

# WAIKATO

## AT A GLANCE

*Our focus in Waikato is on supporting a productive and growing regional economy as part of the wider recovery from COVID-19. One that creates stronger communities with good access to employment, education and essential services, and manages increasing impacts of climate change. Delivering safe and reliable inter-regional journeys that enable the movement of people and freight to key destinations.*

## COVID-19 INSIGHTS AND IMPACTS

This section sets out the how the current pandemic might impact on land transport in the Waikato. Significant levels of uncertainty remain regarding the scale and duration of COVID-19 impacts, particularly in the medium to long-term. We will continue to monitor and update as things change.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON KEY SECTORS

- Hamilton is expected to perform reasonably well because of relatively low reliance on international tourism (25% of total tourism spend), links to surrounding agriculture, and the city's role as a hub for education, healthcare and other government services.<sup>54</sup>
- Waikato District and Waipa are expected to experience slower growth rates because of lower business and population movements out of Auckland, with flow on impacts on the construction sector.
- Significant infrastructure investment, and strategic location within the 'Golden Triangle' also provide the region with a solid base for growth.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Under the slower recovery scenario:

- the Waikato region's forecast fall in employment to 2021 (relative to BAU) is -5.6%, significantly lower than the national average of -6.7%<sup>35</sup>
- Thames Coromandel District (-9.7%) and Taupo District (-8.5%) are forecast to experience higher levels of employment loss, reflecting their reliance on tourism<sup>35</sup>
- with the exception of the Waipa, Otorohanga and Waitomo districts, employment levels are forecast to return to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2025<sup>35</sup>
- Hamilton city is forecast to perform comparatively well and is one of only two main urban centres forecast to return to BAU employment levels by 2031<sup>35</sup>

- population growth expected to slow, at least in the short to medium-term, given the region's reliance on net migration.

Māori, Pasifika, and youth are likely to experience the greatest impacts, particularly in smaller regional centres. An increase in youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is expected.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE LAND TRANSPORT SYSTEM

- Softening of transport demand in the northern Waikato in short to medium-term because of a slowing of people and businesses relocating out of Auckland.
- Growth in Hamilton metro area will continue, albeit more slowly than previously projected.
- Demand for multi-modal distribution function will continue, centred on Hamilton.
- Domestic tourism destinations including the Coromandel, Raglan and Taupō may experience an increase in travel demand.
- Work to ensure the effective integration of land-use and transport remains a priority, to support mode shift and reductions in GHG. This includes sequencing of development, ensuring growth areas are serviced with active mode and PT infrastructure and services, and linking housing to employment and essential services.
- There will be an ongoing need for transport services to support COVID-19 recovery by improving access to employment and essential services for vulnerable communities. There will be ongoing pressure on transport revenue as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.

## REGION STEP CHANGES

### IMPROVE URBAN FORM

Hamilton and the surrounding towns of Cambridge, Te Awamutu, Ngaruawahia and Morrinsville are experiencing high growth. Pōkeno and Tuakau are experiencing strong growth linked to Auckland. Around half the growth in the Waikato is expected in Hamilton and the surrounding towns.<sup>34</sup>

Employment and essential services are likely to be concentrated in Hamilton and Auckland. Population growth outside these of areas risks increasing the trip length between these two cities and reliance on private vehicles for this journey.

### TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY

Waikato is highly dependent on private vehicles to access education, employment and essential services.

### SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS

Waikato has a very poor safety record,<sup>47</sup> with issues around crashes at intersections, run-off road and head-on crashes, and crashes involving vulnerable road users, speeding, alcohol and drug impairment, and people not wearing seatbelts. These are exacerbated by the complexity of the network and high proportion of road transport movements through and within the region.

### TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Sea level rise, increased rain and storm intensity and frequency will affect communities, particularly those in low-lying areas in the region.

Waikato has the second highest carbon emission profile in the country,<sup>48</sup> with a significant proportion from inter-regional freight movement.

