

From: Daran Ponter – Chair [<mailto:Daran.Ponter@gw.govt.nz>]

Sent: Tuesday, 6 July 2021 8:58 AM

To: Hon Michael Wood <Michael.Wood@parliament.govt.nz>

Cc: Don Cameron (don.cameron@ruapehudc.govt.nz) <don.cameron@ruapehudc.govt.nz>; allan.sanson@waidc.govt.nz; Andy Foster <mayor@wcc.govt.nz>; Andy Watson (andy.watson@rangitikei.govt.nz) <andy.watson@rangitikei.govt.nz>; Anita Baker (mayor@poriruacity.govt.nz) <mayor@poriruacity.govt.nz>; Bernie Wanden <mayor@horowhenua.govt.nz>; Campbell Barry <Campbell.Barry@huttcity.govt.nz>; Daran Ponter – Chair <Daran.Ponter@gw.govt.nz>; grant.smith@pncc.govt.nz; Helen.Worboys@mdc.govt.nz; jim.mylchreest@waipadc.govt.nz; John Robertson <John.Robertson@waitomo.govt.nz>; K Gurunathan (k.gurunathan@kapiticoast.govt.nz) <k.gurunathan@kapiticoast.govt.nz>; max@otodc.govt.nz; paula.southgate@council.hcc.govt.nz; Rachel Keedwell (rachel.keedwell@horizons.govt.nz) <rachel.keedwell@horizons.govt.nz>; Russ Rimmington (russ.rimmington@waikatoregion.govt.nz) <russ.rimmington@waikatoregion.govt.nz>; Sam Ferguson (samforhorizons@gmail.com) <samforhorizons@gmail.com>; wayne.guppy@uhcc.govt.nz; Adrienne Young-Cooper - Auckland Transport (adrienneyc@me.com) <adrienneyc@me.com>; Roger Blakeley <Roger.Blakeley@gw.govt.nz>; Thomas Nash <Thomas.Nash@gw.govt.nz>; Greg Campbell <Greg.Campbell@gw.govt.nz>; Scott Gallacher <Scott.Gallacher@gw.govt.nz>

Subject: Passenger rail services on the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT)

Importance: High

Tēna koe Minister

Attached is a letter regarding progress on passenger rail projects on the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) for your attention.

Ngā mihi

Daran Ponter



Daran Ponter

Heamana | Chair

Greater Wellington Te Pane Matua Taiao

027 454 0689

Level 1, 100 Cuba Street, Wellington 6011

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6 July 2021

File Ref: EXTR-9-1184

Hon Michael Wood
Minister of Transport
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Office of the Chairperson
100 Cuba Street
PO Box 11646
Wellington
T 04 384 5708
www.gw.govt.nz

Tēna koe Minister

Passenger rail services on the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT)

I would like to brief you on progress with two key rail projects on which GW is partnering with other Councils and Government.

1. Procurement of a low/ zero carbon rail commuter fleet for the Wellington-Palmerston North and Wellington-Masterton services

The Wairarapa and Manawatu rail services are the only inter-regional public transport option for commuters needing to reach the Wellington CBD, offering a valuable alternative to the already well-used state highway network. GW and Horizons regard investment in modern and reliable trains to be the future of mobility across the greater Wellington and Manawatu regions, delivering a range of benefits eg inclusive access to employment and education, increased transport resilience, safety and reliability, reduced congestion and carbon emissions. (See Appendix 1 for more detail.)

Work on the Detailed Business Case is continuing and is expected to be completed in September 2021. The intention is that the business case will lead-in to a budget submission for Budget 2022 – Minister Robertson is being made aware of this item. This sequence of activity will assure the continued safe operation and sustainability of passenger rail on the Wairarapa and Manawatu lines.

2. Investigating the feasibility of inter-regional passenger rail services between Auckland and Wellington, to support regional economic growth with a low carbon footprint.

