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Dear Sir/Madam,

WRC submission to Horizons RLTP 2024 Submission on the draft Horizon Regional Land Transport Plan (2024 Review).

This submission was formally endorsed by the Waikato Regional Transport Committee under delegated authority of the chair on 11 March 2024.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the draft Horizons Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-2031 (2024 Review). As a neighbouring region and key transport partner, we support Horizons strategic direction with its focus on four core areas: connectivity and access, transport options, safety, and the overarching priority of resilience and climate change.

This direction aligns well with Waikato's draft RLTP and highlights the importance of joined thinking and links between the two regions, particularly to our shared inter-regional strategic corridors:

- o State Highway 1;
- o State Highway 4; and
- o North Island Main Trunk rail line.

We commend the Horizons Regional Transport Committee on developing a comprehensive and robust document, which looks to address land transport issues that are of mutual significance to the Waikato region. This alignment relates particularly to the shared importance of providing a more resilient, connected and efficient land transport system that reduces the impact of transport on the environment. We are also committed to improving the transport options available and the safety of the network.

Key submission points

We note that your draft plan specifically comments on the Waikato Region having a priority emphasis on improving its connections to the Auckland and Bay of Plenty regions (see page 109 of your draft). The plan then goes on to note *"the RTC is still advocating seeing improvements on the section of State Highway 1 between Taupō and the Desert Road summit, which is recognised as a bottleneck to the efficient flow of freight and cars through the centre of the North Island."*

Whilst the draft 2024 Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan will continue to focus on inter-regional priorities connecting Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty regions, the Waikato Regional Transport Committee has identified Bulli Point/Te Pōporo alongside Lake Taupō as the Waikato Region's top priority significant activity. Recognising the importance of this nationally significant inter-regional strategic route

He taiao mauriora ▲ Healthy environment

He hapori hihiri ▲ Vibrant communities

He ōhanga pakari ▲ Strong economy

and other activities that address safety, efficiency and resilience issues across the regional boundary and along the Desert Road are also supported to improve this strategically vital transport corridor.

The Waikato RLTP has also identified the Central Connector on the NIMT as an inter-regionally significant activity and we support rail investment and continued improvements along this corridor for future inter-regional passenger rail. The Waikato region also acknowledges the strategic provisions Horizons has identified, relating to supporting the use of rail for passenger and freight transport, particularly NIMT rail line.

We **support** the Manawatu-Wanganui investment project to prioritise State Highway 1 Utiku Slip resilience improvements as a top priority and agree it addresses a national resilience risk while enabling the flow of freight and people through the two regions.

Detailed submission points

We specifically **support** the following parts of the plan:

Section 6.5.2 – We support the discussion around the opportunity to change the focus of the Northern Explorer service from primarily tourism to a mode of transport for commuters within the North Island, particularly between National Park and Auckland. Waikato Region also supports investigation into the feasibility of a North Island inter-regional passenger rail service operating on the North Island Main Trunk Line, with a focus on connecting people between Palmerston North to Hamilton.

Section 14.2 – We support transport investment priority 1: “Maintain and improve the transport network to provide better connectivity and access, efficient movement of people and freight, reverse network degradation, and create a resilient transport system.” This aligns well with transport priorities in the Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan.

Policy 1.6: “Improve connections between rail, road and active transport networks to enable transport users’ access to multiple modes of travel.”

Policy 2.2: “Support the provision of effective connections to and from the region’s principal economic growth and productivity areas; including providing for efficient and effective movement of freight in the region.”

Policy 2.5: “Support and advocate for increased use of rail for freight and passenger movement through the region.”

Policy 4.9: “Ensure the transport system is maintained, upgraded and designed to a standard that strengthens resilience to current and long-term climate impacts and ensures maintenance of transport lifelines in the event of an emergency.”

It is noted that Horizons draft Regional Land Transport Plan have not identified any inter-regionally significant activities between the Horizons and Waikato regions for the 2024-27 NLTP period.

We **Request** that Inter-regionally significant rail activities on the NIMT are also included in the tables of section 17 along with SH1 inter-regional transport activities Taupō to Waiouru. This will ensure consistency across our RLTPs and further highlight the importance of strategic road and rail corridors in the North Island.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to submit on your draft RLTP and we wish you well with the final stage of your RLTP development process.

Please note, we **do not** wish to be heard in respect of this submission.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of this submission please contact Kimberley Bell, Policy Advisor, Transport Policy and Programmes team directly on (07) 859 0595 or by email kimberley.bell@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michael Downard', with a small dot at the end.

Councillor Mich'eal Downard
Chair of Waikato Regional Transport Committee