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Dear Sir/Madam

Waikato Regional Transport Committee Submission to Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-2034

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-2034. We congratulate Auckland Transport and its transport partners for producing a high-quality document.

We appreciate the ongoing collaboration between the councils in the Waikato region, Auckland Transport and Auckland Council to manage a range of inter-regional transport issues and projects.

Please find attached the Waikato Regional Transport Committee's submission to the draft Auckland RLTP. This submission was reviewed and endorsed by the Chair of the Regional Transport Committee under delegated authority on 17 June 2024.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of this document, please contact Julie Hansen, Senior Policy Advisor Transport and Infrastructure, Transport Policy and Programmes directly on (07) 858 4631 or by email Julie.Hansen@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

We **do not** wish to be heard in respect of this submission.

Regards,

Mich'eal Downard
Chair Regional Transport Committee

Submission from Waikato Regional Transport Committee on the draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan

Introduction

1. This is a submission by the Waikato Regional Transport Committee (RTC). The RTC comprises elected members from Waikato Regional Council and the region's territorial authorities, and regional representatives from NZ Transport Agency, KiwiRail, and CCS Disability Action (Waikato).
2. The Waikato RTC welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan (ARLTP).
3. The Waikato region holds a strategic position in the upper North Island and forms part of the "golden triangle" encompassing Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga/Bay of Plenty. It is vital that cross-boundary issues are adequately addressed through policies and actions in the ARLTP, noting that both regions are part of the Upper North Island Strategic Alliance.
4. We **support** Auckland regional objectives:
 - a. Faster, more reliable public transport
 - b. Network resilience and sound asset management
 - c. Support for the region's economic productivity
 - d. Improved safety and reducing deaths and serious injuries
 - e. Continued decarbonisation of the transport system towards the 2050 target.
5. These objectives are complementary to the Waikato RLTP strategic objectives.

Specific comments

Section 5: Inter-regional priorities

6. As a neighbouring region and key transport partner delivering on inter-regional and upper North Island transport outcomes, we **support** the identification of shared priorities in relation to the importance of the upper North Island transport network, including:
 - a. The golden triangle of Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty
 - b. Economic benefits facilitated by inter-regional transport connections
 - c. Reference to freight hubs in the upper North Island, especially the Ruakura Superhub
 - d. Supporting growth with recognition that there are resultant challenges to be worked on together.

Section 5: Activities of inter-regional significance

7. We **support** the following activities of inter-regional significance outlined in Section 5.
 - a. Projects (both road and rail) that support inter-regional movement of people and goods to key hubs either by road or rail:
 - SH1 Improvements through the NZUP programme. Papakura and Drury and route protection for sections further south to Bombay
 - Maintenance and improvements to safety and efficiency to support growth and productivity
 - Wiri to Quay Park and Third Main Westfield to Wiri
 - Te Huia inter-regional passenger rail between Waikato and Auckland (more on this below)
 - Commencing four-tracking from Westfield to Pukekohe
 - b. SH1 Southern corridor optimisation and capacity improvements
 - c. SH1/29 inter-regional corridor between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga
 - d. SH2 inter-regional corridor between Auckland and Tauranga
 - e. Cross-boundary public transport services
8. These projects are also reflected as inter-regionally significant projects in the Waikato RLTP.

Te Huia inter-regional passenger rail

9. Te Huia is the inter-regional passenger rail service connecting Waikato and Auckland. Despite Covid-19 cancellations and the impacts of multiple projects and maintenance works impacting the Auckland rail network, passenger numbers on this trial have continued to increase and have exceeded initial targets.
10. Central government funding has been confirmed until the end of the 5-year trial, and beyond this, embedding Te Huia as a permanent part of the public transport network is key priority for the Waikato Regional Transport Committee and Waikato Regional Council, and is identified in the Waikato RLTP as such.
11. The Waikato RTC **supports** the inclusion of Te Huia as an inter-regionally significant activity in Section 5 but notes that it refers to the service as being between Hamilton and Papakura. We **request** this is amended to “Te Huia rail passenger services between Waikato and Auckland (The Strand)” to reflect the correct terminus at The Strand (since early 2022) and that towns other than Hamilton along its route are serviced, with plans for additional stops in the north Waikato.
12. We also note the comment that the Te Huia service will be paid for by Waikato Regional Council. Aside from needing to recognise the service is subsidised by central government, the Waikato RTC notes the benefits to Auckland and Aucklanders of having an inter-regional passenger rail service, and repeats its previous requests that Auckland Council / Auckland Transport approve funding for an appropriate portion of the local share funding as a priority.
13. Therefore we **request**:
 - a. A funding contribution for the service from Auckland ratepayers, reflective of the increasing number of passengers who choose to use the service in a southbound direction and the congestion, emissions reduction and road safety benefits of people travelling into Auckland by train rather than by road.
 - b. A commitment to the funding and implementation of stabling and maintenance facilities in Auckland to support a more balanced timetable, including an early morning southbound train from Auckland to Waikato. We note these would also be of immediate benefit to the Northern Explorer service and could enable additional Auckland to Wellington services to operate.

Appendices

14. The RTC **supports** inclusion of programme activities in the Appendices that indicate commitment to Waikato/Auckland inter-regional activities, but seeks some amendments where noted below.
15. We also support other programme activities not included in the list of significant inter-regional activities, but which the RTC considers will have inter-regional benefits.
 - a. Auckland Transport –
 - Park and Ride Programme – **request this be extended** to include consideration of sites outside Auckland Region i.e. in north Waikato. Towns such as Tuakau and Pōkeno are within the functional urban area of Auckland, and the ability to plan and provide transport services in a way that reflects this reality is becoming increasingly important.
 - b. NZ Transport Agency:
 - SH1 Drury CVRSC and Weigh Right Bombay – **support** noting that inspections on heavy vehicles prior to entering the Waikato road network improves safety for all road users in our region.
 - SH1 Drury to Bombay route protection – **support**
 - State Highway planning in response to port future – **support** due to the potential impact on inter-regional freight movements
 - c. KiwiRail
 - 4 tracking Westfield to Pukekohe – **support**
 - KiwiRail strategic future planning – **support**

- Property for passenger fleet stabling – **support** noting that this includes the inter-regional fleet i.e. Te Huia
- d. NZUP Upgrade Capital Programme
 - Drury Stations – **support**
 - Papakura to Pukekohe electrification – **support**
 - Wiri to Quay Park 3rd main – **support** increased capacity on the Auckland rail network to allow for anticipated growth in freight and passenger rail.

Conclusion

17. Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to submit on your draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan and we wish you well with the final stage of your RLTP development process.
18. Overall, the Waikato RTC supports the draft Auckland RLTP. We believe the amendments we are seeking in this submission will strengthen our common policy position and base for combined advocacy on transport matters of inter-regional significance between Auckland and Waikato, and the upper North Island. It will also assist to secure the necessary investment that is of vital importance to inter-regional transport infrastructure and services.