

Date 11 May 2020

Ministry of Transport  
PO Box 3175  
WELLINGTON 6140  
Attn: draft Rail Plan team

Dear Sir / Madam

### **Draft New Zealand Rail Plan**

1. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Draft New Zealand Rail Plan(DNZRP).

#### **General**

2. Council generally supports the proposals but would like to take this opportunity to raise issues of relevance to Kapiti Coast District Council.
3. The Kāpiti Coast has seen significant growth in the last 30 years and our population predictions identify that this trend is expected to continue. Population growth and rail investment has led to the passenger rail boardings on the Kapiti line increasing by almost one million over five-year period between 2014 and 2019.
4. Between 2016 and 2019 overall patronage on the Kapiti Line increased by 11.3% (or 609,607 trips), and 72% of this growth has come from passengers in the Kāpiti Coast. Over the same 4-year period there has been a significant increase in passengers alighting at stations in Kāpiti including Waikanae (+61%), Paraparaumu (+68%) and Paekākāriki (+48%).
5. Council contends that this, along with the growth proposed in Kāpiti, demonstrates that there is significant potential to encourage further rail passenger growth if improved services and infrastructure were provided, particularly to the north of Waikanae and on to Palmerston North. It will also address transport issues such as congestion and parking. Of relevance is that some of the parking issues in Waikanae, around our rail station, are being caused by commuters travelling from Ōtaki and further north to catch rail services from Waikanae as a result of the limited Capital Connect service.

## **Strategic Context**

6. We recognise that the DNZRP supports the priorities contained within the Transport Outcomes Framework. However, we wonder whether this should also make more reference to the Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2021 (GPS), which guides investment in the Rail Network Investment Improvement.
7. Council would also question what is meant in by saying that “Rail enables people in our cities to commute and engage in employment opportunities”. Does this extend beyond the city to the regions? If not there should be recognition of the importance that rail plays in opening up social, cultural, educational economic opportunities in our towns, and smaller cities such as Paraparaumu and Porirua, to support wellbeing.

## **Strategic Priorities**

8. We agree that rail forms an essential part of a multi-modal transport network and support the restoration of a resilient, reliable and safe freight and passenger rail network.
9. In achieving mode shift and a true multi-modal network, it should also be recognised that access to stations by all modes is an important part of the puzzle. Kapiti Coast District Council will be working with Greater Wellington Regional Council to develop station access plans, which will require infrastructure improvements to support better access to rail stations.

## **Investment Priorities for Rail**

10. Council is pleased that the DNZRP recognises the need for investment in the Kapiti Line, but would advocate for further infrastructure improvements and to be implemented more quickly than is envisaged in the plan.
11. We support investment in the Capital Connect service, and consider that funding for both infrastructure and rolling stock is required to realise service improvements. With the level of growth both within Kāpiti and north in areas such as Levin, rail will play an important part in supporting mode shift.
12. Council also supports full electrification of the North Island Main Trunk line and the continuation of crown and Kiwirail investment in rolling stock.
13. Council notes that a number of investments are identified for the Kapiti Line including:
  - Those contained within the Wellington Metropolitan Rail Upgrade Programme;
  - Increased capacity at Wellington Station;
  - A turn back facility at Plimmerton station to make it a terminus station;
  - Reducing the length of Kāpiti Line North – South junction single track;
  - Standardised loop lengths between Palmerston North and Waikanae; and
  - A new platform at Waikanae and further grade separation of the Kapiti Line.
14. However, we are disappointed that, with the exception of the turn back facility at Plimmerton, these schemes have been identified as future opportunities only. It is also

unclear whether the electrification of the Wellington section of the North Island Main Trunk Line will be delivered by the Wellington Metropolitan Rail Upgrade Programme or through another mechanism. We understand that the section between Hamilton and Palmerston North is already electrified but also that section between Palmerston North and Otaki is not in the Greater Wellington Region. It is also understood that whilst the electrification between Wellington and Waikanae operates on 1600V DC, the Hamilton to Palmerston North section operates on 25kV AC. If the electrification of the North Island Main Trunk line is not to be consistent along the whole route, then funding will need to be available to ensure that rolling stock can operate on both networks (dual voltage).

15. Council considers that cross-boundary complexities should not disadvantage our community and project delivery. When considering the rail network and infrastructure improvements Palmerston North to Wellington should be seen as one transport 'catchment'. This has the potential to provide better economies of scale and enable more innovative thinking about funding options.
16. Council is also keen to understand what "*reducing the length of Kāpiti Line North – South junction single track*" means on the ground, and where a new platform at Waikanae is expected to be located. Council has been developing the town centres project, which includes Waikanae, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss how the new platform at Waikanae can complement this work.
17. Council considers that the rail network is critical to encourage mode shift, particularly for commuter journeys within our District and into the City. Currently there is heavy reliance on the private car, where over 50% of our workforce commute in a private vehicle or company car and 36.3% of our residents travel outside of Kapiti for work. This contributes to transport issues within the District and in Wellington City where parking and congestion are an issue. Kāpiti has advocated for some time for improved double tracking and electrification of the rail north of Waikanae, to better serve communities such as Ōtaki in the north of our District, and support mode shift and the future growth of the District. We consider that the double tracking, beyond what is already funded, is required and this will support electrification.
18. Council notes that a strategic investment priority is securing land for the intermodal freight hub at Palmerston North, but we consider that it should be supported by improved rail infrastructure if it is to fulfil its role as a '*critical freight distribution centre for the lower North Island*'.
19. Council notes that other funding opportunities will be identified in the final documents and feel it would have been useful to identify what these are in the DNZRP, to enable feedback and so that submitters are able to understand if this provides the opportunity to expedite projects.
20. We support \$100 million per year in the GPS 2021, and Provincial Growth Funding, which can contribute towards a sustainable nationwide rail network for intercity travel and cater for domestic and international tourism. However, we consider that this should not be the expense of other activity classes such as local road improvements.

## **Conclusion**

21. Kāpiti Coast District Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS) 2021. However, would like to see further investment on the North Island Main Trunk Line and Kapiti Line as well as in rolling stock to support improved rail services.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Maxwell  
Chief Executive