July 2020	Greater Wellington, in support of Central North Island Councils, submitted to the Select Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, urging the reinstatement of the Northern Explorer tourism rail service that had ceased during the COVID-19 lockdown.
August 2020	An online Forum involving the Chairs and Mayors of all 19 councils on the NIMT was established.
September 2020	<p>The Forum agreed that GWRC would work on its behalf with KiwiRail to explore the feasibility of regional passenger rail services between Auckland and Wellington on the NIMT.</p> <p>KiwiRail reinstated the Northern Explorer service.</p>
January 2021	<p>KiwiRail received the “High-Level Feasibility Report, Regional Passenger Rail ‘Connector’, Wellington to Auckland” by HeightPM</p> <p>This considers a commuter service that runs between Wellington and Auckland, as a phased approach starting with a “connector” service between Palmerston North and Hamilton. It forms a useful basis of discussion between KiwiRail and the Forum.</p>
March - June 2021	<p>The Forum met in March with representatives of KiwiRail, Waka Kotahi and Ministry of Transport, and actions have unfolded since then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All three regional councils and Auckland Council along the NMIT included “Connector” text in their Regional Land Transport Plans (RLTPs) 2021, thus formalising their early commitments by June 2021 (as per Appendix 2) • Once the business case for new Palmerston North to Wellington rolling stock is completed, GWRC will share it with the Forum, recognising the implications for national rail passenger rolling stock. • To consolidate Te Huia passenger rail service, Waikato Regional Council will lead actions to secure further pathways into Auckland, starting with the July Puhinui interchange opening for weekday services. • Central North Island Councils are forming a working group under the leadership of Mayor Don Cameron, Ruapehu District Council. This will develop a high-level feasibility study for a ‘connector’ rail service between Hamilton and Palmerston North, linking to other modes such as buses and planes, complementary to the HeightPM High Level Feasibility Study developed for Kiwirail.

	The Terms of Reference for the feasibility study is expected to be completed by the end of July, and signed off by the Forum.
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To advance progress further, I would like the opportunity to meet with you, along with Ruapehu District Council Mayor Don Cameron and GW Transport Committee Chair Cr Roger Blakeley. We would like to discuss an ambitious timeframe to complete the feasibility study and business case, and secure funding support for the "connector" rail service between Hamilton and Palmerston North via Council LTPs 2024-34, and in Budget 2024.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Chair

DD: 027 454 0689

cc: Mayor Don Cameron, Cr Roger Blakeley
Forum Mayors and Chairs

Appendix 1

Low/ zero carbon rail commuter fleet for the Wellington-Palmerston North and Wellington-Masterton services – further detail

What's the problem?

The current rail fleet servicing these regions is near end of life. We are unable to extend the life of the carriages past 2028. In addition, we are unable to furnish the projected growth with the existing fleet capacity. To summarise, there are four factors driving the need for replacement:

- The current fleet's age and condition
- Unattractiveness of the public transport network for inter-regional commuters
- Inability to adequately contribute to decarbonisation goals
- Operational inefficiency and lack of flexibility

Without these services, increased private car use is likely to lead to significant infrastructure costs and restrict economic activity, increase congestion, reduce road safety, increase carbon emissions, and impact freight and commercial movements. These issues will be compounded by projected high population growth and higher density development in the Wairarapa and Manawatu.

And the opportunity?

With timely investment, we can contribute to GPS 2021 by strengthening the overall long-term transport resilience within the Wairarapa and Manawatu corridors by reducing private vehicle dependency and the associated congestion, while catering for the future transport demand.

While the mode shift outcomes of this service will generate significant environmental benefits, we are also ensuring the new fleet of trains will have the lowest practical carbon footprint (with the potential to transition to zero carbon during the life of the trains). We envisage this rolling stock platform could also operate on other key inter-regional passenger services such as Te Huia – Waikato to Auckland passenger rail service, and a future Inter-regional Passenger Service between Auckland and Wellington.

Appendix 2

Regional Land Transport Plans 2021 – relevant text from regional councils

1. Greater Wellington Regional Council

“Work is underway to investigate the feasibility of an inter-regional passenger rail service operating on the North Island Main Trunk between Wellington and Auckland, to facilitate economic growth of regional New Zealand, with a low carbon footprint. This is being led by the Chairs and Mayors of councils on the North Island Main trunk, supported by KiwiRail. This work would be assisted by:

- The Te Huia passenger rail service between Auckland and Hamilton
- Completion of the business case for new rolling stock between Palmerston North and Wellington
- Completion of a high-level feasibility study for a “connector” passenger rail service between Hamilton and Palmerston North”

2. Horizons Regional Council

“The Northern Explorer is a long-distance scenic passenger service running between Auckland and Wellington, stopping at Palmerston North, Ohakune, National Park and Hamilton. Due to the scenic landscape this travels through, it is a popular travel option for tourists and, given the number of stops within the region, is an important service for domestic and international tourism in the region. Moving forward, there is real opportunity to work with KiwiRail to broaden and better integrate the current Northern Explorer with the visitor attractions of the North Island. This will help retain the current domestic tourism base and will serve future international tourism. This is a strong focus of the North Island mayors and chairs who have been collectively advocating for this change.

