



KEY TRANSPORT ISSUES

Transit, along with local and central government are working together to achieve a sustainable land transport system in new ways.

Transit will work closely with the Auckland Regional Transport Authority and regional and district councils to ensure that any substantial upgrading in the next 10 to 20 years is properly considered and planned, in order to relieve congestion and support regional growth strategies. This requires agreement on amendments to road and public transport plans and shared funding responsibilities for both local and national infrastructure and services.

Planning activities such as Auckland's Regional Land Transport Strategy, Long-Term Council Community Plans, and Transit's State Highway Forecast all help in this process.

A sustainable land transport system cannot be achieved without considering land use patterns and transport trends and behaviour. To do this, Transit needs to be involved at an early stage in regional and local growth strategies (or emerging views where strategies have not been written) and planning documents, as these are critical to supporting regional land transport strategies.

In meeting the objectives of the NZTS and LTMA the key regional transport issues for the Auckland region include:

- › Severe congestion, including variability in trip times
- › Road safety, and in particular, a lack of passing opportunities on SH1 and SH16 north of Auckland
- › Traffic growth, driven by population growth
- › An alternative route to SH1 through Auckland
- › Secure efficient and safe transport corridors, especially between Auckland and Whangarei and SH2 within the Auckland region
- › The impact of land use development because of continuing intensification within the Metropolitan Urban Limit (MUL)
- › Increased land use development at growth nodes such as Warkworth and Kumeu leading to the need for improvements to the roading network.

How we plan to address these key issues

Economic growth and resulting increases in traffic demand mean that the state highway network in Auckland will need to be extended, and existing lengths substantially upgraded within the next 10 to 20 years, to relieve congestion and support the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy.

Travel Demand Management (TDM) is a combination of activities that together seek to influence travel behaviour. TDM methods include travel plans, traveller information systems and traffic management techniques such as ramp signalling. Transit endorses the principle of TDM as an integral component of a sustainable approach to land transport and is actively investigating opportunities for TDM.

Improvement works encompass the entire region with particular focus on the Auckland Central Corridor, Western Ring Route (WRR) and the Northern Busway, including the Esmonde Road Interchange. Corridors outside the Auckland MUL also require improvements to accommodate increases in inter-regional travel. Proposed activities include improvements to the alignment of existing two-lane highways, seal widening and the provision of passing lanes.

Large improvement projects (with construction costs of more than \$3.4M) have been indicated for 10 years, while projects with construction costs of less than \$3.4M are proposed over the next three years and are shown in the table. The locations of Auckland projects in the 10-year State Highway Forecast are shown on the map.

Travel Demand Management

Tenders have recently closed for a project to install ramp signalling throughout the Auckland motorway network. Installation of signals will commence on the Southern Motorway in September 2006, with the Northwestern and Northern Motorways following as an integrated project.

Auckland Central Corridor

Auckland Central Corridor activities cover SH1 from Albany to Manukau. In addition to the Central Motorway Junction upgrading project, which is underway, several capacity improvement projects are forecast for the next 10 years. These include projects such as the Vic Park Tunnel and Newmarket Viaduct replacement, which add capacity to maximise the performance of the Central Motorway Junction project.

Northern Busway and Esmonde Rd Interchange

In addition to other SH1 improvements in the Auckland Central Corridor, construction of the Northern Busway is well advanced. The project is a critical component of the Auckland Regional Land Transport Strategy to improve passenger transport services between North Shore and the Auckland isthmus. The initial stages are already in use and have proved to be a great success.

Western Ring Route

The Western Ring Route (WRR) is a proposed strategic motorway running south – north through Auckland, connecting Manukau City, Auckland City, Waitekere City and North Shore City. It is made up of ten individual projects that need to be completed as a complete package. It will take traffic from Manukau through Waterview and Hobsonville to Albany to provide a strategic alternative to State Highway 1.

Provision for completion of the WRR has been included in Transit's State Highway Forecast projections, but in order to complete by 2015, as planned since August 2005, toll revenue will be needed from the route in order to fund the required debt. Transit is working on the understanding that Auckland does want the WRR and wants it completed sooner (around 2015) than would be possible under current conventional funding.