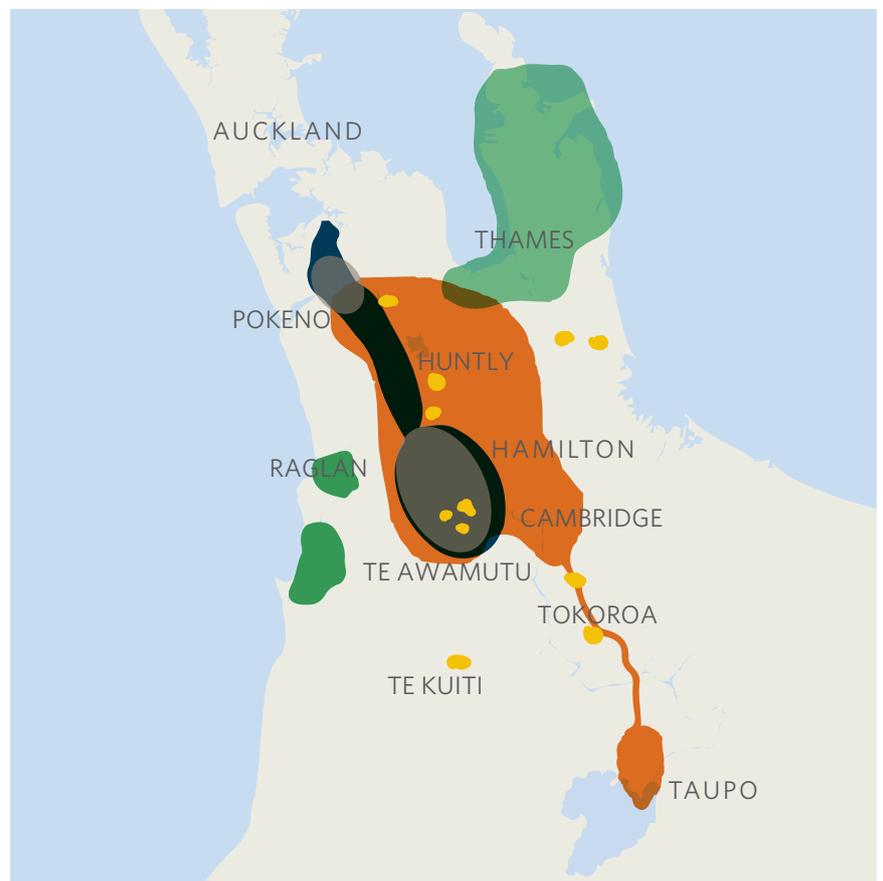
### SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Waikato has some communities with high levels of deprivation and unemployment.<sup>56</sup> Access to education, healthcare and employment must improve in these areas to deliver better social and economic outcomes. The region has nationally significant connections for the movement of freight and tourists. We will continue to support inter-regional connectivity, especially road and rail freight connections to key ports and hubs.



SIGNIFICANCE OF STEP CHANGE TO REGION 2021-31

KEY



**458,202**  
REGIONAL POPULATION<sup>25</sup>

**13.5%**  
REGIONAL POPULATION GROWTH 2013-18<sup>25</sup>

**9.8%**  
OF NATIONAL POPULATION<sup>25</sup> 2018

**14.2%**  
OF NATIONAL DEATHS & SERIOUS INJURIES (DSI)<sup>47</sup>  
**426** TOTAL DSI<sup>47</sup>  
ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR PERIOD 2016-19

**14%**  
OF NATIONAL VEHICLE EMISSIONS<sup>48</sup>

**8.4%**  
OF NATIONAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT YEAR END MARCH 2018<sup>26</sup>

**3.6%**  
REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE  
**4.1%**  
NATIONAL RATE YEAR END JUNE 2019<sup>49</sup>

Pre COVID-19 data

## WAIKATO TODAY

Because of the level of uncertainty of population and economic trends, this section has not been reviewed in detail for Arataki V2.

### WAIKATO HAS THE FOURTH LARGEST REGIONAL ECONOMY IN NEW ZEALAND<sup>18</sup> AND IS NATIONALLY IMPORTANT FOR A RANGE OF EXPORT FACING PRIMARY INDUSTRIES SUCH AS DAIRY, MEAT, FORESTRY AND AQUACULTURE.

Tourism has become increasingly important to the Waikato over the past decade. In 2018 the population of Waikato was 458,202, 9.8% of New Zealand's total.<sup>25</sup> Auckland and Hamilton both have strong growth and this is spilling over into the Waikato and Waipa districts. However, while these areas have experienced growth in population, employment and opportunities over the past decade, the south faces economic challenges and static or falling populations. There is a high proportion of senior residents in Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki districts, and this is projected to increase in the future.

