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Committee Regional Transport
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Recommended Wairarapa Corridor Plan for Approval

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the meeting of the Draft Wairarapa Corridor Plan Hearings Subcommittee that took place on Friday 23 April 2010 and to recommend changes to the final Wairarapa Corridor Plan as a result of the Subcommittee's deliberations.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Report of the Hearings Subcommittee

3.1 Background

The Wairarapa Corridor Plan is one of four corridor plans developed under the policy framework provided by the Regional Land Transport Strategy.

The corridor plan identifies the significant needs and issues, together with associated measures for the Wairarapa transport corridor. A multi-modal action programme in the plan sets out short-medium and longer term measures to be progressed by those agencies represented on the Regional Transport Committee.

The Draft Wairarapa Corridor Plan was approved for consultation by the Regional Transport Committee on 2 December 2009. Submissions were invited on the draft corridor plan during February/March 2010.

4. Hearings Subcommittee

The Regional Transport Committee established a Subcommittee to hear and consider submissions on the draft plan and recommend changes to the final corridor plan.

The Subcommittee had the following membership:

- Councillor Wilde (Chair)
- Mayor Staples (South Wairarapa District Council)
- Mayor Daniells (Masterton District Council)
- Dr Hume (NZ Transport Agency)

Apologies were received from Mayor McPhee who was unable to attend the hearings in full and therefore withdrew from the Subcommittee.

5. Submissions

36 submissions were received on the Draft Wairarapa Corridor Plan. While this is not a large number, 23 of those submissions were from agencies or groups, many with a large membership base within their community or interest area. 13 submissions were from individuals.

Submissions were received from four territorial authorities (Upper Hutt City Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council and Masterton District Council). A submission was also received from Horizons Regional Transport Committee.

The Hearings Subcommittee met on Friday 23 April to hear oral submissions, consider all submissions, and agree recommended changes to the plan. In total, nine submitters took the opportunity to be heard.

The Subcommittee was provided with a submissions report (**Report 10.185** – available on Greater Wellington’s website) to assist their deliberations.

6. Overview of issues

The issues raised by submitters through their submissions ranged both in terms of topic and specificity. Submitters commented on high level strategic issues through to detailed operational issues.

Many submitters noted their support for the measures in the draft plan. However many supporters sought that the plan go further in a few common areas. Submitters also made suggestions as to how they believed the plan could be amended or improved.

The following sections set out the key issues identified by submitters and the officer comment in response.

6.1 Road Safety and Road Network Improvements

Submitters supported measures in the draft plan to improve road safety and the level of service provided by state highways and local roads through the Wairarapa corridor.

Some submitters sought these projects sooner than is currently signalled in the plan – for example improvements to the Rimutaka Hill Road, State Highway 2 intersection upgrades, and the Waihenga Bridge replacement.

Subcommittee's response: The timing identified for these projects in the draft plan generally reflects the realistic expectation of the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) about when the project can be resourced and funded. In many cases the priority and timing is already set in the National Land Transport Programme, or dependant on being included in future programmes.

A common request was for a reduction of the current 70km/h speed limit on SH2 south-west of Featherston to 50km/h. A number of safety concerns were cited as reasons for seeking this speed reduction.

Subcommittee's response: It was noted that NZTA has advised that the speed limits into Featherston are currently being reconsidered by the Agency.

Another measure specifically supported by a number of submitters was advocacy for improvements to the Pahiatua Track as a key alternative access route to Palmerston North for Wairarapa residents. In addition, the importance of key local roads connecting to this route was noted.

Subcommittee's response: The wide support for this advocacy measure in the plan was noted. The measure has also been amended to include reference to key connections to the Pahiatua Track.

6.2 Freight

The need to accommodate current and future freight volumes within and through the Wairarapa transport corridor was acknowledged by a number of submitters. Some submitters strongly supported the measures in the draft plan to address freight and agreed that a significant growth in freight was a key pressure for the corridor.

Other submitters felt that the draft plan underestimates the likely impact of freight in the corridor and sought more and stronger freight measures. In particular, a number of submitters sought additional measures to shift more road freight onto rail. Suggestions included providing additional rail sidings as freight transfer sites, removing current constraints for rail freight, and providing better subsidies for rail freight.

