

Otago/Southland Regional Update

August 2020

Overview

Investment in the region recognises the importance of a regional land transport system that gets goods to market and maintains growth in tourism. To support this an additional \$85 million is being invested in this NLTP to maintain and improve the state highways and local roads.

Safer, more resilient and well-maintained roads are essential to provide access to remote communities and serve the farming, forestry and tourism industries that are the major drivers of economic growth in the Otago/Southland region.

Safety improvements are being made to significant sections of the network throughout both regions, to improve safety for all road users, including visiting drivers.

Public transport in Dunedin has seen ongoing increases in passenger growth. Bus patronage is up 8% on 2017/18 with 2.5 million public transport rides recorded in 2018/19.

In Queenstown, together with the Otago Regional Council and Queenstown Lakes District Council, we introduced the first subsidised bus service. Launched in November 2017, it is now delivering more affordable, frequent and reliable public transport services. Within a year of this new service being launched bus patronage in Queenstown increased by 111%, with more than 1.2 million rides.

This initiative is encouraging a shift from the use of private vehicles towards public transport and active travel options, such as walking and cycling. This co-investment with our partners is helping to provide safer and improved access to schools, employment and goods and services, bringing great social and economic benefits. This also helps create an urban environment where people want to live, work, study and play.

COVID-19

Outside the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago districts, no significant changes are expected in the nature, scale and location of transport demand in the regions, in the medium to long term.

Transport needs to play its part in supporting the recovery of the tourism industry. Pre-existing growth pressures in Queenstown also need addressing.

The current situation provides an opportunity to re-evaluate what is required and where, and the scale and sequencing of growth and investment to achieve objectives in the Queenstown spatial plan.

Maintaining safe and reliable road and rail freight connections to Port Otago remain important to supporting the recovery of the economy.

There will be an on-going need for transport services to support COVID-19 recovery by improving access to employment and essential services for vulnerable communities.

Dunedin

Connecting Dunedin, a transport partnership between the Dunedin City Council (DCC), Otago Regional Council (ORC) and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, is helping to ensure Dunedin is well placed to respond to the city's future transport needs.

This partnership is working to ensure good alignment and co-ordination of key transport projects and programmes, future land use and transport development for the central city, where the new hospital will be situated. The work programme is focused on a range of cycling, safety and public transport initiatives, and travel demand management improvement projects.

The Shaping Future Dunedin Transport business cases are nearing completion. Waka Kotahi, DCC and ORC are working on these to provide a safer and better-connected transport network for Dunedin's CBD, where the new hospital will be built.

In the last 18 months:

- A new \$6 million Dunedin central city bus hub was opened, providing one convenient central city service point for public transport, making it easier for bus users to transfer between services. The facility is playing a major hand in growing public transport usage in the city, and a real-time bus information system will soon make it easier for everyone to track their bus.
- In 2018/2019 bus patronage in Dunedin increased by 8% with more than 2.5 million trips on public transport compared to 2017/2018.
- The \$8 million separated cycle lanes on SH1 one-way system through central and north Dunedin are providing safer and improved access for cyclists on this busy arterial route through the central city. The lanes are one of the first cycling projects completed under the umbrella of the Connecting Dunedin group.
- The roll-out of 'all people cross at once' Barnes Dance pedestrian crossings at eight CBD intersections was completed in the second half of 2019. This jointly funded DCC/ Waka Kotahi project is helping improve safety throughout the inner city. The risk of fatal and serious injuries to pedestrians is higher in Dunedin than other comparable cities.

Underway or about to start:

