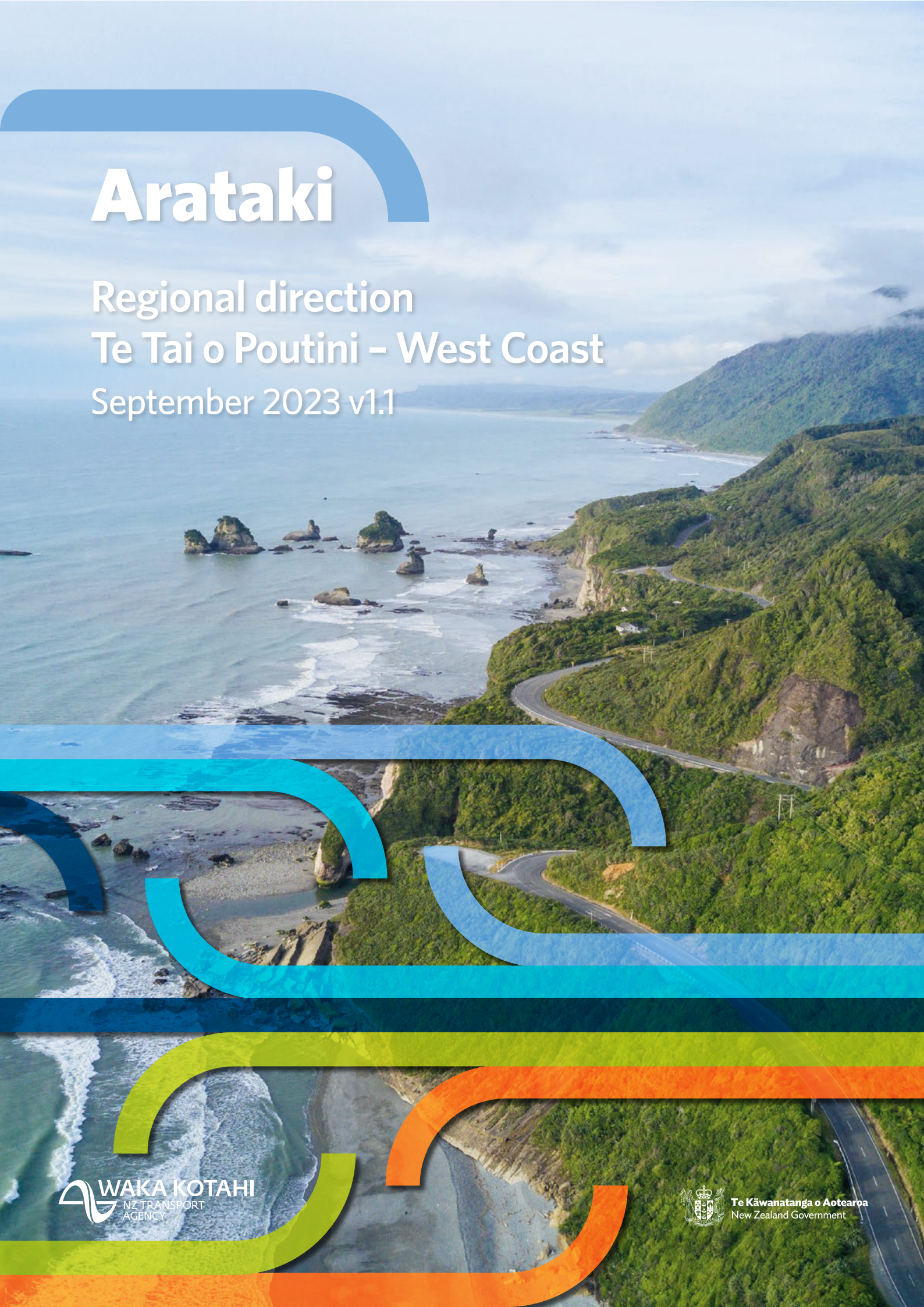
Arataki

Regional direction
Te Tai o Poutini – West Coast

September 2023 v1.1



WAKA KOTAHI
NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

At a glance

Te Tai o Poutini West Coast is home to some of most spectacular landscapes and natural environments in Aotearoa New Zealand, making it a magnet for tourists and outdoor enthusiasts. It is the most sparsely populated of the country's regions, with conservation land making up nearly 85% of the region's land area.[1]

Economically, the region performs below the national average in terms of productivity and employment rates. The economy is largely focused on dairy farming, mining, and tourism.

