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

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

› Road safety

› Forestry traffic

› Dairying traffic: the increase in the number of dairy farms is seeing increasing heavy vehicle movements, particularly around the processing plant at Edendale

› Tourist traffic: particularly increases on the southern scenic route and to Fiordland National Park and between Queenstown and Milford Sound (SH94)

› Lack of passing opportunities, particularly on SH1 between Edendale and Dacre.

How we plan to address these key issues

Most state highways in Southland carry relatively low traffic volumes and few improvements are currently required apart from minor safety improvements, improvements to Homer Tunnel on SH94, and a realignment of SH1 at Edendale. Southland's economic growth and conversion of pasture farming activity to dairying is actively monitored to ensure that the current high levels of service on Southland highways are maintained.

While the emphasis for Transit in Southland is on maintaining the existing state highway network, there are a number of activities prioritised in the State Highway Forecast to improve road safety as well as route security and route efficiency.

A key priority is managing the connections between state highways and local roads, as well as access to state highways from adjacent land, to support the medium to long distance travel function of key arterial roads.

There is a continuing need for active management of SH94 between Te Anau and Milford Sound to provide an appropriate level of avalanche protection and traffic management. Transit is continuing investigations into replacing the eastern portal to the Homer Tunnel that was damaged some years ago and needs to be replaced and possibly extended. This tunnel provides the only road access to the key tourist destination of Milford Sound.

In addition, the Edendale Realignment is proposed to improve the safety of that section of SH1.

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 Southland projects in the 10-year State Highway Forecast are shown on the map.

Road Safety – Secure and Efficient Transport Corridors

Transit has identified a number of activities to improve the safety and efficiency of sections of state highway in Southland, including realignments, bridge widening and intersection improvements, for progress in the next five years. A pullover or stopping area with a kiosk will be provided on SH94 near Te Anau, to make road condition information available to motorists. Further work on the management or removal of roadside hazards will continue.

Stock Effluent Disposal Facilities

As part of a national programme to provide a safe and convenient network of stock effluent disposal facilities Transit is proposing a new stock effluent disposal facility on SH1, between Gore and Mataura. A new facility is also planned on SH6 near Lumsden.

Strategic Studies

We are proposing to undertake three strategic studies for the Southland region, to improve our long term planning and assist good decision-making. These are studies of SH94/95 The Key to Milford (Te Anau), Invercargill to Winton and Lorneville to Wallacetown.

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 activities make up the majority of the forecast expenditure in the Southland region. In addition to preserving the highway network and undertaking maintenance and improvements to meet future levels of service, we propose to:

› Undertake 74km of resurfacing, including 7km of thin asphaltic surfacing, which, although more expensive, is more durable and quieter

› Undertake 10km of road pavement reconstruction

› Continue to install the latest hazard management systems at Homer Tunnel on SH94. The current avalanche hazard management system is recognised as being world-class. We intend to ensure that the programme remains adequately funded and the latest techniques are used to maximise access to Milford Sound and minimise risks to road users

› Maintaining high skid resistance surfacing to help prevent wet road crashes

› Develop a strategy, including in-depth crash analysis, in an effort to meet the Government's 2010 safety targets

› Continue with improvements in traffic management at incidents on the network.