

A photograph of a KiwiRail passenger train crossing a bridge over a river. The train is silver with orange and yellow accents. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains covered in snow under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The foreground shows a riverbed with gravel and some green vegetation.

# Inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand 24 November 2022

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Photo Source: KiwiRail



# National Integrated Public Transport Planning - Observations

- NZ is at a junction when comes to inter-regional passenger rail and public transport
- Will it continue almost entirely focusing on urban passenger rail investment in Auckland and Wellington regions?
- Or can it expand planning to include passenger rail reconnecting main urban areas to regions extending back to NZ's Heartland as part of a national PT network?
- **What sort of country do we want NZ to be? At stake: social equity, national connectivity, transport accessibility, meeting climate change commitments, improved transport safety, regional rejuvenation, affordable housing access, economic development and even patriotic national pride as one joined up nation.**
- Need National economic development plan – growth corridors, housing, employment, industrial development, population / immigration strategy – transport planning facilitates this – Adhoc planning doesn't cut it in 2022
- Few things give the perception of a united nation like quality **national rail networks** – not an end in of itself but part of national development vision.
- Need national consensus to correctly identify viable opportunities and problems trying to solve to fulfill potential to deliver a more sustainable future that helps NZ fully realise it's potential. Linking opportunities to spatial planning for our towns and cities also important
- Need to put end to institutional bias against Rail & PT policy in NZ over last 60 years – Treasury, MoT, Infrastructure NZ policy positions reflect poor legislative framework for national / inter-regional public transport – Waka Kotahi / KiwiRail can only do what empowered and legislation allows them to do

# Inter-Regional Passenger Rail Funding - Process

- Significant deficiency in current process. Everything has to be instigated by regions but **inter-regional and national public transport a national issue**. Makes inter-regional rail / PT challenging.
- **Where is the national vision?** Who is responsible for that? Central Government agency leadership required with regional partnerships for inter-regional PT and rail to develop. The current PT planning process / legislative framework heavily biased to intra-regional which worked well for Auckland and Wellington Rail but not so much elsewhere. Completely inadequate as a national PT lens.
- **Establishment of a stronger National Public Transport function with a mandate to plan/develop national and regional integrated PT networks (Buses, Rail and Ferries) across all NZ** would be a start. Would help alignment with national development priorities and ensure business cases are **funded, not just a regional activities, but as national development ones – policy legislative framework changes**. Start with Golden Triangle.
- Not a replacement for regional council transport functions rather a **framework & resource with national lead joined up PT planning function** something lacking in NZ today. Currently these functions don't sit at top table in MoT, Waka Kotahi or KiwiRail – not given the gravitas deserves in Transport GPS or in legislation

# Why Inter-Regional Passenger Rail?

- In deciding what a future inter-regional rail network may look like it is important to establish what some of the key success factors may be.
- Key criteria include identifying where rail has a strategic advantage over other Public Transport modes or private motor car use.
- Some of these include potential journey time advantages due to superior rail alignments over road e.g. tunnelling, serving larger intermediate towns on route with large passenger flows generated. As an example: the route between Wellington and Wairarapa through the Remutaka tunnel offers a key advantage over road avoiding the trip over the hills.
- Analysing transport demand - current, latent, induced – how does rail affect PT Transport demand? Spatial planning to ensure growth strategies are integrated with transport priorities with regional and inter-regional rail investment
- GPS, with supporting legislative changes to help identify “What Good Looks Like”. Inter-regional PT **NOT** just Te Huia or the Capital Connection but more broadly inter-regional connections to major urban areas like Tauranga - Hamilton - Auckland (Making Rail Work), Palmerston North - Wellington or Timaru - Christchurch
- Buses too - Commercial national InterCity network going backward as we speak – needs addressing

# Key Recommendations (1 of 2)

- Issue not KiwiRail structure – just delivery vehicle under contract – **but legislative / policy settings, MoT guidance / Waka Kotahi empowerment - legislative changes to Land Transport Management Act 2003 required in concert with changes to inadequate GPS on Transport** – Both need to reflect National / inter-regional PT aspiration as all regionally focused - Changes to resulting National Rail Plan also required.
- 30 year NZ Rail Network Investment Programme needs more than just Te Huia and Capital Connection for Inter-regional passenger rail – GPS changes enable that - What does Good look like?
- That Transport, Rail and PT industry delivery / structure reform including further detail on operating model / MoT / Waka Kotahi / accountability / value for money be examined closely post PT legislative reform
- National and Regional Public Transport planning, funding and delivery functions need integrated development - recommend strong **National Public Transport Planning function (Agency)** to develop integrated Nation-Wide Public Transport plans and delivery monitoring – needs to sit at the top table – could be division of NZTA ensuring limited resources not syphoned off to another agency when such resources are limited across NZ
- Regional agency and local grassroot community advocacy / involvement critical to help planning attuned to local needs. AT and other regional transport agency functions therefore very important but with **national lens (currently lacking)** for Integrated nationwide PT networks – includes national integrated ticketing.
- That capital funding sources and delivery timeframes be investigated. Sources of funding can include mix of: farebox based on affordable fares, TOD's (eg Central Hamilton station location under Centre Place Tainui development), Land value uplift capture, fuel taxes and general taxation (NZLTF), local body rates as at present, overseas funding partners, export financing, wet leasing ex rolling stock manufacturers, Community based partnerships (Development Corporations, Co Ops e.g. Making Rail Work proposal as a test case), population growth increasing funding base, capital release by individuals from less private car ownership

# Key Recommendations (2 of 2)

- Various delivery operating models incl. franchising, Co-Operatives, concessions, national state operator (like VLine in Vic. Aus – we already have that in KiwiRail) be explored
- Continuous staged improvements to inter-regional rail over 10 to 30 years be undertaken as resources permit but with an eye to a Vision of continuous build up – Golden Triangle first domino to fall, Lower North / Central South Island.
- Passenger Rail isn't needed on all rail lines – public buses fine for many routes – where can rail make its biggest contribution? – Golden Triangle should be a winner and case study for NZ
- Rolling Stock selection should be to national standards with regional adaptation – limited rolling stock currently in NZ – much better to buy new than limit to further refurbishment of older stock which is not sustainable and poor value – one region not to dictate national standards
- That a rolling programme of Electrification extension Pukekohe - Hamilton - Tauranga be a priority
- That affordable fares are needed to encourage modal shift, user uptake - this requires direct subsidies
- That Rail and Infrastructure Construction industry capability, together with Rail delivery knowledge, be developed in NZ enabled by a pipeline of projects from Government enabling industry participants commitment - Academy of Rail to build rail competency and knowledge in NZ.
- That non-partisan political support / consensus building to avoid political football of rail
- **Ambition and new thinking is required! Let us together Make Rail Work!**





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