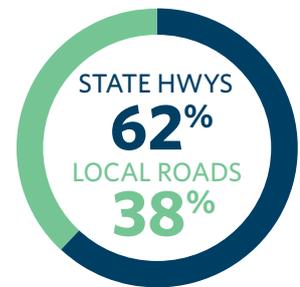
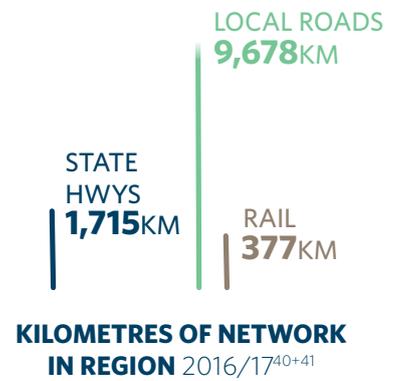
Waikato is a significant region for freight transport with 32% of the nation's freight movements going into, out of, or through the region by both rail and road.<sup>60</sup> The region's transport network is vital to the nation's economic prosperity, linking people to key destinations and providing important freight access. SH1, SH29 and the East Coast/Main Trunk Lines between Auckland and Tauranga are the country's most critical freight connections.

The safety record of Waikato's transport system is very poor, with high numbers of DSI and relatively high levels of DSI per 100,000 population.

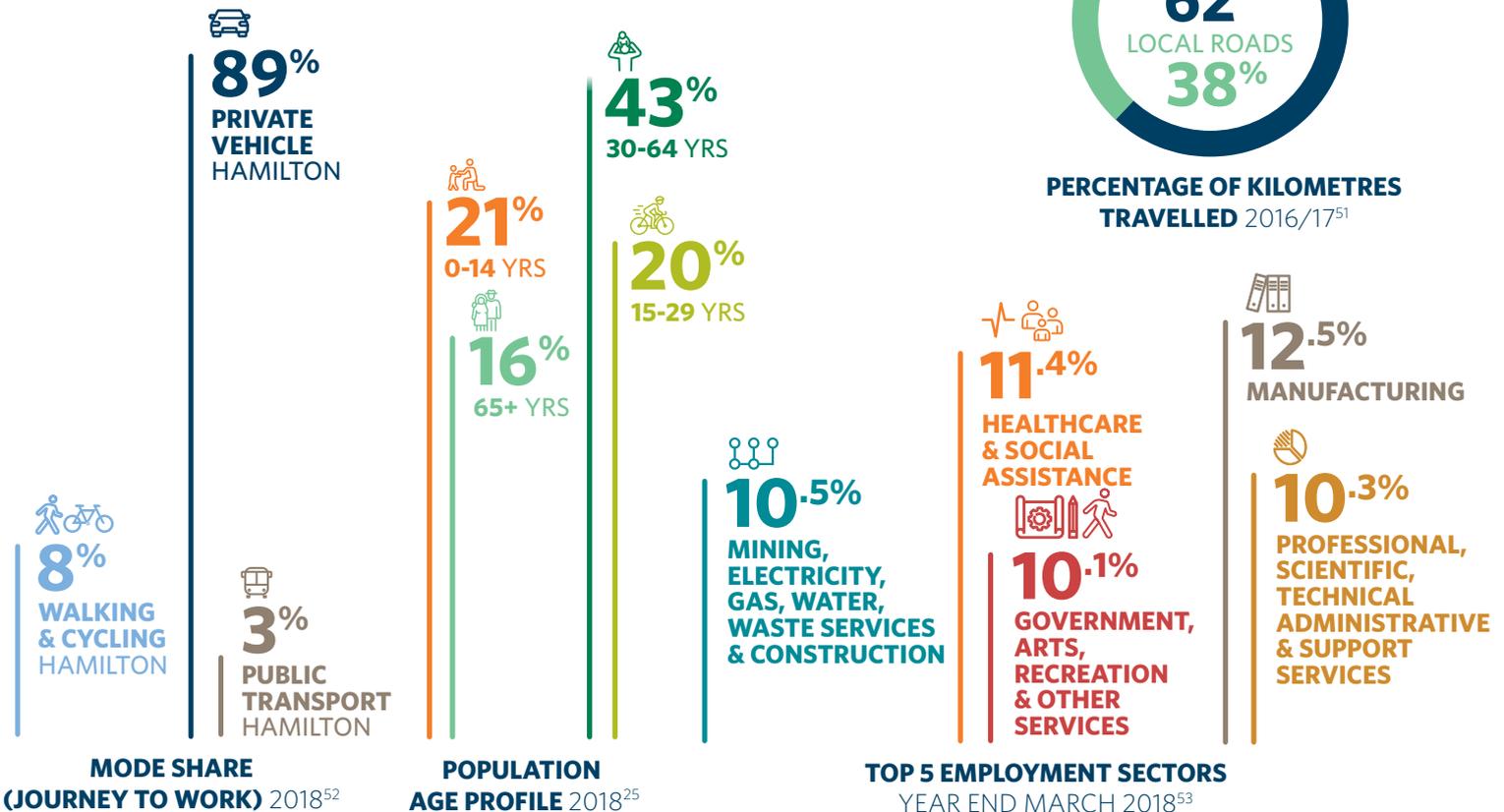
Future Proof is a joint project set up by a group of partners to consider how the sub-region that includes the territorial authorities of Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and Waikato District Council should develop into the future. The Hamilton to Auckland road and rail corridors connect two of our