The region is relatively isolated. It relies heavily on SH6, SH73, and the Midland Rail Line to connect communities as well as move freight and people.

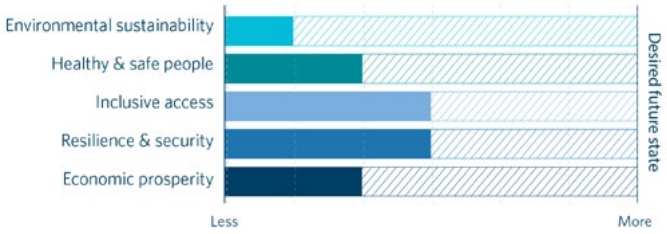
It is the country's fifth largest region by land area but has the smallest population. The region's population of 32,400 is expected to fall to 30,600 by 2043.[2] This population decline is forecast across all districts, including the largest centre, Māwhera Greymouth.[3]

Te Tai o Poutini has one of the highest per capita deaths and serious injuries on its roads, which needs to be addressed.[4]

There are several locations on the network at high risk of damage or disruption from the effects of climate change or other natural hazards; this affects regional long-term resilience. Because the region is mostly made up of conservation land, councils don't receive rates from these areas. Maintaining the existing network is already an issue.

Another challenge for Te Tai o Poutini will be reducing greenhouse gas emissions as the country moves to a low-carbon economy.

Scale of effort to deliver outcomes in Te Tai o Poutini – West Coast



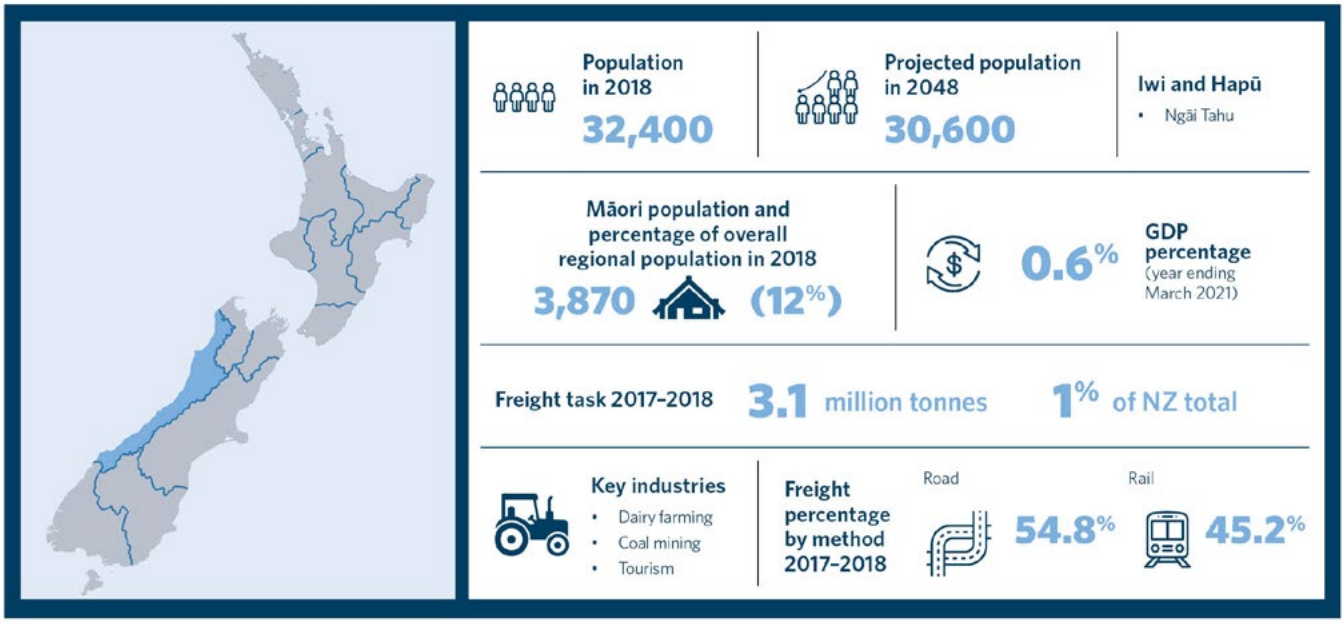
The regional ratings show how Waka Kotahi has assessed the potential scale of effort required in each region to achieve the future desired state for each outcome over the next 10 years. The ratings in each region indicate where effort can be best focused and inform conversations with partners about priority outcomes in each region.