Increases in funding to state highway activity will not meet all the costs of state highway projects. Transit's plan for early completion of the Western Ring Route in Auckland remains dependent on support from Aucklanders for tolling the route. This is unchanged from August 2005.

The set of projects making up the WRR and the desire to complete it sooner make it a very challenging and complex proposal. The options available to Transit for achieving early completion so as to provide more reliable travel times, reduced commute times, improved airport connectivity and better overall network performance are limited and consultation is important before Transit makes any decisions. Meaningful public feedback will be central to ensure the Transit New Zealand Board is well informed.

An announcement will be made regarding Transit's intentions for completing the WRR and tolling in coming months. Although tolling and road pricing are related they do serve different purposes. Recent consultation on road pricing by the Ministry of Transport has added to our considerations on when and how Transit should proceed on tolling and its consultation.

The 2006/07 State Highway Forecast includes an \$800M loan to advance the Waterview Connection project and ensure the completion of the Western Ring Route by 2015 (subject to tolling). The tender for the construction of the motorway link between SH1 and Puhinui Interchange has been let. Construction of the Manukau Harbour Crossing has been brought forward as a result of additional funding, with the Mangere Bridge Duplication and motorway widening planned for completion mid 2011.

Public Transport Improvements

All new projects being developed consider and make appropriate provision for public transport. In addition, a number of bus priority lanes are being progressed in conjunction with other motorway capacity improvements.

Road Safety

Transit has identified a number of activities to improve the safety and efficiency of sections of state highways. These include realignments, intersection improvements, seal widening and lighting safety retrofits.

Passing Opportunities

Limited passing opportunities on parts of the rural state highway network lead to driver frustration and accidents. Transit plans to progress passing lanes on both SH1 and SH16 north of Auckland, and on SH22 north of Pukekohe.

Stock Effluent Disposal Facilities

As part of a national programme to provide a safe and convenient network of stock effluent disposal facilities, two new facilities are being constructed on SH1, one at Wellsford and the other at the Bombay Hills.

Walking and Cycling

Provision for walking and cycling activities is an integral part of state highway planning. While these facilities are provided as part of improvement projects where applicable, there is one specific pedestrian facility planned for implementation in the next three years, on SH16 at Westgate.

Strategic Studies

We are proposing to undertake a number of strategic studies for the Auckland region to improve our long-term planning and assist good decision-making.

Maintenance and Operations

The safe operation of the state highway network is a key function for Transit. Processes are in place to manage traffic efficiently, provide consistent and reliable information for road users, undertake maintenance work on the highway in the safest and least disruptive way, monitor locations where crashes occur and where appropriate, take corrective action.

The state highway network is a \$15 billion transport infrastructure asset that demands sophisticated and effective management. Transit has systems in place to do this, ranging from infrastructure and traffic databases to natural features inventories, long-term deterioration modelling tools, and annual condition data collection supported by advanced contract delivery methods and regular performance reporting.

Further, improvements to the way traffic is managed at incidents and in congested urban areas are being investigated and implemented.

Maintenance and operations activities make up a large proportion of the forecast expenditure in the Auckland region. In addition to preserving the highway network and undertaking maintenance and improvements to meet future levels of service, other maintenance and operations activities include:

- › Resurfacing 69km of multi-lane motorway
- › Resurfacing 17km and reconstructing 4.8km of rural state highway
- › Improving safety by applying high skid resistance surfacing at critical locations
- › Continuing to refine maintenance practices to reduce traffic disruptions and noise during the day and night
- › Continuing to carry out structural and seismic strengthening of bridges, including the Auckland Harbour Bridge
- › Improving techniques and response times to incidents on motorways.

In 2006/07 the Transit managed Traffic Management Unit (TMU), a joint collaboration between Transit and six Auckland local authorities, providing 24/7 integrated traffic management, incident management and traveller information to road users, proposes to:

- › Continue to improve management of the wider impacts of the expanding motorway construction programme
- › Expand the geographic coverage and improve the functionality of the motorway Advanced Traffic Management Systems
- › Provide an improved traveller information service to users through the traffic website and associated services
- › Increase resource levels to operate travel demand management measures, such as ramp signalling
- › Continue to enhance the management of the critical arterial network by improving co-ordination of traffic signals throughout the region
- › Improve asset management systems for all high technology equipment.