“Further to the above services, work is underway to investigate the feasibility of a North Island inter-regional passenger rail service operating on the North Island Main Trunk Line to provide alternative travel options and work towards a low carbon transport system that enables economic growth. This service would be different to the Northern Explorer service in that it extends further and incorporates more stops and operates as a connector service connecting people in more remote areas to health and employment. Leading off this is the opportunity to consider a connector passenger rail type service between Palmerston North and Whanganui offering an alternative transport mode for commuters between these two cities.”

3. Waikato Regional Council

“WRC and Greater Wellington Regional Council to work together to develop a joint Procurement Strategy for optimising inter-regional rail rolling stock and rail infrastructure investment, and use this strategy to commence the procurement to replace the Te Huia Passenger Rail rolling stock by June 2024.

“Work is underway to investigate the feasibility of a North Island inter-regional passenger rail service operating on the North Island Main Trunk to facilitate economic growth of regional New Zealand.

“North Island Regional Passenger Rail Connector service (currently being investigated)”.

4. Auckland Council/Auckland Transport

“Work is also underway to investigate the feasibility of a North Island inter-regional passenger rail service operating on the North Island MainTrunk to facilitate economic growth of regional New Zealand, with a low carbon footprint”.

From: Fiona Abbott <Fiona.Abbott@gw.govt.nz>
Sent: Monday, 30 August 2021 3:00 pm
To: Joanna Heard <J.Heard@transport.govt.nz>
Subject: FW: Presentation for Tonight...
Importance: High

Kia Ora Jo

Attached is a presentation that is going to the minister tonight. It is being presented by Daran and Rachel with Scott in attendance.

Deb Hume from Waka Kotahi and the minister's office has received this presentation.

