

IMPROVING TRANSPORT IN WELLINGTON REGION WORKSHOP

Local Government Commission (LGC)

13 June 2016

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Raewyn Hailes	CCS Disability Action
Brent Efford	Light Rail Transit Association
Jacob McElwee	Bus and Coach Association New Zealand (Inc)
Christine McCarthy	President, Architectural Centre
Sam McKinnon	Policy Advisor, Business Central
Russell Tregonning	Fair, Intelligent Transport
Tim Jones	Save the Basin Campaign Inc
Siddhartha Mehta	Generation Zero
Victor Komarovskiy	Generation Zero
Liz Springford	Individual
Mike Mellor	Individual
Morrie Love	Wellington Tenths Trust
Sarah Gauden-Ing	Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office
Maddy Drew	PSA
Ron Beernink	Chairman, Cycle Aware Wellington
Patrick Morgan	Project Manager, CAN – Cycling Action Network
Timon Bakker	Hutt Cycling Network
Andrew Steele	Centreport Ltd
Mike Brown	Wellington Airport
Jonathan Bhana-Thomson	Chief Executive, NZ Heavy Haulage Association
Ken Shirley	Road Transport Forum
Demetrius Christoforou	Trams-Action
Evelyn Tuuta	Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust
Wayne Heerdegen	NZTA

Views on the draft problems identified by LGC work

Integration/alignment

General agreement that integration/alignment is a priority problem and has a material impact.

Comments on the problem included:

- Difficult for stakeholders to find a 'regional' view and who to talk to
- Transport spine studies – too limited a focus
- Responsive to new users
- Duplication vs multiple decision-making (need to optimise)
- Nobody has an overview of the whole system
- Wellington is unique as there is a concentration of population in the CBD and transport is constrained geographically
- Roading/public transport divide – “who speaks for the city?”
- Overall regional strategy (spatial and transport planning) needed to lift the perspective to a regional level

- Differing views – some think strategic alignment is a problem, others that it is ok
- Perception that NZTA have a disproportionate say on the RTC (even though only one vote) as they provide the bulk of the funding
- A fundamental problem is lack of alignment also seen between national, regional and local priorities eg national level funding focus on state highways but communities want public transport; GPS vs regional/local priorities (eg WCC sustainability /carbon free policies), so it doesn't matter how regional transport decision-making is reorganised
- Contradictions between State Highway programme focus on mobility and local road focus on accessibility. What happens when increased mobility enters the local network in Wellington city?
- Integration of key nodes into the transport network eg Wellington Port access is by local road – should be State Highway
- Too many agencies – creates difficulties with engaging in decision-making eg cycling projects which span boundaries (6 agencies involved with Wellington to Melling cycleway)
- Overlaps between councils eg GWRC responsible for public transport but WCC organises bus stops
- Political will for implementation doesn't always match strategy (eg Hutt Road cycleway)
- Need a greater focus on ends - fragmentation leads to a focus on means (eg climate change is an important “end”)

Capacity/capability

General agreement that capacity/capability is a priority problem and has a material impact

Comments on the problem included:

- Need for better capacity to manage future issues which will inevitably occur with growth, particular up the coast
- Council responses are too quick to “solutions” and light on planning. Regional body needed to provide oversight/strategic planning for the future
- Councils are too small to retain capacity
- Constraint of 2% remuneration cap
- Duplication of capability across organisations
- But there is still a need for understanding of local transport context

Other problems

- Mistake taking interest groups off the Regional Transport Committee
- Need for stronger leadership from politicians
- Transport too narrow frame – should be “access” and cost of inactivity/health considerations
- Kiwi rail should be included in the problem definition
- Funding model – should be regional for regional projects
- Freight increasing – cluster of hotspots (eg airport, port, Basin Reserve)
- Broader transport perspective needed – more public transport, fewer cars. Public transport spine needed to free the roads up for people who really need to use them
- Need to consider other forms of efficiency, not only economic efficiency – energy, spatial, sustainability. Metrics on these dimensions are also needed to help with decision-making
- Consider best solutions vs most efficient.
- Transport governance needs to be transparent and accountable, with opportunity for wide community input
- Transport legacy issues (eg roads and rail lines built on a faultline and tsunami zone) mean Wellington transport network is vulnerable in an emergency. Need to consider resilience in future planning.
- Risks of reducing local input into decision making
- Discount rate influences priorities
- Regional paralysis on project decisions. Vociferous minority groups of different types carry undue weight
- Transport will become expensive if charges are introduced to address climate change issues
- Physical activity issues need to be addressed in transport context (eg deaths from lack of physical activity outweigh road deaths)

Views on the draft options for change

General

- Does solving governance solve the issue with technical expertise?
- Relationships at least as important as structure
- Transport should be controlled by elected councillors, on a population basis
- Transport timelines very slow so sometimes transport decisions are out of cycle with elections
- Important to preserve democracy, transparency, accountability, open reporting and diversity of community input into decision-making
- Who makes the decisions?
- Alignment vs democracy vs efficiency. Will change achieve anything given the impact/cost on other elements (eg democracy)
- Strategic advice vs strategic decision-making
- How effective is change at the regional level given the national context ie national funding focus. What would options look like if there was potential to change the National Land Transport Fund (is the problem national, regional or local level)?
- Already working to improve communication between councils and the community (eg a single "portal" for consultation information for community interests)
- Efficiencies for community groups in dealing with one large organisation rather than numerous small ones
- Combining organisations risks losing institutional knowledge local knowledge and local response (eg local knowledge about areas where road flooding is likely and ability to respond quickly)
- Priority is getting the "what" right (alignment), the "how" (capacity) should follow. Alignment pushes towards E but trade off with local input
- Options A-C – status quo plus inertia
- Options B-D - consider how to integrate public transport eg separate committee
- Option C-E – positive for capability. Regardless of where decisions are made there is a need for the right expertise/advice behind it
- Spectrum of options – variable action and engagement at different levels. Local vs regional issues can be in conflict
- AT is a useful model – potential to learn what is relevant for Wellington

Option C

- Include a strategic advice component

Option D – Wellington Roads

- Support for Option D, but concerns about democracy, political power, councillors too far removed, responsiveness (speed, community)
- Larger organisation better able to lobby at a national level
- Governance issues – interest based decisions

Option E – Wellington Transport

- Better capability to work with Central Government (as a larger organisation)
- Business feedback is that it is much easier in Auckland dealing with one agency
- Some felt Auckland Transport (AT) is working well e.g. incorporating cycling into AT has been excellent for the delivery of cycling projects
- Support for Option E, but concerns about democracy, political power, councillors too far removed, loss of local context, responsiveness (speed, community). Concerns about loss of local input into decisions
- Support for Option E because of technical expertise (rather than being driven by councillors and political pressure)
- Some felt Option E would be more responsive (in terms of speed) and better able to cope with upcoming change (eg aging population, growth)
- One plan, one workforce
- Potential for misalignment still exists – regional vs national priorities
- Option E should include railways, state highways
- Provides a system-wide lens
- GPS link to regional plan

- Council gaming with Regional Transport Authority – conflict in looking out for ratepayers vs entire region; litigation if not done smoothly.