The rating assessments are based on evidence using system-levels metrics. Further details are captured in the methodology document.

The September v1.1 release of *Arataki* includes updates to reflect the severe weather events of 2023 and correct minor errors.

Context

Te Tai o Poutini – West Coast



Te Tai o Poutini West Coast has the smallest population of all the country's regions. By 2028, the population is expected to grow slightly from 32,400 to 32,600, or about 0.5% of the country's population.[5] Then from 2028 to 2048, the region's population is expected to decline to 30,600.[6] Te Tai o Poutini is the only region in Aotearoa New Zealand expected to have a decline in population during this period.

The projected decline beyond 2028 is because of:

- an ageing population
- declining birth rate
- low immigration to the region
- people leaving the region.[7]

All districts of Te Tai o Poutini are expected to experience population decline to some degree by 2048, including the largest centre, Māwhera Greymouth.[8]

The average age of the region's population is increasing faster than the national average, with 31% of the population expected to be aged 65 or over in 2048; this includes a relatively high median age also.[9] Ensuring good access to social networks, sports, social activities, and essential services will be key.

In 2018, 3,870 Māori lived in Te Tai o Poutini, making up 12% of the region's population.[10] This is lower than the national rate of 16.5%.[11]

Most Māori live in Māwhera, where they make up 10% of the population.[12] The iwi in Te Tai o Poutini is Ngāi Tahu.[13]

Te Ōhanga Māori - The Māori Economy 2018 includes information for the Waitaha rohe, which relates to the regions of Te Tai o Poutini, Waitaha Canterbury, Ōtākou Otago, and Murihiku Southland. It notes the asset base in this rohe is valued at $9.3 billion.[14] The primary sector and property are both important.[15] The Waitaha rohe has the highest proportion of Māori self-employed (13%) and employers (17%).[16]

Te Tai o Poutini is performing below the national average in terms of economic productivity and employment rates.[17]

The region is reliant on international tourism. Guest nights per capita (40) was five times higher than the national average (8) in 2019.[18]

Before COVID-19, domestic and international tourism was forecast to grow. With 50% of tourism spend coming from international visitors, the region has been heavily impacted by border closures.[19] The ongoing impact remains unclear.

Domestic tourism has not offset this reduction in visitor numbers, largely because of how far away Te Tai o Poutini is from major population centres in the North Island.