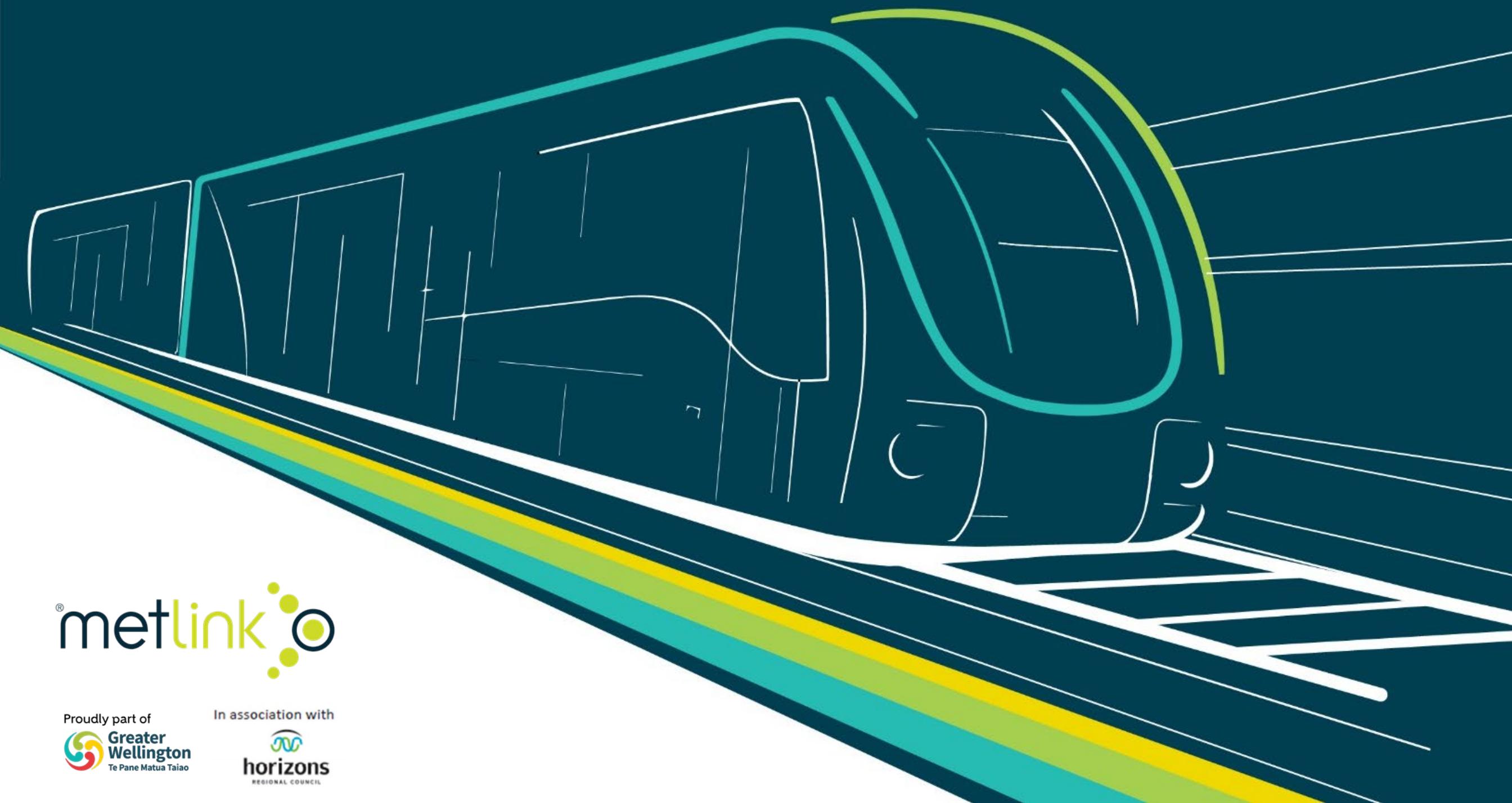
Nga mihi
Fiona

Fiona Abbott | She/her
Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Te Aka me Kiritaki | Manager, Assets and Infrastructure
Metlink | Ngā Waka Tūmatanui
100 Cuba Street, Wellington 6011 | PO Box 11646, Manners St, Wellington 6142
Mobile [+64 21 325 051](tel:+6421325051)
Follow us online: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)
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LNIRIM

Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility



Investment is needed now

Our carriage fleet is reaching **end of life** and will be unusable beyond 2027

We are **approaching full capacity** on the Wairarapa Line

New trains will unlock growth across the lower North Island – they will enable mode-shift and drive decarbonisation

The Greater Wellington region is forecast to **grow by 37%**, or 200,000 people over the next 30 years, and the Horizons region's to **grow by 28%** by 2053.

High growth is expected in the Wairarapa and North of Waikanae due to greenfield development potential within commuting distance to the Capital city.

Unlock economic prosperity through inclusive access and improved mobility.