Subcommittee's response: The plan recognises an expected significant growth in freight volumes generally, and in log freight generated from Wairarapa in particular. Key sources for projected log freight that informed the plan were

the Ministry of Transport's National Freight Demands Study (2008) and the Ministry for the Environment's Wood Availability Forecasts (2008 – 2040).

The plan includes several measures that support the development of a log transfer site at Waingawa, however this is dependant on a commercial partnership.

Provision of subsidies for rail freight is an issue that sits with central government. An 'alternative to roading' subsidy has been previously available from NZTA and has been utilised to some degree by rail freight operators over recent years. The current National Land Transport Programme notes that funding for these types of initiatives under the 'Rail and Sea Freight' activity class is being phased out during 2009-2012, being used only for committed activities. NZTA has advised that its policy on funding assistance for rail freight operations and infrastructure is based on validated business cases demonstrating a funding gap, merit of the proposal and that the freight service will be self sustaining at the end of funding period.

The Forest Owners Association was able to identify specific constraints that are seen to currently limit the ability to competitively move log freight by rail between Waingawa and CentrePort. These included an adverse gradient south of Featherston requiring two locomotives; restrictions on train length crossing Aotea Quay; a lack of wagons; and restrictions on operating hours around passenger trains. Inadequate log storage space for cargo over 30,000 tonnes and no facilities for chip export were also noted.

Subcommittee's response: An additional measure is recommended to work with the key parties to investigate removal of these constraints that affect rail freight movement between the Wairarapa corridor and key freight hubs such as CentrePort.

The current consideration by the government of 'mothballing' some railway lines in New Zealand, including the Wairarapa line north of Masterton, was raised by several submitters who suggested that the plan should include a measure to advocate for its retention in recognition of its role as an alternative route should the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) line be closed and future potential as key infrastructure for moving freight to the north.

Subcommittee's response: It was noted that the government is currently reviewing its options for future investment in the rail network, including whether to 'mothball' the Wairarapa railway line north of Masterton. There is almost no traffic on this part of the line at present and NZTA has signalled that the focus for rail investment will be increasing freight movement on the NIMT line and upgrading the urban commuter rail networks in Auckland and Wellington.

While recognising there may be potential for this section of railway to play a greater role in the movement of freight in future, and the value in having an alternative route to the NIMT line, the need for investment in rail to be focused into areas where the most benefits and efficiencies can be gained is also recognised.

A new measure is recommended that involves working with central government to encourage investment in the rail network that supports the use of rail as a safe, sustainable, and efficient solution for the movement of freight to/from and through the Wairarapa corridor.

Several submitters suggested that heavy vehicle bypass routes could be created within ten years to improve amenity, freight connectivity and road safety through Wairarapa townships.

Subcommittee's response: It was noted that while NZTA has signalled that general state highway bypasses will not be considered until beyond ten years, there is no reason why local councils could not investigate the merit of any heavy vehicle-only bypass options in the interim. A case for any funding assistance for such investigations would need to be made through the next RLTP/NLTP process. A new measure is proposed to reflect this.

6.3 Walking and cycling

A lot of support for improvements to walking and cycling facilities was noted through the submissions. Submitters generally supported the measures in the draft plan under 'Walking and Cycling' to improve the cycle network in urban areas, reviewing cycle facilities on state highways and open local roads, and considering the needs of pedestrians in Wairarapa townships.

Submitters recognised the potential for cycling in Wairarapa, particularly given the flat terrain and also the potential for increasing tourism and recreation related cycling. Submitters sought improvements to cycling facilities, including dedicated off-road cycle links and improved on-road facilities.

Subcommittee's response: The focus of this transport plan is on cycling for trip making purposes. Off-road cycle tracks and routes that serve recreational or tourist trips would need to be driven primarily by funding from those sectors. However, improved on-road cycling facilities signalled in the plan will contribute towards cycling safety and connectivity between Wairarapa communities.

While the improvements may not necessarily include dedicated marked on-road cycle lanes, ensuring that road shoulders are of adequate width and quality, and removing pinch points (such as provision at bridges) will improve on-road cycling facilities. Local councils could also contribute towards cyclist safety by providing signage indicating safe cycle routes and connections that avoid the state highway and busier routes where these are available.