fastest growing urban centres and are a key part of the supply chain network for the upper North Island. The Hamilton to Auckland corridor that encompasses the settlements along the transport corridor between Cambridge/Te Awamutu and Papakura has been identified as a priority area for planning.

Pōkeno to Tauranga on SH2 supports local trips and is also a key tourist journey providing access the Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty and Hobbiton (near Matamata). The western end of the journey also carries high freight volumes, but the majority diverts onto SH27 to avoid the Karangahake Gorge.



PERCENTAGE OF KILOMETRES TRAVELLED 2016/17<sup>51</sup>



## WAIKATO TOMORROW

Prior to COVID-19, Waikato's population was forecast to grow 23% by 2043 to 562,100 with high growth projected on all sides of Hamilton and in the surrounding towns,<sup>34</sup> which is already home to more than half of the region's population. Some of this population and employment growth was expected to be located along the Hamilton to Auckland corridor, which could slow down if there are lower business and population movements out of Auckland. Existing constraints would have limited growth in some communities. It is expected that population growth will slow down in the short to medium-term as border closures lead to lower immigration, because net migration accounts for the majority of population growth in the region.

Significant infrastructure investment, and strategic location within the 'Golden Triangle' will provide the region with a solid base for future growth.

There is a risk that present growth patterns will lock communities into dependence on private vehicles and travelling relatively long distances to access employment and essential services. Waikato's reliance on private vehicles creates a number of challenges. Without a significant shift to public transport, walking or cycling, vehicle travel will increase substantially, leading to more congestion, less access to opportunities, more emissions, a less safe and healthy population, and overall a poorer quality environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

Low growth, static or declining populations were projected for the remainder of the region, which could potentially slow down in the short to medium-term depending on the economic profile of each district. An aging population is still expected to be most noticeable in Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki districts so ensuring suitable transport options are available for older residents will be important.

Employment in service industries is expected to continue to grow in the Hamilton urban area because of the relative scale of government services and tourism-related services will be less impacted than other regions because of a higher proportion of domestic visitors. There could also be an increase in travel demand to other domestic visitor destinations such as Coromandel, Raglan and Taupō, helping to offset a forecast decline in international visitors. Manufacturing, dairy, meat and forestry will continue to be important across the region and will contribute strongly to COVID-19 recovery. Aquaculture will continue to grow in the Coromandel Peninsula. The region's economy will continue to be influenced by the growth of Auckland. While employment levels in most districts are

expected to be close to business as usual forecasts by 2031, Waikato and Waipa districts are forecast to be well below where they could have been before the impact of COVID-19.

There is a challenge to fund new infrastructure and services to keep pace with growth in the wider Hamilton and north Waikato urban areas. In areas with significant numbers of people living on fixed incomes, local councils will face increased pressure to raise funds to maintain existing and deliver new infrastructure.

COVID-19 will exacerbate issues such as high unemployment and rates of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), particularly among Māori. Waikato's NEET rate<sup>37</sup> is already higher than the national rate, particularly in southern Waikato and Waikato district.<sup>27</sup> Māori make up a larger proportion of the region's population<sup>25</sup> and workforce than in New Zealand as a whole. Māori, particularly young people, are vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 because they are more likely to be engaged in part-time or casual employment in sectors such as tourism and hospitality.

Communities of high social deprivation in parts of Hamilton, southern Waikato, Waikato and Hauraki districts, are looking for increased local employment and improved connections to centres where their young people can access education and employment, and for older residents to access physical and social activities, health and social services.