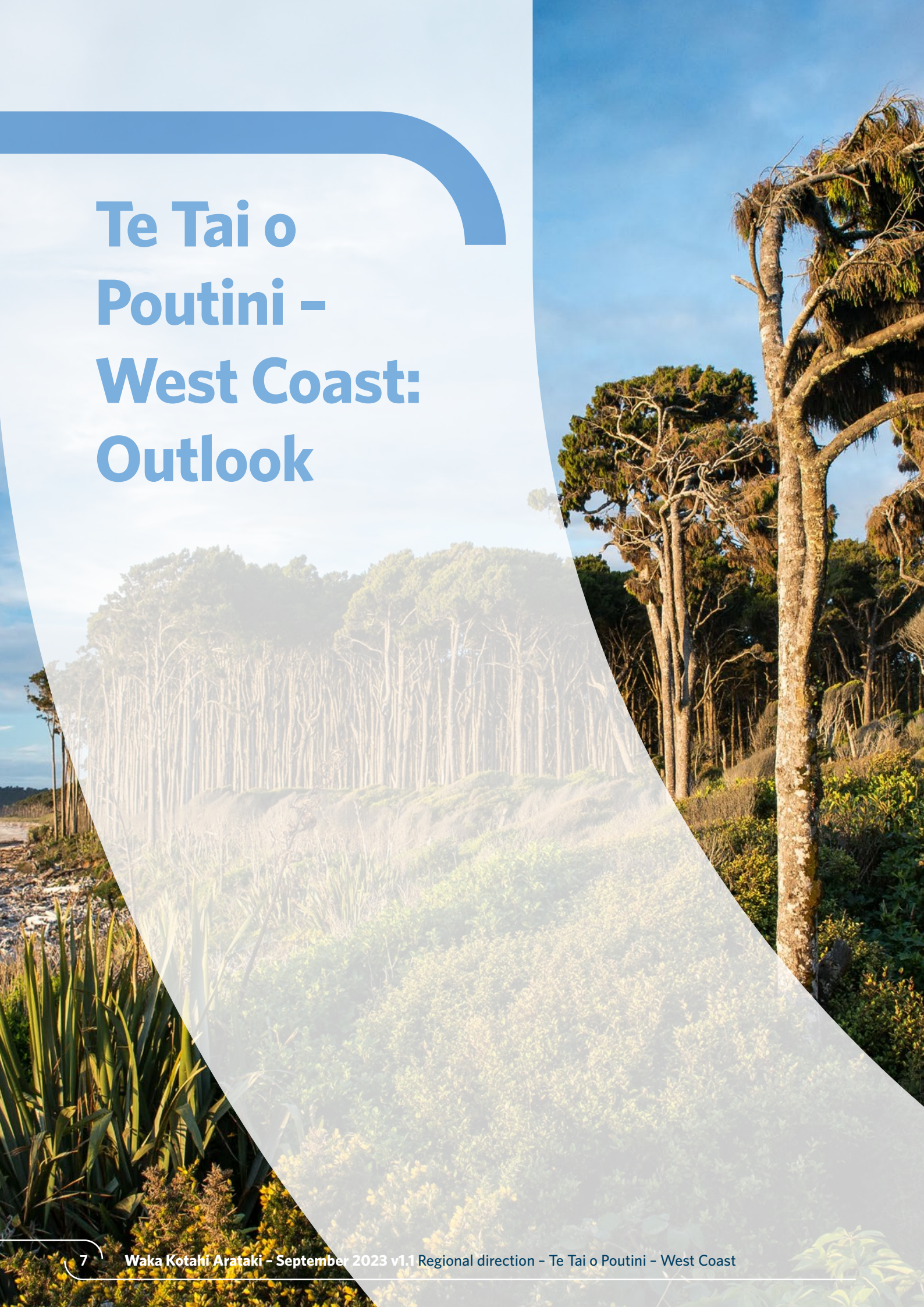
Leading up to 2020, there was a significant difference in the economic performance of the three districts. Westland was performing better because of its strong tourism industry.[20]

The freight task in Te Tai o Poutini in 2017–2018 was 3.1 million tonnes, or around 1% of the Aotearoa total.[21] A total of 54.8% of the freight task tonnage in Te Tai o Poutini was moved by road and 45.2% by rail.[22]

Coal is the primary sector commodity produced in Te Tai o Poutini, with 1.5 million tonnes produced, or 45.9% of the country's coal mining production.[23] This represents 5% or more of the country's total primary sector commodity production in 2017–2018.[24]

Te Tai o Poutini is relatively isolated and relies heavily on SH6, SH73, and the Midland Rail Line to connect communities as well as move freight and people. These corridors are all subject to high-risk natural hazards from ice and snow, erosion, rockfall, landslips, and flooding. Network closures are made worse because there are no alternate routes and detours are extremely lengthy. The tourist and freight sectors are greatly affected by these closures.

Te Tai o Poutini – West Coast: Outlook



Over the next 30 years, as the population of Te Tai o Poutini West Coast is expected to slightly decline, its economy is likely to transform considerably as Aotearoa New Zealand transitions to a low-carbon future.

The most significant changes to the region's transport system will be:

- supporting the country's economic transformation
- making significant improvements to safety and resilience
- improved accessibility for an ageing population.

Conservation land makes up 85% of the region, from which councils receive no rates income. The region will face an ageing population and a significant proportion of residents on fixed incomes. These factors will likely put pressure on the region's ability to:

- maintain existing networks
- fund new infrastructure
- provide appropriate services.

The increasing impacts of climate change plus maintenance and renewal costs for land transport infrastructure will make this even harder.

This section uses the *Transport Outcomes Framework* from Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport to support a 'decide and provide' approach to proactively plan the desired future state we want to achieve. Key challenges and opportunities are identified and discussed. Then we highlight the most important actions to be taken to make progress on each outcome.

Environmental sustainability

Challenges and opportunities

Te Tai o Poutini West Coast will need to make an important contribution to reducing carbon emissions, to reach the 2035 targets set in the government's *Emissions Reduction Plan* and net-zero emissions by 2050.[25]

To support national emissions targets, there will need to be significant change to how people travel in Te Tai o Poutini, a region with:

- a transport system reliant on private vehicle use
- limited scope to grow public transport because of relatively small population centres.

Care is required to ensure efforts to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) don't unfairly impact specific communities or groups.

