

Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce Submission on the Nelson Regional Land Transport Plan and Statement of Review – *Connecting the Top of the South*

9 February 2018

Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of the members of the Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has approximately 550 members. This submission is based on current and long-held views of our membership base.

As a voice for the region's business community (both present and into the future), the Chamber's focus is to ensure there is a reliable, efficient and safe transport infrastructure that will serve the region well into the future.

Submission - Nelson Regional Land Transport Plan

Nelson Tasman is one of the fastest growing regions in the country, not only population wise, but also in visitor numbers and business growth. Nelson and Richmond are forecast to grow by 15% by 2043, and the current urban roading network in Nelson and Richmond is operating at near capacity causing major congestion. The region needs – and in fact demands – an improved transport infrastructure network in particular between Nelson and Richmond, but also in the Tasman District between Richmond and Motueka and Richmond and Hope, and also between Nelson and Marlborough.

If our transport infrastructure is inadequate, inefficient and/or poorly maintained, the business community will face additional delays and costs, which impacts on the economic vitality of the region. Attracting new businesses to the region is also an important part of economic growth, and good transport infrastructure is an important factor when considering doing business in a region. We know that existing constraints on the transport network are already leading to delays affecting freight, tourism, business and residential growth. The recent storm on 1 February has shown once again the vulnerability of SH6 and its susceptibility to closure due to extreme weather events.

The Nelson Regional Land Transport Plan points out that Nelson City continues to be the largest urban area within the region for employment, the State Highway 1 route through Marlborough District is the highest use freight route in the South Island and Tasman is experiencing significant residential and commercial growth. It is these reasons the Chamber believes the current transport network must be upgraded and is concerned the Plan does not go far enough in addressing congestion in Nelson. The Chamber would like to better understand the communication and planning between Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council to manage increased traffic flows into Nelson as a result of proposed transport improvements in Tasman.

The Chamber fully supports the sentiment that the economic wellbeing and safety of our people is dependent on an efficient and effective road network. The region's primary industries (horticulture and

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viticulture, and forestry in particular) are heavily reliant on our road network, with around 650 trucks per day currently using Rocks Road (which can increase by 50% during peak periods).

The majority of Chamber members have long supported the proposed Southern Link arterial route as a viable alternative highway. Members have previously expressed and continue to express grave concerns over the adequacy of Waimea Road and Rocks Road. Whilst the Chamber acknowledges our members who do not support an alternative highway, on balance the Chamber is in favour of the proposal to progress the Nelson Southern Link Investigation. This investigation should be carried out with urgency to ensure the region does not face ongoing delays and road closures caused by growth and weather events.

Providing a more efficient route to take primary products to the ports will help to futureproof economic growth in our region. The Plan states there is a projected 47% increase in freight volumes forecast to 2042 across the top of the south, and with regular maintenance required on Rocks Road, an alternative highway is a necessity.

The Chamber believes alternative options previously provided by the New Zealand Transport Agency (such as clearways on Waimea Road for example) will provide some congestion relief for a short time, but ultimately will not provide a lasting solution for the increased travel demand and freight volume that is projected. Clearways and traffic management solutions could mean less parking spaces being provided and increased parking charges. From a traffic engineering point of view and from a financial budgeting point of view, these might seem like workable solutions, but how will it impact on the business community along those clearways and in the Nelson CBD?

The Chamber supports creating a connected arterial cycle network and improved public transport services. Cycleway projects (including Rocks Road) will help stimulate greater economic activity and generate more tourism income. An upgraded cycleway along Rocks road would assist with the promotion of the region as a cycling hub, enhancing our existing cycling and mountain biking offerings.

These projects should be planned for in conjunction with an alternative route, rather than 'instead of'.

Submission - Nelson Regional Public Transport Plan

The Chamber supports improved public transport services, as there is no doubt this can help to relieve some pressure off the roading network. The Chamber is interested to know what studies/investigations have been done to show the expected behavioural shift from private car use to using public transport and improved walking and cycling routes, and how much this will help alleviate current and future congestion levels.

The Chamber is also interested to know what data the Council has on current bus utilisation rates, and what is the projected return on investment expected from the proposed bus service improvements.

The Nelson Regional Public Transport Plan does not appear to address how the proposed improved service offerings will impact on overall congestion levels and by when.

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Summary

The Chamber fully supports Nelson City Council's key transport projects of:

- Progressing the Southern Link Investigation
- A partnership project to consider the best form and function of the Richmond and Stoke South transport network
- Improvements to the safety and resilience of the SH6 Blenheim to Nelson route.

The Chamber would like to see more evidence of how Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council will work together to manage congestion in and out of its respective jurisdictions.

Grant Kerr
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