Submitters also identified safety issues for cyclists on Rimutaka Hill Road and the need to provide a safe cycle connection between Upper Hutt and Featherston.

Subcommittee's response: The Regional Cycle Network Map does not include the Rimutaka Hill Road as it is not recommended as a safe route for cyclists. Providing a safe cycle connection between the Hutt Valley and Wairarapa, and taking cyclists off the Rimutaka Hill Road would contribute to our road safety

outcomes. A new measure around upgrading the Rimutaka Rail Trail is recommended to address this.

6.4 Public Transport

A large proportion of submitters made comments in relation to public transport in the Wairarapa corridor.

Support was noted for the measures identified in the plan to improve public transport in the short-medium term and in the longer term.

However, many submitters sought stronger measures in the plan to improve public transport. For example, some submitters felt that there should be more rail services connecting Wairarapa with the rest of the region, including additional early morning, late evening and inter-peak services. Submitters also raised the issue of additional services during special events in Wairarapa or Wellington – for example the Martinborough Fair or a Hurricanes rugby game.

Subcommittee's response: Greater Wellington advised the subcommittee that with the current rolling stock and funding there are limitations to the services that can be provided. However, Wairarapa rail services will be reviewed once more carriages become available following the introduction of the new electric Matangi trains from late 2010, in line with available budgets.

Some submitters sought additional seating capacity on Wairarapa rail services, reporting overcrowding and often having to stand between Featherston and Lower Hutt.

Subcommittee's response: Some reconfiguration of current services to increase seating capacity was to be considered late last year but this work has been put on hold due to a decrease in overall patronage over recent months. Greater Wellington officers have obtained recent guard count data to assist with understanding this issue better. The new SE carriages, due from late 2010, will increase capacity once these are altered for use on Wairarapa line rail services.

New rail infrastructure such as new 'passing loops' so that trains can pass one another between Upper Hutt and Masterton were also sought.

Subcommittee's response: The Wellington Regional Rail Plan identifies double tracking from Trentham to Upper Hutt as a medium term network enhancement project and will be a priority if funding can be made available. Other track works are not planned in the short to medium term. The corridor plan includes a long-term measure to consider the potential for shuttle services between Masterton and Upper Hutt. Any associated infrastructure upgrade such as passing loops would be considered as part of this action.

The need for improved connections between bus and rail services was commented on, together with the need to advertise these connections, and generally improve promotion of public transport in Wairarapa.

Subcommittee's response: New improved Wairarapa bus services, including connections with rail services, commenced operating in 2007. They are due to be reviewed in the 2010/11 financial year. Comments around the need for better promotion of public transport services in Wairarapa have been referred to Greater Wellington's Metlink Team for consideration and action.

Submitters also commonly noted the issue of carriage of bikes on trains, seeking additional space for bikes, a consistent operational policy, and more promotion.

Subcommittee's response: Greater Wellington advised the subcommittee that the current rules allow for the carriage of bikes on the regional rail network in general and the new Matangi trains have been designed to allow the carriage of bikes. Bikes can be carried on the Wairarapa trains, subject to available space. The operational policy is currently under review and will include looking at cycle storage at rail stations.

6.5 Measures in other regional implementation plans

Some submitters felt that actions identified in the other various region-wide implementation plans, such as our road safety and travel demand management plans should be listed out in this plan.

The officers technical group considered this issue during the development of this and other corridor plans. The other regional plans for road safety, walking, cycling, and travel demand management include measures to be implemented region-wide and these sit in the RLTS folder alongside the various corridor plans and should be read as complementary plans. The purpose of the corridor plans is to identify corridor specific projects and advocacy matters that need to be progressed alongside these other region-wide initiatives.

Listing the measures from other plans in this corridor plan would result in a very lengthy document and much duplication. Therefore the approach has been to simply cross-reference the need to be progressing the measures in these other implementation plans, as they relate to Wairarapa.

