



Capitalising on positive changes arising from transport disruption

In New Zealand by mid/end June, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 had led to more than 1500 cases, 22 deaths, and a full lockdown of the country to minimise virus transmission. Many aspects of New Zealand life were disrupted, with cancellation of social events, changing work and travel patterns, job losses, closure of businesses, and consequent mental health concerns.

Despite these negative outcomes, there is a widely-shared notion of 'not wasting a good crisis' and a desire to leverage disruptions as opportunities. Learning from, and responding to, some positive aspects of the disruption caused by COVID-19 could help our transport system to play a key role in New Zealand's recovery in support of New Zealand's longer-term transport outcomes. However, any new initiatives will need to be sensitively implemented, given that disruptions are a time of uncertainty and stress.

WHAT WAS RESEARCHED AND HOW IT WAS DONE

The international literature review aimed to identify learnings from previous major transport disruptions to provide insight into how they might be leveraged to advance transport policy goals.

Based on the need for urgent government decision-making, a rapid, targeted review was done. This took a system-view of 'transport behaviour', acknowledging the decisions and behaviour of individuals, elements in the physical and social environment and the role of institutions and policy. Relevant key themes were distilled, and five case studies of disruptive events were developed to contextualise and support the findings.

WHAT WAS FOUND

Objective 1

Understand the effectiveness of using major transport disruption as the best time to influence behaviour change pertaining to transport.

There are a range of theoretical perspectives which argue that disruptions provide a window of opportunity to learn, influence behaviour, re-examine processes and systems, foster niche innovations and ultimately advance policy goals. However, evidence of capitalising on major transport disruption to effectively influence transport behaviour change is considerably mixed, and studies examining long-term change are scarce. Despite this, the literature does offer some insight into the factors that may enhance the effectiveness of actions in the post-disruption period.

Disruptions may also present opportunities to learn in more subtle ways, by reflecting on policy drivers and assumptions which impact longer-term change, even

Inclusive access

Enabling all people to participate in society through access to social and economic opportunities, such as work, education, and healthcare.

Healthy and safe people

Protecting people from transport-related injuries and harmful pollution, and making active travel an attractive option.

Economic prosperity

Supporting economic activity via local, regional, and international connections, with efficient movements of people and products.

Environmental sustainability

Transitioning to net zero carbon emissions, and maintaining or improving biodiversity, water quality, and air quality.



Resilience and security

Minimising and managing the risks from natural and human-made hazards, anticipating and adapting to emerging threats, and recovering effectively from disruptive events.

Outcomes for the transport system (Ministry of Transport, 2018)

if policy implementation is not immediately actioned. As seen in Hurricane Katrina, disruptions can be used to identify necessary improvements to institutional arrangements or ways of working such as disaster response strategies.

Objective 2

Understand the relative merits of potential approaches to leverage the current transport disruption to influence behaviour change pertaining to transport.

Drawing on the literature and case studies, 10 key lessons or considerations were identified to help inform approaches that might be taken to advance New Zealand's transport policy goals during and post-COVID-19 and contribute to recovery strategies. These lessons and considerations are summarised in the conclusion below.

CONCLUSION

Transport disruptions are an opportunity to advance policy goals and contribute to long-term transport behaviour change. However, this will not happen automatically - a careful, fine-grained system-level sustained response is needed, one that rapidly and proactively identifies and acts on opportunities at

the right time. A range of approaches is possible with differing levels of ambition, and New Zealand's existing policy direction for safe, sustainable and inclusive transport already provides a strong platform for change. Lessons from previous disruptions show that New Zealand may be more successful at turning COVID-19 into an opportunity if strong government leadership is combined with proactive community engagement, especially with vulnerable groups, and transport solutions can be quickly identified which have synergy with economic recovery, safety and health, inclusivity, climate change and resilience goals.

The critical point is not to go backwards. At the very least, the various forces that entrench negative outcomes such as poor road safety and automobility should be identified and mitigated. It is also important to ensure that the disruption and/or the policy responses do not further disadvantage vulnerable groups.

The disruption of COVID-19 is on-going and will not be New Zealand's last disruption, particularly as climate change accelerates. Therefore, learning from this experience provides a chance to act now, while also enhancing resilience to future disruptions in a way that supports achievement of our transport policy goals.



RR 672 - Leveraging transport disruption to influence change, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency research report. Available at www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/reports/672