In the region, 84% of journeys to work are made by private vehicles. Care is required to ensure efforts to reduce VKT are fair, equitable, and don't unfairly affect specific communities or groups.[26]

We need to reduce freight transport carbon through:

- adopting lower-emitting fuels
- increasing mode share for rail.

With key transport corridors passing through conservation land, we must reduce the impact of the region's transport system on the local environment, especially its impacts on air pollution, waterways, and ecological systems. Contaminated stormwater runoff from roads must be treated before entering waterways. The impact of new and improved transport infrastructure on the natural environment must be appropriately managed.

Making progress

Key actions over the next 10 years to make progress on this outcome are:

- engaging in local planning processes to ensure development and transport planning focuses on reducing emissions, private vehicle travel, and average trip length
- focusing transport planning on interventions, activities, and investments that are needed to achieve vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) and emissions reduction
- making changes to the allocation of space on existing roads and streets to enable and increase mode shift to public transport, walking, and cycling
- identifying opportunities for smaller projects, including making the most of the network, that can improve system outcomes
- ensuring appropriate standards, policies, and regulations are put in place to reduce the impact of the region's transport system on the local environment.

84% of journeys to work are made by private vehicles.

Healthy and safe people

Challenges and opportunities

The number of deaths and serious injuries per capita on the roads of Te Tai o Poutini West Coast is among the highest in Aotearoa New Zealand.[27]

Efforts to improve road safety are guided by the *Road to Zero: New Zealand's Road Safety Strategy 2020–2030* and associated Action Plan 2020–2022, and regional safety strategies.[28]

Significant progress on the healthy and safe people outcome will support environmental sustainability and inclusive access. Using urban speed management and providing extensive networks of safe walking and cycling facilities will encourage more people to use these healthy and sustainable travel options. Similarly, a focus on reducing deaths and serious injuries for vulnerable road users will also encourage more people to walk and cycle.

Making progress

Continuing to realise safety plans and supporting dramatic changes, or step changes, to encourage walking and cycling will help the urban areas of the region.

New approaches to planning, design, and delivery, along with significant investment, are needed to accelerate progress.

Key actions over the next 10 years to make progress on this outcome are:

- continuing safety improvements targeting run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads
- using urban speed management, along with improving walking and cycling facilities and infrastructure, to increase levels of walking and cycling
- requiring high-quality active mode infrastructure to be part of new developments
- encouraging and implementing regulatory changes that reduce harmful vehicle emissions and encourage the use of zero-emissions vehicles
- continuing to manage transport system noise through planning and mitigation
- targeting road policing and behaviour change programmes with a focus on alcohol and drug impairment, speeding, and people not wearing seatbelts
- managing safe and appropriate speeds on high-risk rural roads – this includes targeted use of safety cameras to reduce speeding
- advocating for robust mobile network coverage in rural and regional areas.

New approaches to planning, design, and delivery, along with significant investment, are needed to accelerate progress.

Inclusive access

Challenges and opportunities

The transport system of Te Tai o Poutini West Coast struggles to provide rural and remote communities with reliable connections to Māwhera Greymouth and beyond. It's essential that young people can access education and work; senior residents need access to social activities as well as health and social services.

A high reliance on private vehicles creates several access challenges, including:

- creating difficulties for those without easy access to, and use of, a private vehicle to fully participate in society
- placing significant pressure on household budgets to meet the high costs of car ownership and use
- limiting people's ability to travel in a way that best meets their needs because of poor travel choice.

Emerging technologies, such as on-demand shuttles, could provide a shared-transport option. These would help people get around within smaller towns and rural communities, and improve access to services in Māwhera.

Improved access to high-quality data and information will allow better management of the transport system to get the most out of existing infrastructure.

Making progress

Key actions over the next 10 years to make progress on this outcome are:

- exploring opportunities to incorporate public transport or shared services, including on-demand shuttles where appropriate, to improve access to essential services, and social and economic opportunities
- ensuring transport infrastructure and services are designed and provided in a way that meets the needs of people of all ages and abilities
- improving access to opportunities for iwi Māori, including access to sites of cultural significance
- exploring opportunities to support mobile or digital delivery of essential services.

The transport system of Te Tai o Poutini struggles to provide rural and remote communities with reliable connections to Māwhera Greymouth and beyond.