6.6 Considerations for other processes

In many cases submitters raised issues that are outside the scope of this strategic level plan. For example matters that will be addressed by the implementing agencies as they progress the design and implementation of specific projects, or because they relate considerations for detailed service reviews or other operational work programmes or funding processes.

Where submitters raised detailed issues related to specific operational matters, then that submission has been forwarded to the relevant implementing agency for their consideration.

7. Changes recommended by the Subcommittee

The Subcommittee has recommended the following changes be made to the draft Wairarapa Corridor Plan:

Under the ‘Immediate priorities’ listed on page 3 of the draft plan the following changes are recommended:

- 7.1.1 Amend the text on page 3 of bullet point 3 to read:
‘Providing a safe, efficient *and reliable* road *and rail* network for key tourism and freight routes through the corridor’
- 7.1.2 Amend the text of bullet 4 to read:
‘Supporting the transfer of freight from road to rail wherever practical, *including the need to address current infrastructure and rolling stock constraints between Wairarapa and ports*’
- 7.1.3 Amend the fifth bullet point to read:
‘Maintain, *and improve where practicable*, the current level of service provided by public transport to/from and within Wairarapa’.

For the ‘Overview diagrams’ on pages 7 and 8 of the draft plan, the following change is recommended:

- 7.1.4 Amend Figure 1 to show the proposed log transfer site at Waingawa as a circle straddling the railway line, to reflect that the site could go on the east or west side of the railway line.
- 7.1.5 Update Figure 1 and Figure 2 to reflect any other new measures or changes as a consequence of these recommendations.

Under the ‘Road safety and the Road Network’ heading (page 9 of draft plan) in the table of measures to be implemented within 10 years, the following changes are recommended:

- 7.1.6 Amend the measure regarding the Pahiatua Track to read: ‘Advocate for improvements to the Pahiatua Track, *and key connecting links, as an important route* for Wairarapa residents accessing *services* and facilities in Palmerston North, *other parts of Manawatu, and beyond*.’
- 7.1.7 Amend the ‘Responsibility’ column for the measure relating to the Pahiatua Track from: ‘All agencies’ to ‘*Greater Wellington, MDC, CDC, SWDC*’ – to reflect that it is not appropriate for the NZTA to advocate to itself.
- 7.1.8 Add a new measure to read:
‘*Advocate for the Rimutaka Hill Road and State Highway 2 through Wairarapa to be included as part of the NZ Transport Agency’s ‘National Motorcycle Black Route’ to be targeted for associated safety improvements*’.

- 7.1.9 Amend the existing measure regarding upgrade of Norfolk Road/SH2 intersection by adding reference to the Buchanan Place/SH2 project to read:

'Construct intersection improvements at Norfolk Road/State Highway 2 and Buchanan Place/State Highway 2 intersections to ensure the increasing number of vehicle movements at these locations can be safely and efficiently accommodated'.

Amend the timing for this measure to reflect its urgency: From 'By 2015' to 'By 2014'.

It is also recommended that this measure is moved from under the 'Freight' heading to under 'Road network and road safety' to reflect its safety contribution to all traffic.

Under the 'Freight' heading (page 9 and 10) in the table of measures to be implemented within 10 years, the following changes are recommended:

- 7.1.10 Add a new measure to read:

'Investigate the potential for heavy traffic only bypasses, where opportunities may exist to remove heavy vehicles from SH2 through Wairarapa townships'.

Responsibility: 'CDC, MDC, SWDC' . Timing: 'Ongoing'.

- 7.1.11 Add a new measure to read:

'Advocate to central government to encourage investment in the rail network that supports the use of rail as a safe, sustainable, and efficient solution for the movement of freight to/from and through the Wairarapa corridor'.

Responsibility: 'GW, NZTA and TAs' Timing: 'Ongoing'

- 7.1.12 Add a new measure to read:

'Work with KiwiRail, Ontrack, CentrePort, NZTA and forestry companies to investigate removal of identified infrastructure and rolling stock constraints affecting rail freight movement between the Wairarapa corridor and key freight hubs, such as CentrePort'.

Responsibility: 'GW and TAs' Timing: 'Ongoing'

- 7.1.13 Adjust the timing of the measure regarding the NZTA freight impacts review on page 10 of the draft plan – from: 'By 2012' to: 'By 2013'.