Emerging technologies, such as on-demand shuttles, could provide a feasible shared transport option in the future to help people get around within rural communities, and improve access to services in urban centres. Improved access to high-quality data and information will enable better management of the existing transport system to get the most out of existing infrastructure.

In Hamilton, there will continue to be increasing demand to plan, book and pay digitally for journeys. The growing popularity of online purchasing and home delivery will impact on-demand travel, including the movement of freight.

Coastal erosion, sea level rise, flooding and storms are predicted to intensify over the next 30 years increasing risk to the road and rail network. This will add to existing resilience issues, particularly in the Coromandel Peninsula and Hauraki Plains.

There are a number of high risks in the Waikato area related to landslip, erosion, flooding along SH1, as well as the potential for and ice and snow along SH5 (Kaweka Ranges). The most significant risk for erosion risk is along Lake Karapiro.

## KEY SYSTEM INSIGHTS

- Strong population growth in Hamilton and the surrounding towns and in north Waikato will continue, but more slowly. The Future Proof Strategy that covers the sub-region that includes Hamilton city and Waikato and Waipa districts and the Hamilton to Auckland Corridor Spatial Plan project provide scope to manage growth and support existing communities, supported by high quality inter-regional road and rail connections.
- Care must be taken to ensure that the location of housing, jobs, schools, healthcare (and other key community facilities) will support thriving communities, reduce the need to travel and grow the share of public transport, walking and cycling options.
- Completion of the Waikato Expressway will enable through-traffic to bypass Hamilton city, freeing up urban network to support local journeys. It is critical that future growth patterns do not prevent the expressway from providing efficient inter-regional connections.
- Waikato has one of the busiest land transport networks in the country because of its strategic location in the upper North Island. It will be important to continue to provide reliable road and rail connections for freight between Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga and key freight hubs, as well as the routes south to Taranaki, and Wellington and the South Island.
- Increasingly severe storm events, flooding and sea level rise will impact coastal communities and low-lying transport networks, with the Hauraki Plains and the Coromandel Peninsula particularly at risk. SH3 is a key route for LPG to get trucked from New Plymouth to Auckland but is at risk from landslips.
- The safety record for the Waikato region is very poor, with a need to focus on reducing DSI within the Hamilton urban area, and on rural state highways (especially SH1 and SH2), high-risk rural roads and high-risk motorcycle routes.
- Regional development can be supported by improved access for goods to market and access to employment, education, training and essential services for communities with high social deprivation. Some of these communities have large concentrations of young Māori, who are more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

