

26 March 2024

Ministry of Transport
GPS Team

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Tena Koe

Submission from the Rangitikei District Council to the Ministry of Transport's Draft Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Land Transport 2024-34.

Rangitikei District Council (RDC) thanks the Ministry of Transport for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft GPS on Land Transport.

1. Background

The Rangitikei District neighbours the Manawatū, Whanganui, Ruapehu, and Hawkes Bay Districts. This District is large, diverse and central in the wider Manawatū-Whanganui region. It covers road and rail networks that connect the lower and central North Island to the upper North Island. These connections are a key economic lifeline, enabling the movement of people and freight between key centres of production, consumer markets and freight distribution hubs.

Transport is an enabler of wider social, economic and environmental outcomes. Local authorities are a partner in the delivery of land transport infrastructure and services. In the Rangitikei District, the current population is approximately 16,200, and most of the district's population utilise their personal vehicles to transport themselves within and outside the region. Residents are generally reliant on personal vehicles or air transport for interregional travel due to the lack of available public transport options.

Rangitikei's road network is approximately 1,300km and comprises three main ORNC road classifications, including Low Volume (46%), Access (30%), Secondary Collector (14%). Approximately 93% of these roads are rural and 7% are urban, with 66% of the network sealed. State Highways 1 and 3 go through the towns of Bulls, Hunterville, Mangaweka, and Taihape. The intersection of State Highways 1 and 3 through Bulls in particular sees a relatively high flow of traffic, both vehicle and pedestrian, and includes the main intersection with a history of accidents and near misses.

The district's total traffic volume has increased by 9% between 2018 and 2022. Furthermore, traffic demand associated with forestry activities across the network is predicted to increase, peaking between 2024 and 2029. In order to respond to future traffic demand, it is important to maintain the condition of the network. Parewanui Road, Santoft Road, Kie Kie Road, Murimotu Road, Watershed Road, West Road, Turakina Valley Road 3 and Ongo Road are particularly at risk of requiring heavy maintenance.

RDC has identified the following key roading network issues in its Roothing Asset Management Plan 2024-27:

- **The legacy network:** Maintaining pavement performance in the face of ongoing forestry harvest, increasing traffic volumes as a result of population growth and growing freight movements. Deteriorating condition and changing demands on Access, Low Volume and Secondary Collector roads are resulting in decreased Levels of Service and increasing reactive interventions.
- **Network resilience:** The Rangitikei District is susceptible to increasingly severe climatic events resulting in significant reactive maintenance expenditure at a relatively limited number of locations, disruption to the network and increased road safety risks. Investment is required for the purpose of maintenance and renewal activities to improve network resilience and reduce the risk and duration of road closures due to landslides or storm events.
- **Safety:** Investing in safety-related activities to improve the safety of the network, minimise the risk and consequence of crashes, as well as enabling growth. Analysis showed Collective Risk on Arterials has been notably higher than other rural districts, but comparable on other road types. Personal Risk however has consistently been higher in Rangitikei compared to its peers, the wider region, and the country. This is especially true for Low Volume roads and could be linked to the large volume of this type of road on the network. Investment in arterial roads on the network will improve safety for users in the district and will lead to RDC achieving better alignment with Road to Zero.

In addition to the three main issues RDC has identified the following key challenges for the provision of infrastructure in our district:

- affordability
- resilience and increased severity and intensity of extreme weather events
- managing growth and demand
- changing regulatory environment
- impact of central government direction on land-use change

RDC is supportive of the general direction of this draft GPS. However, our transport system is in desperate need of increased investment, and we need to put significant effort into increasing maintenance and resilience activities to sustain asset condition and prevent a slow decline of the assets over time.

RDC supports:

- The four strategic priorities identified in the draft GPS
- Taking a longer-term focus on the system.

RDC notes that there is broad alignment between some of the key objectives of the GPS and some of the issues as identified for the Rangitikei, notably alignment in relation to safety for all users and resilience of state highways, local and rural roads. We also find that the GPS and RDC's Roothing AMP's emphasis on maintenance and network quality respectively are well aligned. We particularly welcome the intent to reduce expenditure on temporary traffic management.

2. Timeline and timeframe of National Land Transport Plans

RDC agrees that expanding the timeframe of National Land Transport Plans to 10 years bodes well for alignment with the general timeframe of LTPs. However, there continues to be misalignment in terms of the timelines where the timeline of releasing draft GPS significantly deviates from the timelines of producing LTPs. This is problematic and has implications for devising LTPs that take into account possible changes of direction as proposed by a GPS. We therefore support calls to consider that the release of any future draft GPS is better harmonised with the timelines of preparing draft LTPs.

While we endorse expanding the timeframe to 10 years to make the duration National Transport Plans consistent with LTPs, we note that Councils create Infrastructure Strategies that cover 30 years. Given the role that infrastructure provision plays as enabler of economic growth, social prosperity and ecological sustainability in our district, RDC encourages the Ministry to develop transport plans and equivalent funding plans that mirror those of District Councils' Infrastructure Strategies.

3. We support greater investment in increased maintenance and resilience

We are pleased to see that increased maintenance and resilience is a strategic priority, and that it is matched with increased investment in road maintenance across state highways and local roads. Historically, successive governments have underinvested in renewals and maintenance which has had a detrimental effect on the usability of our transport system.

We would like to see this approach, and the funding that supports it, to be deployed in a way which supports best practice, and which builds resilience of the overall system. This is in line with the GPS' stated desire for a proactive approach to road maintenance. While there are current impacts from historic underinvestment in maintenance, a balance will need to be achieved between responsiveness to potholes and a return to appropriate planned maintenance such as rehabilitation/resurfacing of the network at the appropriate time required to address the historic deficit in roading maintenance which is causing such high rates of potholes.

4. Freight

We would like an integrated freight system introduced as a strategic priority. We need a freight network that enables transportation of goods across road, rail and coastal shipping to support our regional economies. Diversifying our freight network will improve the resilience of the system and reduce the cost of maintenance and renewals, as the use of heavy vehicles has a significant impact on the condition of our roads. With almost 93% of all freight transported by truck, New Zealand's roading network provides a crucial service in supporting our economy at both national and local levels.

There is significant public and private infrastructure investment in and around our district that will see the creation of integrated freight systems to leverage the strategic position of the district to reduce the transport of freight by road and create freight transport efficiencies. In particular, the construction of the Marton Rail Hub, a freight and distribution hub, is expected to increase the use of existing rail and air networks and remove trucks from our national road networks.

5. Conclusion

We have stressed that the maintenance of our networks is of paramount importance to us and with the need for funding it becomes a wider issue of how roading should be funded throughout New Zealand. Unless there is a change in the funding structure for roading our networks will continue to deteriorate. We understand that LGNZ has on many occasions asked for some of the income derived from these regions to be returned to the regions and we would urge you to have this discussion with Government.

In closing, RDC thanks you again for the opportunity to submit to the draft GPS.

Kind regards,



Arno Benadie
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