Economic prosperity

Challenges and opportunities

Te Tai o Poutini West Coast is a priority for regional development support because of the long-term challenges it faces, such as high unemployment and low incomes. The region has worked with central government and independent consultants to develop the *Tai Poutini West Coast Growth Study*, which identifies the region's opportunities for, and barriers to, economic growth.[29]

The small proportion of rateable land and an increasing proportion of residents on fixed incomes is likely to put pressure on the region's ability to:

- maintain existing infrastructure
- fund new infrastructure
- provide appropriate services.

Making progress

Economic productivity and business competitiveness in the region can be improved by a transport system that provides:

- a range of travel options with wide capacity
- reliable journey times
- safe and low-cost ways of getting around.

Key actions over the next 10 years to make progress on this outcome are:

- completing regeneration plans for towns and villages, such as master plans for Franz Josef and Māwhera Greymouth, and delivering well-planned transport that enables future growth
- completing visitor destination plans and providing transport infrastructure and services that improve access to destinations, such as Franz Josef, Dolomite Point, Croesus Track, and Ōpārara Arches
- improving safety and access on the road corridors, particularly critical routes to key tourist destinations
- completing and promoting walking and cycling trail plans, such as the Regional Cycle Trail Strategy, and a connected network of cycle and walking trails
- implementing transport initiatives that improve economic performance, including investment in the TranzAlpine service upgrade
- exploring opportunities to move to a more multimodal freight system with greater use of rail and coastal shipping
- working closer with councils and regional tourism organisations to explore ways to improve tourism and amenity (attractiveness).

Completing visitor destination plans and providing transport infrastructure and services that improve access to destinations will help the region.

Resilience and security

Challenges and opportunities

The next 30 years will see a growing risk of damage to road and rail networks because of increased rain and storm intensity, coastal and soil erosion, sea level rise, flooding, slips, and storm surges.[30]

Networks across the region are expected to come under increased pressure because of storm intensity combined with relatively unstable terrain, resulting in rockfall, landslips, erosion, and flooding. Particularly significant risks relate to rockfall and landslips along SH6, SH7, and SH73.

More than ever, there must be a greater focus on maintaining existing assets at current levels of access and connectivity. There is a major opportunity to progress multiple outcomes by investing in maintenance and renewals, but this requires changes to current practices and increased funding.

More than ever, there must be a greater focus on maintaining existing assets at current levels of access and connectivity.

Making progress

The key to improving resilience in the region's transport system is an ongoing focus on maintaining existing assets along with targeted improvements to reduce risks.

Key actions over the next 10 years to make progress on this outcome are:

- engaging in local planning processes to avoid infrastructure and development in areas at risk of natural hazards and climate change; this includes prioritising other high-risk areas, for example at Franz Josef
- seeking continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance, renewals, and 'low cost/low risk' investments
- continuing design and planning work to identify and prioritise responses to natural hazards in high-risk areas – this includes working with communities to identify plans for when to defend, accommodate, or retreat
- improving operational responses to events to support quick recovery following disruption to the land transport system.

Te Tai o Poutini – West Coast: Focusing our efforts

For efficient and effective progress, transport challenges in Te Tai o Poutini West Coast must be tackled in a cohesive way.

The directions below identify the most important issues to be resolved over the next 10 years to make progress towards transport outcomes.

- Begin to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) in a way that's fair, equitable, and improves quality of life.
- Enable and support the region's transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Maintain and improve resilience of the region's land transport network.
- Support efforts to improve access to essential services as well as social and economic opportunities.
- Significantly reduce the harm caused by the region's transport system, especially through improved road safety and reduced pollutants that are dangerous to people's health.
- Maintain and improve efficiency of interregional road and rail connections, especially east to Ōtautahi Christchurch on SH73 and Midland Rail Line.
- Support the delivery of walking and cycling networks, predominantly through reshaping existing streets to make these options safe and attractive.
- Explore the potential for new and emerging technologies, such as on-demand services, to improve access to social and economic opportunities.
- Better understand the impact of future economic transformation on travel patterns and freight volumes.
- Explore opportunities to move to a more multimodal freight system with greater use of rail.
- Confirm how key resilience risks will be addressed over time, and work with communities to identify plans for when to defend, accommodate, or retreat.
- Continue to implement road safety plans and programmes including those focused for iwi Māori.
- Improve or maintain, as appropriate, physical access to marae, papakāinga, wāhi tapu, and wāhi taonga.

These will be updated over time to focus effort on the most critical matters.

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