## FOCUS OF EFFORT: 2018-21

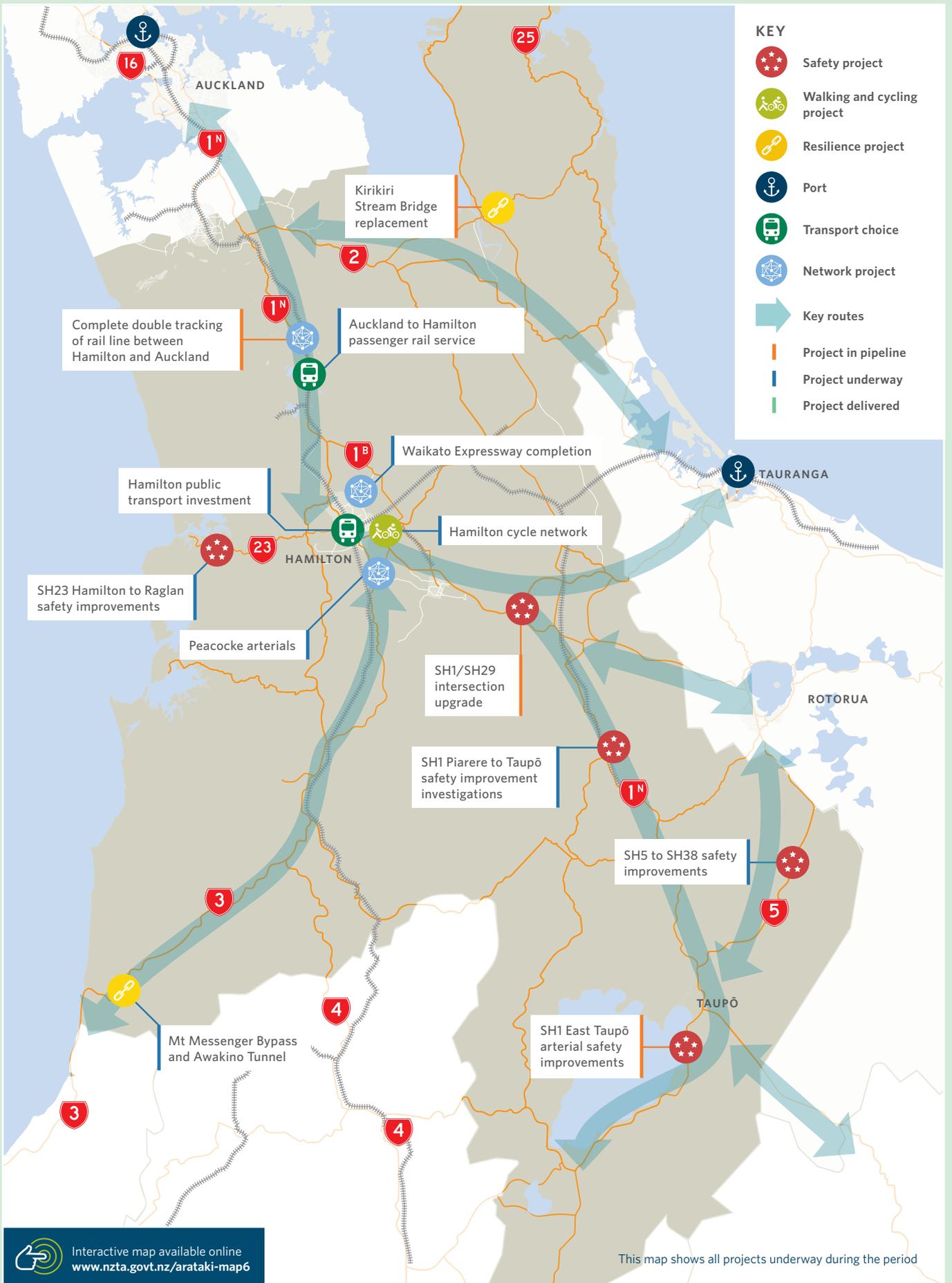
This section represents the existing commitments (eg the NLTP and NZUP). V2 has not been updated to include economic stimulus packages as that space continues to evolve.

The East Coast Main Trunk Line provides a major link for freight movement between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. Investments are being made in the Auckland to Hamilton passenger rail connection to help reduce pressure on the road network in Auckland, and support growth and urban development outcomes.

The completion of the Waikato Expressway in 2021 will improve safety and reliability outcomes by enabling the majority of north-south through traffic to bypass the city, which will reduce pressure on the urban networks providing local trips. Ensuring that urban development, particularly in Hamilton, remains on the western side of the Waikato Expressway is important to maintaining efficient inter-regional connections.

The state highway connections from Waikato south to Taranaki (SH3) and east to Rotorua (SH5) are also critical in enabling the movement of people and goods to and from those regions and supporting their economic development. While these journeys are generally fit for purpose, the 53km section of SH3 through Mt Messenger and the Awakino Gorge runs through rough terrain and is narrow and winding. Several projects are progressing to improve the safety, resilience and travel time reliability of this route, including the Mt Messenger and Awakino Tunnel bypasses.

There is an ongoing programme of investment in safer roads and roadsides at high-risk locations, including SH2 Pokeno to Mangatarata and SH29 Piarere to Te Poi/Te Poi to Kaimai Summit projects. Improvements to the SH1/SH29 intersection at Piarere will be delivered as part of the New Zealand Upgrade Programme.



Interactive map available online  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/arataki-map6](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/arataki-map6)

This map shows all projects underway during the period

## AREAS OF FOCUS: WAIKATO 2021-31

### SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS (HIGH)

#### SAFETY

Support implementation of the *Road to Zero: New Zealand's road safety strategy 2020-2030* and associated *Action plan 2020-2022*, and regional safety strategies, with a particular emphasis on:

- continuation of safety treatments targeting high-risk intersections, and run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads (rural roads are roads with speed limits >80km/h)
- separated facilities and infrastructure improvements in areas with significant levels of walking and cycling
- road policing and behaviour change programmes with a focus on alcohol and drug impairment, people not wearing seatbelts and speeding
- safety treatments on high-risk motorcycle routes.

