

8 March 2023

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Hon Michael Wood
Minister of Transport
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Tēna koe Minister

Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility (LNIRIM) - Enabling continuation and growth of regional passenger rail services

As Budget 2023 draws near, your support of our funding proposal for new regional passenger trains is vital to ensure service continuity and future-proof the Wairarapa and Manawatū lines.

The devastating impacts of recent weather events have highlighted vulnerabilities of critical transport infrastructure. The LNIRIM Investment in modern low-carbon passenger rail is clearly an important step toward achieving twin objectives of a resilient transport network and reduced transport emissions. By providing a practical low-carbon alternative to private car travel, this initiative will contribute towards passenger Vehicle Kilometre Travelled (VKT) reduction targets with emission, congestion, and safety benefits. In addition, the investment will improve transport access and equity and enable growth and prosperity across our regions.

The project also has the potential to jump-start other regional passenger rail services through shared procurement and design of rolling stock eg for Te Huia service.

Greater Wellington and Horizons are working well with KiwiRail regarding network and vehicle requirements to ensure a fully integrated project that can deliver the benefits outlined in the Detailed Business Case. We are re-establishing the multi-party governance structure and commencing project team establishment activities to ensure we can hit the ground running as soon as full funding support is obtained.

Our officers have been actively engaged with the Ministry of Transport, but we have not had the opportunity to discuss this at a political level. If there are any remaining concerns or questions regarding the Budget Bid these should be discussed now, rather than after the Budget 2023 announcement. With the current trains' "end of life" drawing ever closer, we are now running out of time to bring these services in-line with modern safety standards.

Your government has made clear New Zealand’s commitment to significant reductions in carbon emissions. However, if Budget 2023 does not provide for these new trains, then the government will need to explain to the public how its approach will lead to higher vehicle kilometres travelled, likely use of buses for those that currently use trains in the Wairarapa and overcrowding on the Wellington electric Matangi network. This bid is about providing resilient transport solutions.

We remain optimistic that soon we will be able to announce to communities how multiple local and central government agencies will be delivering a credible low emission modern regional passenger rail service option for the Wairarapa and Manawatū transport corridors.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Chair
Greater Wellington



Rachel Keedwell
Chair
Horizons Regional Council

CC: Mayors of the Wellington and Horizons regions