

Freight investment summary

August 2020

One of the key investment areas for the 2018–21 NLTP is access, in particular, supporting land transport activities that promote social and economic opportunities.

Economic growth is recognised as critical to creating thriving regions, achieved by supporting employment opportunities and creating a transport system that is safer, more resilient and reliable to get goods to market and achieve optimum returns.

Significant investment is being made throughout the country to improve freight connections to ports, airports and distribution centres, as well as extending network access that supports high productivity motor vehicles (HPMVs).

Throughout New Zealand, investment is planned in most regions to improve HPMV routes by opening up more of the network – state highways and local roads – to carry these vehicles. More freight on less vehicles also has safety and environmental outcomes.

In many regions, the resilience of key freight routes is critical to support regional economies. This is addressed with investment in improvements on state highways and local roads, which are susceptible to frequent closures from severe weather events, climate change and crashes. These improvements are even more critical where there are no viable alternative routes.

We're working with industry, the community and our co-investment partners in local government to strengthen alternate freight routes on local roads, ensuring there are good levels of service for freight in the event of network disruption.

This investment includes:

- In Northland, the growth of forestry in the region means that strategic routes can change over time. The maintenance and renewals programme responds to these changes, supporting industry and economic development. We continue to work with industry, communities and local government to develop and improve the region's HPMV routes, and to prioritise projects addressing dust caused by increased traffic on unsealed roads.
- Northland's transport system provides the means for businesses to operate successfully in the region. The port at Marsden Point is crucial to the Northland region and safety improvements will help to support the safe and efficient movement of freight to and from the port.
- Following investigations, the SH2 route between Gisborne and Ōpōtiki has now been opened to full HPMV capability, allowing trucks weighing more than 44 tonnes to travel the route. The investigations identified six bridges on the route that will require strengthening to support continued HPMV standard.
- In Taranaki, the region's major transport focus is ensuring there are safer, more reliable and resilient freight routes and good inter-regional connectivity. Heavy vehicles travel more than 75 million kilometres on Taranaki roads every year, supporting the oil and gas industry, forestry and dairying.
- Completed sections of the Waikato Expressway support the movement of freight across the upper North Island, where freight volumes are expected to continue to grow.

- The SH1 Whirokino Trestle and Manawatū River Bridge project between Levin and Foxton opened in February, improving a vital freight route. The new structures include wider lanes, safer road edges, and reducing the need for heavy vehicles to take a detour via Shannon.
- As part of the Palmerston North Integrated Transport Improvements (PNITI), work is underway to complete a detailed business case for roading initiatives required to support the freight hub and distribution potential of the region. This work is informed by KiwiRail plans to construct a new freight hub in Manawatū.
- On SH7, a key West Coast freight route from the north is underway to replace the single-lane wooden Ahaura River Bridge with a new two-lane bridge, including pedestrian and cyclist access and realigned highway. Upgrading this bridge will improve freight connections and enable trucks to access the region's primary produce and move goods to market in the most cost-effective and efficient way.
- Construction of the new \$21 million bridge over Blenheim's Ōpaoa River began in 2019. The new, wider bridge will ensure better access for heavy vehicles, improve safety for users, offer greater seismic resilience, and allow for improved walking and cycling facilities. This is a critical transport link between Picton and Christchurch, particularly for freight, and for people in Marlborough to access Blenheim. The new bridge will make SH1 more resilient and secure as New Zealand's key strategic road freight route.
- The Weigh Right programme is focused on reducing heavy vehicle overloading and improving productivity and safety.
- Commercial Vehicle Safety Centres (CVSCs) are being set up that will cover half of New Zealand's freight kilometres travelled. Two sites have already opened at Glasnevin, in North Canterbury, and Paengaroa, in eastern Bay of Plenty.
- We're continuing work to open more sites across the country, in Marsden (Northland), three locations in the Auckland region (Albany, Stanley Street and Bombay), Sulphur Point Port (Tauranga), Taupo, Napier Port, Ohakea (Manawatū), Mackays Crossing (Kāpiti), and Rakaia.
- The programme is supported by the development of a new easy to use heavy vehicle permitting system.
- Insights delivered from Weigh Right data will feed into our regulatory intervention model, enabling both real-time and post-event interventions.