#### HEALTH

Our approach to delivering better health outcomes, particularly the reduction of harmful emissions, will primarily be through initiatives that target other step changes, including improved urban form, increasing access to and use of public transport, walking and cycling, and efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

We will support future pandemic planning by drawing on our COVID-19 experience and initiatives such as low-cost and temporary street calming and active transport projects that enable social distance while bringing health benefits from increased physical activity and reduced air emissions.

We will also continue to work to ensure that the noise impacts of transport are appropriately managed through a mix of land-use planning and mitigation works.

### IMPROVE URBAN FORM (HIGH)

#### HAMILTON

Waka Kotahi is a partner in developing cross-government initiatives that aim to better support growth and increase connectivity in an integrated way, as follows:

- Through the established Future Proof partnership, a sub-regional tool to guide the future strategic direction of Hamilton, Waikato and Waipa. This will include completion of phase 2 of the Future Proof strategy. The Future Proof settlement pattern provides a blueprint for growth and development in these areas. This is aligned with the Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy.
- By supporting the development of the Hamilton-Waikato Metro Spatial Plan, which seeks to determine a shared 100-year vision and framework for the emerging Hamilton-Waikato area.
- Through these partnerships, we will work to deliver urban development that enhances existing communities, supports

an increase in walking and cycling, reduces the need to travel and improves safety and climate impacts.

Across the region we will engage in planning processes, with a goal of delivering urban development that:

- enhances existing communities, making them a better place to work, live and play
- supports an increase in active modes, including trips by foot, bike and e-scooter etc
- reduces the need to travel long distances to access employment and services
- results in lower emissions per capita
- maintains or improves the safety and efficiency of the transport system.

### TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY (HIGH)

Projected population growth in Hamilton and the surrounding towns will increase travel demand on the region's networks and provides opportunities to support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Our focus will be on:

#### HAMILTON

- Supporting delivery of Access Hamilton and the Hamilton-Waikato Metro Spatial Plan.
- Supporting development of Mass Transit Plan/Mode Shift Plan to deliver on the target of doubling the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport over the next 10 years.
- Supporting the development and delivery of walking and cycling networks.
- Investigating opportunities for improved public transport services and reduced journey times.
- Supporting Hamilton City Council to prioritise public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Working with Hamilton City Council to encourage actively manage carparking in the city centre, city fringe area and other key centres to increase uptake of public transport, walking and cycling for trips to these locations.

#### HAMILTON-AUCKLAND CORRIDOR

- Supporting delivery of interim inter-regional passenger rail on the strategic connection between Hamilton and Auckland and investment in associated station infrastructure.
- Supporting the Hamilton-Auckland corridor partnership to
  - implement the key initiatives contained in the Hamilton to Auckland Corridor Plan, and
  - continue with the ongoing growth management partnership.

## TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE (MEDIUM)

We will continue to work to understand the opportunities to support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### ADAPTATION:

We will focus on:

- engaging in local planning processes to avoid infrastructure and development in areas at increased risk of natural hazards and effects of climate change
- working with our partners to prioritise interventions and responses to natural hazards in high-risk areas
- maintaining system resilience and managing the impacts of climate change, especially in the Coromandel Peninsula and low-lying coastal areas. Investigate options for alternate routes that are less likely to be subject to disruption
- enabling continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance and renewals, and 'low cost/low risk' investments
- enabling quick recovery following disruption to the land transport system.

### MITIGATION:

We will focus on:

- engaging in local planning processes to ensure urban form and transport planning supports reductions in emissions, private vehicle travel and average trip length
- identifying low-carbon transport options, infrastructure and services in urban areas to support shift from cars to low-emission options
- ensuring network design and operations makes the best use of existing systems to manage demand and reduce emissions, by prioritising the movement of public transport and low emission options and actively managing speed, urban freight and congestion.

## SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (MEDIUM)

Lower socio-economic communities in parts of Hamilton, southern Waikato, Waikato and Hauraki districts will continue to face challenges without improved access to education, employment and essential services. To support this, we will:

- support improvements in social and economic outcomes in areas of high deprivation, particularly improving access to employment, education and essential services for isolated communities
- support and help deliver compact, connected, land-use development with access to transport options
- continue to support public transport services and urban cycleways in Hamilton, and explore opportunities to improve the affordability of public transport
- explore opportunities to support the mobile delivery of education and essential services
- continue to support inter-regional connectivity
- support freight initiatives that are multi-modal, efficient and safe.