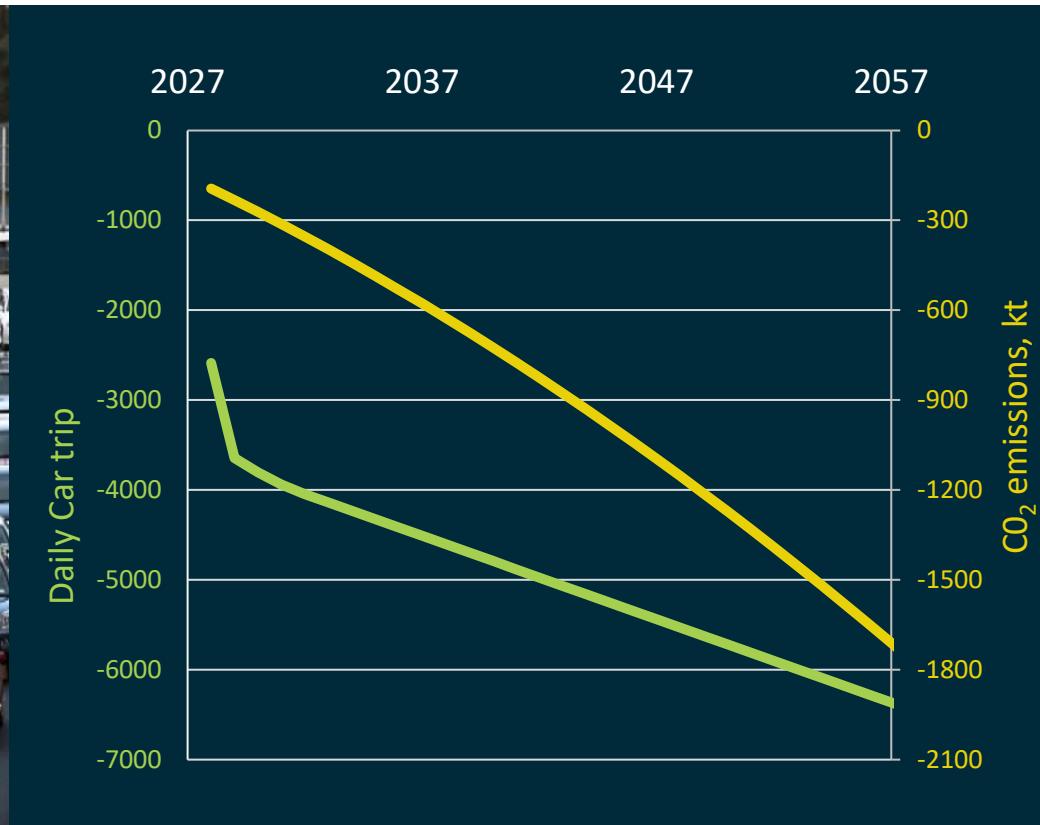


Our carriage fleet was built 50 years ago and rebuilt in 2007.
By 2027 they will reach end-of-life.

These carriages **lack the safety** of modern trains.

It is essential to decarbonise passenger transport

The proposed fleet has the capacity to deliver over **7,500** people into Wellington and around the Lower North Island every day. This will result in **4,000** fewer car journeys and increases the capacity of the regions rail network by **50%**



With your investment now, both car usage and CO₂ emissions will decrease *significantly*.

This investment provides a proven solution that is **highly reliable** and provides **dependable connectivity**, and eliminates the risk of discontinuing public transport services due to life expired rolling stock.

Connecting the communities across our regions

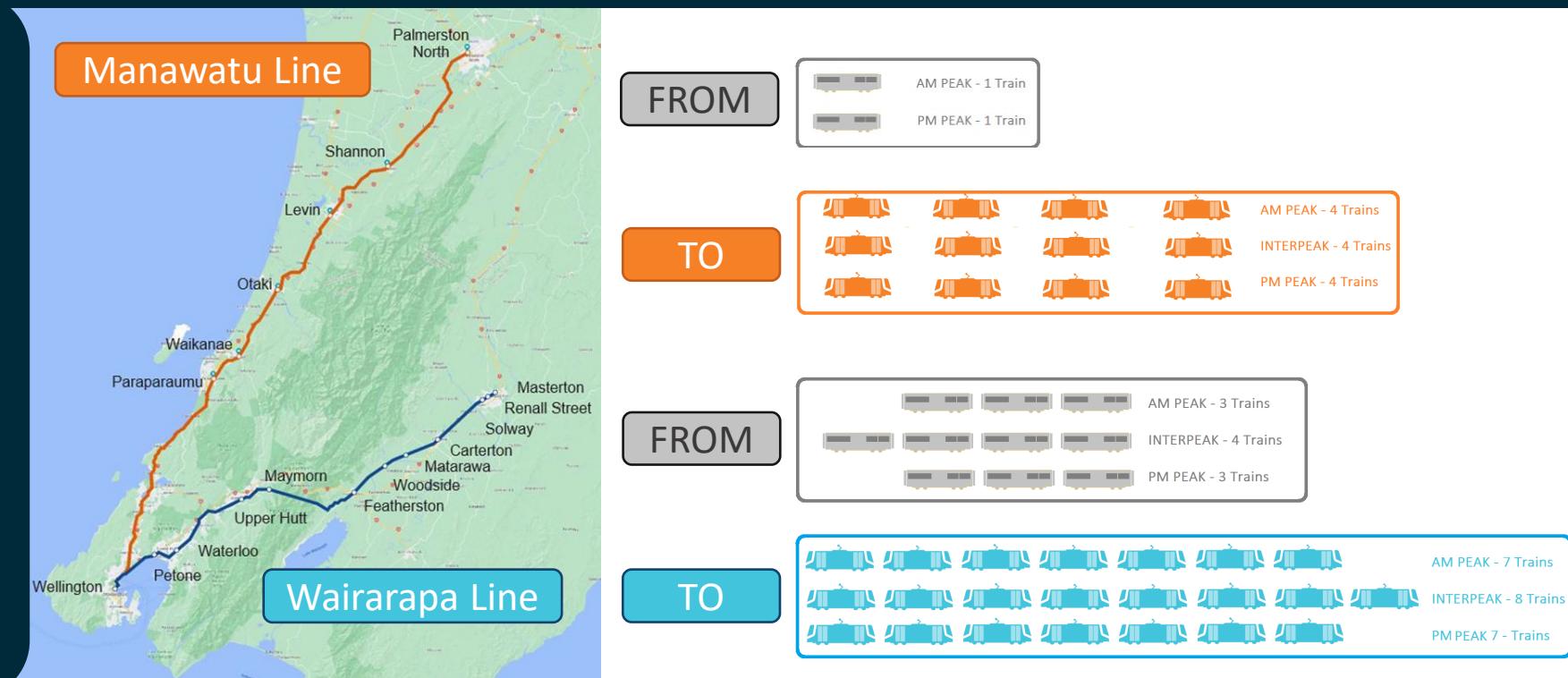
This proposal includes

- New passenger train fleet comprising 22x 4-car tri-mode units (\$381m)
- Revitalisation of regional railway stations (\$43m)
- New fleet maintenance facilities and training simulator (\$72m)
- Network improvements to enable service delivery on a constrained dual purpose network (\$24m)

