in 2002 (subsequently incorporated in the Land Transport Management Act 2003) contains the following overall vision:

By 2010 New Zealand will have an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable transport system.

This is underpinned by five objectives:

- Assisting economic development
- Assisting safety and personal security
- Improving access and mobility
- Protecting and promoting public health
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.

3.2.2 Wellington Regional Strategy

These objectives were incorporated into the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS), which has "investment in regional form" as one of its three components. Within this component a sub-heading is "Integrating Transport with Urban and Rural Needs".

3.2.3 Regional Land Transport Strategy

The WRS aims are supported by the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) which contains the following region wide strategic targets:

- Increased peak period passenger transport mode share
- Increased mode share for pedestrians and cyclists
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduced severe road congestion
- Improved regional road safety
- Improved land use and transport integration
- Improved regional freight efficiency.

The RLTS also contains a detailed vision statement for the Ngauranga-Airport Corridor:

"Along the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor, access to key destinations such as CentrePort, Wellington City CBD, Newtown Hospital and the International Airport will be efficient, reliable, quick and easy. Priority will be given to public transport through this corridor, particularly during the peak period. Public transport will provide a very high quality, reliable, safe service along the Wellington City Growth

Spine and other key commuter routes. The road network will provide well for those trips which cannot be made by alternative modes and will allow freight to move freely through the corridor. Traffic congestion through the corridor will be managed at levels that balance the need for access against the ability to fully provide for peak demands due to community impacts and cost constraints. Maximum use of the existing network will be achieved by removal of key bottlenecks on the road and rail networks."

3.2.4 Wellington City Council Strategies

Wellington City Council's Transport Strategy and Urban Development Strategy seek to achieve the following 'on the ground' outcomes:

- Concentrate future population and employment growth along the Growth Spine, supported by:
  - A dedicated, high quality and high frequency public transport corridor
  - A high quality state highway route with dependable travel times
  - Bus priority along connecting arterial routes
  - Convenient and safe walking and cycling routes
- Limit commuter parking in the Central Area
- Improve access to the waterfront
- Comprehensive travel demand management (TDM) programme.

3.3 Issues identified through data analysis

Specific issues that have been identified in the corridor include:

- The capacity of the motorway system on the approach to Wellington CBD from the north, where SH1 and SH2 merge at Ngauranga Gorge;
- The increased number of trips associated with the airport, coupled with the need for the majority of the region's population (to the north of the CBD) to pass through the CBD;
- The capacity of the Mount Victoria tunnel and the Basin Reserve, and the effect that these bottlenecks have on the accessibility of the route between the airport (and adjacent suburbs) and the CBD;
- The capacity of the Terrace Tunnel, particularly the single lane in the southbound direction and the impact this has on utilising the full capacity of the remainder of the motorway network;
- The heavy volumes of traffic that use the waterfront route, and the resulting severance or "disconnection" between the waterfront and the CBD;
- The need for commuters to make a mode change at the railway station due to it being located on the northern edge of the CBD, along with the impact of the significant numbers of people who walk to their destination in the CBD from the railway station;
- The need to maintain good accessibility to/from key locations that are essential to the economic and/or social wellbeing of the region; and

- Increased demand for additional high quality and reliable passenger transport services and routes.

Emerging issues that have been identified include increasing travel demand as a result of increasing population and predicted increases in vehicle usage in the Wellington Region, in particular with respect to the Wellington CBD and associated major regional facilities (such as the airport and port). This will put pressure on the existing transport network and services, parts of which are already at, or very close to, capacity at peak times. Amongst the key high-level challenges facing Wellington City that need to be addressed with respect to those issues identified above are:

- Accommodating an overall increase in travel demand;
- Accommodating an increasing number of commuter trips to the CBD;
- Increasing the level of 'penetration' of passenger transport into the CBD to facilitate/encourage a change in transport mode choices;
- Providing relief to existing (and future) 'choke points';
- Accommodating an increasing number of trips to/from the port and airport as passenger and freight movements increase;
- Enhancing opportunities to cater for active modes of transport such as walking and cycling; and
- Integrating urban form considerations into transport planning.