- Construction started in January 2020 on the SH88 Dunedin to Port Chalmers Safety Improvements project. It includes building the final 5km section of the SH88 shared cycling/walking path between St Leonards and Port Chalmers. When it opens in mid-2022 it will provide a safer alternative route for cyclists on SH88, the main road freight link between Dunedin and Port Chalmers.
- Safety improvements on rural sections of SH88 are integral to this project and will include safety barriers, high-performance road marking and improved road signage.
- Work on the Dunedin's Central City Cycle Network that saw the opening of a new cycle bridge over Water of Leith, connecting with the SH88 Dunedin to Port Chalmers shared path, is expected to be completed later this year.
- The project also provides a route through the industrial area to Portsmouth Drive and via the rail corridor to Anzac Avenue in front of Dunedin's railway station. The \$8 million project, jointly funded by Waka Kotahi and Dunedin City Council, is designed to improve access and safety for cyclists.
- Detailed design work is nearing completion and consents have been approved for the new two-lane Beaumont Bridge on SH8 over the Clutha River. Subject to construction approval, work on this new two-lane bridge is expected to start in the first quarter of 2021. The new bridge would replace a 140-year-old single lane steel bridge on an important highway link between Dunedin and Central Otago, increasing safety, reducing travel times and providing greater access to economic and social opportunities.
- In July 2019, work started on a \$12.2 million project to replace Dunedin's street lighting with LEDs. Waka Kotahi is providing 85% of the funding for this work. LED lighting increases safety and significantly reduces energy use and on-going maintenance costs. Work on this project will be finished in the second half of 2021.
- Progress continues to be made on the Dunedin City Council's \$69.5 million Portobello Road safety and resilience project. In 2019, the \$12.5 million, 2km section linking Broad Bay and Portobello opened. This project involves widening 15km of road from Vauxhall to Portobello improving safety and creating a shared walking and cycling path. Low-lying sections of the route are being raised to protect the road from rising sea levels. This project is jointly funded from the NLTP and by the Dunedin City Council. The 7km Vauxhall to Macandrew Bay portion of the project is expected to open later this year.
- Further rock armouring work will get underway later this year to protect SH1 at Katiki Beach between Palmerston and Ōamaru from coastal erosion. This will build on previous work carried out at three sites at this beach in 2017. Consents were approved last month

allowing rock armouring work to start in October at another seven sites. The project is expected to cost between \$3 and \$4 million.

- A new, smarter Bee Card bus card system is being rolled out in Dunedin later this year to make it even easier for people to use public transport. Approved funding for this project is about \$7 million.

Queenstown

Waka Kotahi is taking a multi-agency approach to managing transport opportunities and growth challenges in Queenstown, reflecting the town's rapid expansion as a holiday destination and lifestyle choice.

In the last 18 months:

- We have invested \$6.4 million to improve safety and access at the busy SH6/Tucker Beach Road intersection in Frankton. Difficult right-hand turns across the highway have been resolved by building a new slip road onto SH6 to Frankton.
- With our partners, Otago Regional Council and Queenstown Lakes District Council, we introduced the first subsidised – flat rate of \$2 – bus service in Queenstown. It offers a more affordable, frequent and reliable public transport service. It is an important step in helping to reduce the town's reliance on single occupancy car trips. We've co-invested 51% of \$9.7 million in funding to run the service in 2017/18 and 2020-21 NLTP.
- Nearly 1.5 million people used in public transport in Queenstown in 2018/19. This is a 64% increase on 2017/2018.
- A modern and easy to use Bee Card bus card system is being rolled out in Queenstown later this year, to make it even easier for people to use public transport.

Underway or about to start:

- Several possible improvements to the SH6/SH6A highway corridor are being considered to ensure better connections to other parts of the network and improve walking, cycling and public transport links.
- Detailed business case work is advancing as part of the 'Way to Go' partnership between Waka Kotahi, Queenstown Lakes District Council and Otago Regional Council, on multiple projects to provide greater transport choice for residents and visitors to Queenstown. These include:
 - Queenstown Town Centre Detailed Business Case and Frankton to Queenstown, Frankton and Ladies Mile Single Stage Business case (which are being managed together and includes the Government's NZ Upgrade Programme Queenstown Package of improvements)
 - Wakatipu Ferry Detailed Business Case
- The NZ Upgrade Programme is investing \$90 million to give Queenstown residents and visitors greater choice about how they move about, with better access to new public transport facilities and improved walking and cycling connections. The programme will deliver a range of public transport and walking and cycling improvements on SH6 and SH6A between Ladies Mile, Kawarau Falls Bridge and the Queenstown centre.
- Consideration is also being given to initiatives that further improve access and public transport efficiency in the area, such as bus priority measures; new transport hubs and a more pedestrian-friendly town centre. Additional activities include improved parking management, new on-road/off-road shared walking/cycling opportunities; and a range of public transport service improvements, among them a water ferry service.
- A new cycle connection is planned at Nevis Bluff to secure the Great Ride link between Cromwell and Queenstown.