This plan provides **full strategic alignment** with Land Transport Government Policy Statement by delivering:

- Inclusive Access
- Economic Prosperity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Healthy & Safer People
- Improved Resilience

This complements and strengthens key transport initiatives across the Lower North Island



*We are seeking your commitment in time for budget 2022 to invest \$630 – 740M for use from 2024 – 2028
A Central Government share of at least 90% is required to progress*

Long lead times necessitate action **now** to ensure service continuity and capacity to drive mode-shift



By email

20 May 2022

File Ref: EXTR-9-1314

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance
Freepost PO Box 18 888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
Email: g.robertson@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Michael Wood
Minister of Transport
Freepost PO Box 18 888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
Email: m.wood@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā kōrua

Budget 2022: Regional trains for Lower North Island

We are writing to express our surprise and disappointment that the Government has chosen not to contribute funding for a fleet of hybrid electric trains in the lower North Island through Budget 2022.

As expressed in our November 2021 letter to you, we see this proposition as a key enabler to unlock access to affordable housing in our regions, while improving connectivity to employment, education, recreation, friends and whanau.

Further, this investment is completely aligned with Government policy on transport emissions and indeed your sentiment expressed in Budget 2022, “To Invest in the future and address the challenges of climate change”.

Minister, we are encouraged by your retention of half price fares for public transport until 31 August. We endorse permanently retaining this arrangement for Community Services Card holders. It makes an enormous difference to people who rely on our rail network.



To make this a worthwhile investment, however, we need to provide reliable, low-emissions transport services for the increasing number of people living across the lower North Island. We have great confidence in our business case that proposes the purchase of hybrid electric trains, and we thank the Treasury and Waka Kotahi for their assistance in putting it together. We will continue to pursue a commitment from the government to contribute to the \$760 million investment our case recommends.

We are now working against the clock to replace our fleets of 50-year-old regional rail carriages, which will soon reach the end of their working lives. The tender process for new trains must continue unabated so we look forward to engaging with you on finding ways to unlock Waka Kotahi and other funding for procurement.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Chair, Greater Wellington



Rachel Keedwell
Chair, Horizons



Wayne Guppy
Mayor
Upper Hutt City Council



Campbell Barry
Mayor
Hutt City Council



Andy Foster
Mayor
Wellington City Council



Lyn Patterson
Mayor
Masterton District
Council



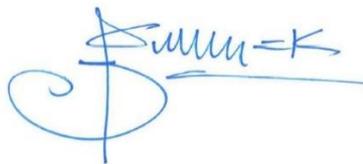
Greg Lang
Mayor
Carterton District Council



Alex Beijen
Mayor
South Wairarapa District Council



Anita Baker
Mayor
Porirua City Council



K (Guru) Gurunathan
Mayor
Kapiti Coast District
Council



Bernie Wanden
Mayor
Horowhenua District Council



Grant Smith
Mayor
Palmerston North City
Council



Helen Worboys
Mayor
Manawatu District Council



Andy Watson
Mayor
Rangitikei District Council



Tracey Collis
Mayor
Tararua District Council



Hamish McDouall
Mayor
Whanganui District Council



Don Cameron
Mayor
Ruapehu District Council

cc:

Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Trevor Mallard
Ginny Andersen MP
Greg O'Connor, MP
Paul Eagle, MP
Barbara Edmonds MP
Tangi Utikere, MP
Kieran McAnulty, MP
Ian McKelvie, MP
Terisa Ngobi, MP
Sir Brian Roche, Chair, Waka Kotahi
Holden, Hohaia, Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust
Callum Katene, Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangātira Inc
Andre Baker, Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust
Denise Hapeta, Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki
Hera Edwards, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Trust
Tiraumaera Te Tau, Rangitāne o Wairarapa Inc
Di Rump, Muaūpoko Tribal Authority
Rārite Mātaki, Ngāti Raukawa
Danielle Harris, Tanenuirangi Manawatū Inc