3.4 Consultation results and issues

The response rate to the consultation document released on 6 December 2008 was very positive. The number and breakdown of submissions was as follows:

Type	Quantity
Green Alliance Postcards	3750
Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce Postcards	482
Online Questionnaire Forms (WCC Website)	204
Emails	95
Post/Letter	71
Other	71
Total	**4673**

The main themes of the consultation were (not in any particular order):

- General concern about reliance on fossil fuels and the effect of climate change
- Concern about funding priorities being directed away from Transmission Gully
- Support for active transport modes (walking and cycling)
- General support for and acceptance of the need for public transport
- General acceptance of the need to upgrade the city's public transport system, which took the form of support for bus priority measures, busways or light rail
- Strong numerical support for light rail expressed through the postcard campaign

- A range of advantages and disadvantages identified for the Ngauranga-Aotea traffic management proposals
- The main benefits of the Terrace Tunnel tidal flow was low cost while a range of practical disadvantages were identified
- The Terrace Tunnel duplication was seen by some as reducing peak time congestion and providing a continuous motorway through the city but others as having a number of disadvantages including high cost and environmental damage
- The Adelaide Road boulevard attracted a variety of responses, both positive and negative (further consultation on this project is currently being undertaken by Wellington City Council)
- The Basin Reserve improvements were seen as providing an effective solution to traffic but also as impacting on amenity (visual and noise) and creating an obstruction to pedestrians and cyclists accessing Newtown
- Mt Victoria Tunnel duplication was seen as providing congestion relief and improved traffic flow, but others felt it would encourage increased vehicle flow into the city and have amenity, heritage and environmental impacts
- The Ruahine Street and Wellington Road improvements were seen by some as a cost effective way of improving traffic flows, but others were concerned about the demolition of houses and removal of trees and saw it only as a short term solution that would affect the safety of pedestrians and cyclists
- The Cobham Drive roundabouts were seen by some as being effective in reducing congestion while others perceived them as only a short term solution.

A copy of the consultation summary report is available from Greater Wellington offices on request.

4. Comment

4.1 The draft Plan

The draft Plan (**Attachment 1**) is divided into two parts:

- Measures required to meet current needs or those which will arise in the next 10 years
- Longer term measures which are not expected to be required until beyond 10 years.

4.2 Development principles for the draft plan

Over the past five years, a number of global issues have gained increasing prominence including the forecasted impact of greenhouse emissions on climate, the probable effects of unstable and increasing oil prices, possible technological responses to these developments and forecast plateauing of global populations. It is apparent that the future is uncertain and the pace of change is accelerating.

These issues mean that it is no longer appropriate to simply plan for "business as usual" in transport. However we have no certainty that current demand and growth trends will not continue. For example, under one scenario, the private car will cease to be affordable because of carbon charges and oil price increases. Under this scenario, it might be prudent to plan for no additional expenditure on roads and all investment to be in public transport (PT), travel demand management (TDM) and other low carbon / low oil alternatives. Another scenario is that affordable substitutes for powering private vehicles will be found out of the hundreds of research initiatives which are occurring around the world, and that demand for cars will continue to grow as it has from the dawn of this invention. This scenario would call for roading initiatives to be part of the planning for the city.

What is apparent is that now, perhaps more than any other time in history, the future is unknowable and that our best predictions are likely to be inaccurate. Nevertheless it is also clear that we cannot abdicate from the process of planning. This implies a need to make plans for the corridor that are responsive and adaptive to change.

For these reasons, the draft corridor plan:

- Identifies elements that may be required for the future of the city based on current knowledge of possible scenarios
- Aims to protect the routes or locations of those elements to ensure that they are available if required
- Sets out the assumptions used in developing the plan and indicates when the plan is to be reviewed
- Predicts the timing of each of the measures or investments which appear in the plan based on current knowledge
- Is intended to be sufficiently flexible to cope if the assumptions prove to be inaccurate.

The planning assumptions underpinning the plan are set out in it. The plan is intended to be a living document that will be adapted as the environment changes. For example, if oil price increases or carbon charges substantially reduce the demand for private transport, those projects required for private vehicle demand would be delayed or even eliminated. Conversely, if affordable alternatives for powering private motor vehicles continue to be available, these projects would be expected to proceed as planned.

As part of the development process, transport modelling of a range of investment scenarios was undertaken to determine the impact of these scenarios on the pattern of travel in the future and on the outcomes desired under the strategic framework. These scenarios included light rail with minor roading improvements, busway systems with and without major investments in the roading infrastructure, and substantial improvements to the roading infrastructure with only minor PT improvements.

Successful cities around the world were looked at to identify whether they had lessons that were relevant to the Wellington context. These cities included

Copenhagen (Denmark), Curitiba (Brazil), Freiburg (Germany) and Portland (USA).