Safety

Queenstown's tourist economy will be supported through an on-going rock fall protection management programme at Nevis Bluff on SH6 between Queenstown and Cromwell to reduce the risk of closure of this highway corridor.

Detailed design work is underway on a \$6.4 million seal extension to improve safety on Ballantyne Road near Wanaka. The road shoulders on this busy local arterial road will also be widened to provide greater safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

Southland

In the last 18 months:

- The \$13 million SH1 Edendale realignment 30km north of Invercargill opened in December 2019. The new alignment will improve safety by moving highway traffic out of the Edendale township, and help the region prosper by providing better access to economic and social opportunities.
- A new \$1 million Alpine Operations Centre opened near the eastern entrance to the Homer Tunnel. It houses tunnel operations staff, the Milford Road avalanche and rockfall protection programmes team and provides a modern base for road maintenance crews.
- We worked with the Southland District Council and Gore District Council to secure emergency works funding, to replace the 85-year-old single lane Pyramid Bridge in eastern Southland that was swept away by a major flood in early 2018. Work on a new single lane bridge started in late 2019 and opened in June 2020, restoring an important economic and community transport link for the Eastern Southland area. The new bridge with a total cost of \$4.6 million was \$2 million under the estimated cost and opened several months ahead of schedule.
- Completed the \$14 million Boost safety programme targeting highways in Otago and Southland involving the installation of safety barriers, rumble strips and upgrading curve warning signs.
- In Southland, barriers and improved signs were added to 935km of high-risk rural highway, 430km of rumble strips and 3kms of safety barriers.
- \$6 million is being invested in Invercargill's public transport in this NLTP and targets better services, simplified fare structures and upgraded infrastructure such as bus shelters.

Regional development

Climate change is affecting the resilience of the region's land transport system as a freight corridor, providing more reliable connections to communities is critical for the region economic growth.

Underway or about to start:

- Consenting and detailed design for a new roundabout to improve safety and reduce the severity of crashes at the SH1/Elles Road Intersection in south Invercargill is about to start.
- Waka Kotahi recently approved funding for a new walking and cycling connection over the Mataura River in Gore (\$3.6m) and 90% of \$1m for walking and cycling improvements in Gore to complete its cycle network.
- Invercargill City Council is preparing to implement New Zealand's first pulse timetable. This uses three bus routes that converge from different locations around the city into the CBD. From there, passengers can transfer to the other services before the buses return to their home base.
- A new Bee Card bus card system will be operating in Invercargill from early in the third quarter of 2020. This will help make it even easier for customers to use public transport, including the ability to top up the card on-line.

NZ Upgrade Programme

The NZ Upgrade Programme provides \$90 million for Queenstown to build on the success of the Orbus service by funding a range of public transport projects on SH6 and SH6A, between Ladies Mile, Kawarau Falls Bridge and Queenstown's town centre. Bus lanes will be built to prioritise travel by public transport on SH6 and bus priority on SH6A. These will be supported by a new bus hub on SH6.

The investment includes a new roundabout at Howards Drive (Lake Hayes Estate access), an upgrade to the SH6/SH6A intersection and an underpass at Ladies Mile to provide better cycling and walking connections.

Together, these improvements will provide a more reliable and efficient bus service into Queenstown's town centre, and safer, upgraded walking and cycling facilities, helping reduce reliance on private vehicle use.

Announced in February 2020, the regional package of NZ Upgrade Programme investment will help address safety risks, resilience, accessibility and travel time reliability as well as support regional economic development. The Otago projects totalling \$10m are:

- SH1 north of Kakanui River/ South of Oamaru – Improving Flood Mitigation
- SH6 - SH8B Junction Cromwell intersection upgrade.

Investment in Otago/Southland

NLTP	2015–18	2018–21
Forecast total investment	\$662 million	\$1 billion
Forecast maintenance and operations	\$473 million	\$561 million
Forecast public transport investment	\$43 million	\$95 million
Forecast walking and cycling	\$6 million	\$61 million
Regional network improvements	\$107 million	\$269 million

Crown funding	
NZ Upgrade Programme*	\$100 million

* Waka Kotahi led projects only

Overview map