- 7.1.14 Amend the existing measure regarding development of a log transfer site at Waingawa to accurately reflect the role of the partners to this plan in supporting and advocating for this project, rather than have the responsibility for the measure listed as 'commercial joint venture'.

Amend text from: 'Develop a log transfer and storage site at Waingawa as a commercial partnership'.

Responsibility: 'Commercial joint venture'

To: *'Support the commercial development of a log transfer and storage site at Waingawa'*.

Responsibility: *'GW, NZTA, TAs'*

Under the 'Walking and cycling' heading (page 10) in the table of measures to be implemented within 10 years, the following changes are recommended:

7.1.15 Add both *'Carterton District Council'* and *'South Wairarapa District Council'* to the responsibility column for the measure relating to improving the cycle network in accordance with best practice guidance.

7.1.16 Amend the second measure to read:

'Review shoulder widths and quality on open state highways and open local roads to ensure sealed road shoulders provide for adequate space between cyclists and passing vehicles on these high speed rural roads'

7.1.17 Add a new measure to read:

'Support and encourage upgrades to the Rimutaka Rail Trail track from Cross Creek through to Cross Creek Road to an easy shared path standard that accommodates a wide range of bicycle types. Identify potential improvements to on-road cycle facilities and off-road paths connecting the Rimutaka Rail Trail and Featherston'.

Responsibility: *'GWRC and SWDC'* Timing: *'By 2015'*

Under the 'Public transport' heading (pages 10 and 11) in the table of measures to be implemented within 10 years, the following changes are recommended:

7.1.18 Amend the first measure to reflect the fact that while we may not expect to receive the brand new locomotives ordered by the government, we would hope to receive newer locomotives for Wairarapa line passenger services when the new ones enter the NZ fleet. Amended text to read:

'Advocate for newer locomotives to be used for Wairarapa passenger rail services – to improve service reliability and to ensure the benefits of the new Wairarapa carriages are not lost'.

7.1.19 Amend the third measure to reflect further feedback on this issue from council officers to read:

'Identify opportunities to improve park and ride facilities (eg. lighting, security) and to provide more park and ride spaces at rail stations within the Wairarapa corridor in line with demand.'

7.1.20 Move the fourth measure to the top of the public transport measures and amend to reflect the sorts of issues to be considered as part of the upcoming service review for Wairarapa public transport services (many of which were raised by submitters).

Amend text to read:

‘Undertake a review of Wairarapa bus and train services. Review to include consideration of train timetable and capacity issues, services for special events, bus and train connections, carriage of bikes on trains/buses’.
Timing: ‘2011’

Under the 'Travel Demand Management and other regional plans' heading (page 11) in the table of measures to be implemented within 10 years, the following changes are recommended:

- 7.1.21 Under the heading amend the ‘Responsibility’ column from ‘All Agencies’ to ‘Greater Wellington, NZTA, SWDC, CDC, MDC, UHCC’ as the relevant agencies.

Under ‘Measures that may be implemented (beyond 10 years)’

- 7.1.22 Amend the fourth measure in response to issues raised through submissions to read:

‘Consider the potential for shuttle services, either bus or rail, between Masterton and Upper Hutt (including associated infrastructure needs such as passing loops) to improve public transport frequency and connectivity between Wairarapa and the rest of the region’.

Throughout the plan the following changes are recommended:

- 7.1.23 Update any text in the final plan to reflect new RLTS 2010 to 2040, as appropriate.

8. Next steps

Once the Regional Transport Committee adopts a final Wairarapa Corridor Plan, the plan will be printed and distributed to the Committee, stakeholders and interest groups.

Submitters will also be sent a copy of the final plan together with specific responses to the key points raised in their submission.

9. Communication

A media release will be issued in relation to adoption of a new Wairarapa Corridor Plan.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

3. *Agrees to amend the draft Wairarapa Corridor Plan in accordance with the proposed changes set out in section 7 of this report, as recommended by the Hearings Subcommittee.*
4. *Agrees to adopt the final Wairarapa Corridor Plan, as set out in Attachment 1.*

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Wairarapa Corridor Plan 2010