The consistent findings from both streams of work were that in order to address the identified issues to provide for expected growth in the city and surrounding regional network, and to facilitate the development of a city that meets best practice internationally, a balanced transport plan is required which contains the following elements:

- Travel demand management measures to reduce the number of car trips (particularly sole occupant) and encourage alternatives such as public transport, walking, cycling and telecommuting
- A high quality, high frequency public transport spine to cater for travel growth, reduce vehicle congestion, improve liveability; guide and support urban intensification
- A high quality 'predictable' vehicle 'ring route' for inter-regional accessibility, economic linkages, time critical travel and to support the PT network
- Walking routes to cater for the substantial numbers of people who walk and encourage growth in these numbers, also essential for urban vitality
- Cycling routes and facilities to facilitate the development of this small but growing transport mode.

As part of the evaluation work, transport modelling was carried out on the greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts of a wide range of scenarios. This analysis showed that none of the scenarios modelled would result in a significant change to GHG emissions within the region. Modelling was also done to investigate the impact of substantial future fuel price increases which showed that a 30% increase in fuel prices would reduce demand on the roading network. In practice, such increases could delay or even eliminate those roading infrastructure improvements that were not required to meet public transport requirements. Similar 'sensitivity tests' will be done as large projects are developed to ensuring that the effects of any substantial increase in private vehicle operating costs are factored into decision making.

4.3 Wider network implications

The draft corridor plan has been developed in the context of a wider transport network, and the interdependencies have formed a key part of the data used in the study. Included in the analysis were planned network improvements on State Highways 1 and 2 north of Ngauranga interchange. Capacity improvements on SH1, and in particular the construction of Transmission Gully are not expected to result in additional traffic being delivered to the base of the Ngauranga Gorge because of the capacity constraint in the Gorge itself. In addition, improvements planned on SH2, including the Dowse to Petone upgrade, the Melling Interchange improvements and the upgrade to the intersection at SH58, have been included in the analysis. The planned Grenada to Gracefield road has also been factored in.

On the public transport side, the impact of planned increases in rail frequencies on the Hutt line and the planned capacity and service improvements on the

Paraparaumu Line have also been considered in determining the projected demand for travel within the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport corridor.

The study has also considered the interrelationships between land transport and port operations, the inter-island ferries and the airport.

The draft plan is consistent with and supportive of the current state of knowledge regarding the wider transport network. However, it is recognised that our knowledge will develop and grow over time, and the plan is intended to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate these developments.

4.4 Evaluation of the draft plan against the issues and concerns

A detailed check has been done to ensure that the draft corridor plan addresses the strategic objectives in the New Zealand Transport Strategy, the Wellington Regional Strategy, the Regional Land Transport Strategy, the Wellington City Council's Transport and Urban Development Strategies. A further analysis has been undertaken to ensure all issues and concerns identified during the technical analysis of the corridor and the major issues raised in the consultation process have been taken into account. The draft corridor plan shows the results of these analyses and summarises how each of these is addressed (**Attachment 1**, pages 15-21).

5. Conclusion

The draft corridor plan has been developed through a process of widespread consultation, data analysis and consideration of the city and regional strategic planning context. It is recommended that the Committee endorses the draft plan and agrees to send it to the Regional Land Transport Committee for final consultation before incorporation into the regional transport plan.

6. Next steps

The timetable for completing the corridor plan is as follows:

Item	Date	Responsibility
Consideration of draft plan for consultation release	6, 7 & 8 May	WCC, Greater Wellington, Transit
RLTC releases draft corridor plan in conjunction with Wellington City Council and Transit	4 June	RLTC
Consultation	June - July	WCC, Greater Wellington, Transit
Hearing of submissions	August	RLTC, WCC, Transit
Final plan to partner organisations for consideration	September	WCC, Greater Wellington, Transit

RLTC adopts new corridor plan	October	RLTC
RLTC uses new plan as input to new Regional Land Transport Programme	December	RLTC

7. Communication

The draft plan is also being considered by Wellington City Council and Transit New Zealand. It is being recommended that those organisations agree that the Regional Land Transport Committee undertakes consultation on the draft corridor plan. A media statement will be prepared following those meetings. The Regional Land Transport Committee will consider the detailed consultation plan at its meeting on 4 June. Further communication will follow that meeting.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives** the report.*

2. ***Notes** the content of the report.*

3. ***Agrees** to endorse the draft Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor Plan and forward it to the Regional Land Transport Committee for it to lead a public consultation process in conjunction with study partners Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Transit New Zealand.*

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Attachment 1: Draft Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor Plan – May 2008