

SUBMISSION BY NATIONAL ROAD CARRIERS (INC) TO NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE UNIT

Submission to: Executive Director
National Infrastructure Unit
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INTRODUCTION

National Road Carriers (NRC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the **National Infrastructure Plan Discussion Document**.

The focus of our comments on the Document is in regard to areas of interest to the freight transport sector in Auckland, and in particular matters related to improving the efficiency of the freight distribution system to help New Zealand increase its rate of economic growth and improve productivity.

BACKGROUND

NRC provides service and advice to those who chose to earn a living in transport and logistics. An Auckland based trucking association, the NRC has 2400 members North Island wide, of which 85% are single vehicle operators and 95% employ 10 or less, including many who expect their views to be forcefully represented in this Submission.

The NRC is dedicated to working for and with members to achieve continual improvement in all aspects of the industry including safety, recruitment and retention of staff, compliance, profitability and professionalism.

SUBMISSION

The focus of the NRC's submission is on concerns raised by members with reference to questions the Treasury Infrastructure Unit's is seeking feedback:

- Missing Issues: Are there important infrastructure issues not mentioned?
- Link to economic growth: What additional investment would help New Zealand to increase its rate of economic growth?¹

In particular, members believe that the high level of congestion and complex design of Auckland's road network between Pakuranga in the east and Onehunga in the west – i.e. **the East-West: SH1-20 East Tamaki to Onehunga Corridor** and which includes **Neilson Street** – is adversely affecting the efficient performance of the large number of freight vehicles that use the corridor every working day.

The core of our submission makes a case for a number of disparate roading projects in the area that are vital for Auckland's efficient freight movement and which have been under discussion for improvement for some years to be integrated into a single project for priority implementation as a 'Road of National Significance'.

That is, the missing important infrastructure issue we contend is not mentioned in the document relates to the so-called 'ladder' project linking SH1 and SH20 between Mt Wellington and Onehunga and first promoted by Transit New Zealand more than 10 years ago (see map below).

The NRC contend that the development of an efficient East-West connection between SH1 at Mt Wellington and SH20 at Onehunga is an essential freight route that requires significant development to reduce congestion, improve safety and the efficiency of the freight distribution sector and help New Zealand build the platform for sustained economic growth in the future. The balance of the submission sets out details of our case.

Context - Importance of an efficient road freight network to Auckland's economy

Freight forms the backbone of Auckland's economy. Around \$45 billion of freight and goods are carried annually on Auckland's roads, made up from more than 500,000 freight trips every day. This activity represents 33.3% of all freight traffic in New Zealand² and translates to moving more than a tonne of freight each day for every Auckland household. A significant proportion of Auckland's daily freight trips use the road network between Pakuranga in the east and Onehunga in the west (see details below).

Auckland's freight vehicle growth is about 3-4% a year, compared to annual population growth of about 1.2% (which in turn is nearly double the New Zealand population growth rate average

¹ Treasury Discussion document, page 2

² "National Freight Demands Study", Richard Paling Consulting, September 2008, page iv.

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of 0.8%.) . Research for the Road Transport Forum New Zealand projects that freight volume trips on Auckland (and neighbour region Waikato) roads will double by 2020, even if rail achieves its projected potential.

A significant proportion of Auckland's population and business activity growth is occurring in the areas of Auckland immediately adjacent to the East-West corridor (i.e. in the eastern suburbs), and the corridor is an important route for accessing Auckland Airport and Waitakere City from eastern Auckland. Completion of the Western Ring Route (WRR) scheduled for 2015 will increase the importance of the east-west link for journeys between south and east Auckland and west and north Auckland (by providing an option to bypass travelling through Auckland City's Central Motorway Junction via the southern motorway).

Current Situation

The existing route between Pakuranga and Onehunga, connecting SH1 at Mt Wellington and SH20 at Onehunga, is made up of a number of short routes and intersection sections controlled by disconnected traffic light systems, all of which are heavily congested through most working days and in particular during peak hours.

Numerous studies support a comprehensive project to provide an integrated, efficient route and predict that without such a project congestion will get significantly worse over time and be end-to-end at less than 40kph by 2020 (see below).

The core sections of the route are as follows:

- SH1: Mt Wellington & SEART interchanges linking to Carbine Road, Mt Wellington Highway, Sylvia Park Rd and Great South Road.
- SEART linking Church St and Neilson St.
- SH20: Mangere Bridge and Gloucester Park interchange linking Onehunga Mall, Selwyn St, Neilson St and Church St.

Some sections carry more heavy freight vehicles (HCV) daily than any other route in New Zealand's roading network, with the exception of the Auckland Harbour Bridge and Newmarket viaduct, including all but one of the currently listed Roads of National Significance (RONS)³ as follows:

³ Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding 2009/10 – 2018/19 (GPS), paragraph 21, page 9. Of four RONS projects outside Auckland only the SH1 Wellington Nguaranga Gorge route (6500 HCV/ day) carries freight volumes matching those of the local road network making up the E-W corridor.

E-W Route Sections	Average daily HCV Volumes
Pakuranga Bridge	8200 ⁴
SEART (east of Waipuna Bridge)	7000
Mt Wellington Highway (Penrose Rd)	2500
Neilson St	4000 ⁵
SH20: Mangere Crossing	4700

Source: ARTA presentation to RTC, July 2009.

A number of projects to improve elements of the route have been under consideration for many years as follows:

- **Neilson Street improvements:** An Auckland City Council proposal⁶ under investigation since 2003 to widen Neilson St to provide four lanes plus medium along its whole length.
- **Gloucester Park Interchange redesign and widening:** A Transit NZ project first put forward in the 1990s as part of the proposal to duplicate the Manukau Harbour Crossing. However, consent for the Gloucester Park Interchange redesign was denied, and the bridge duplication project has proceeded without this important element. The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), who have absorbed Transit NZ, have indicated an intention to review the interchange redesign proposals in conjunction with planning for a East – West SH20 to SH1 link (known as the middle ladder in the State Highway network plan (see map below), but there is no provision in the current Programme.
- **A new Southwestern (SH or Expressway) Corridor between Onehunga and East Tamaki:** A NZTA project under investigation since at least 2006 is one option among a number of E-W 'ladder rung' connections. The requirement for such a route has been identified in a number of earlier studies, including the South Western Transport Corridor Study (2006) and the Eastern Corridor Transport Study (2006).
 - The studies undertaken for NZTA have concluded that without the project (including a redesigned Gloucester Park interchange) the overall network that serves the route area will be severely congested throughout the working day by 2021 with end-to-end average speeds below 40kph⁷ and significant congestion implications for local traffic in Onehunga, restricted accessibility to Auckland Airport, increased congestion on Great South Road, and reduced freight distribution service efficiency to local freight hubs, including Metro Port.

⁴ Only the Auckland Harbour Bridge (8400 HCV/day) is higher.

⁵ See also daily and weekly traffic flow data in Neilson St compiled in "A Regional Strategic Freight Network for Auckland," ARC Draft Report – Revision 3A, by Richard Paling, May 2009, pages 11 & 12.

⁶ This project is currently on hold. For latest update see "Auckland Regional Land Transport Strategy: Regional Projects Monitoring," August 2009, page 15.

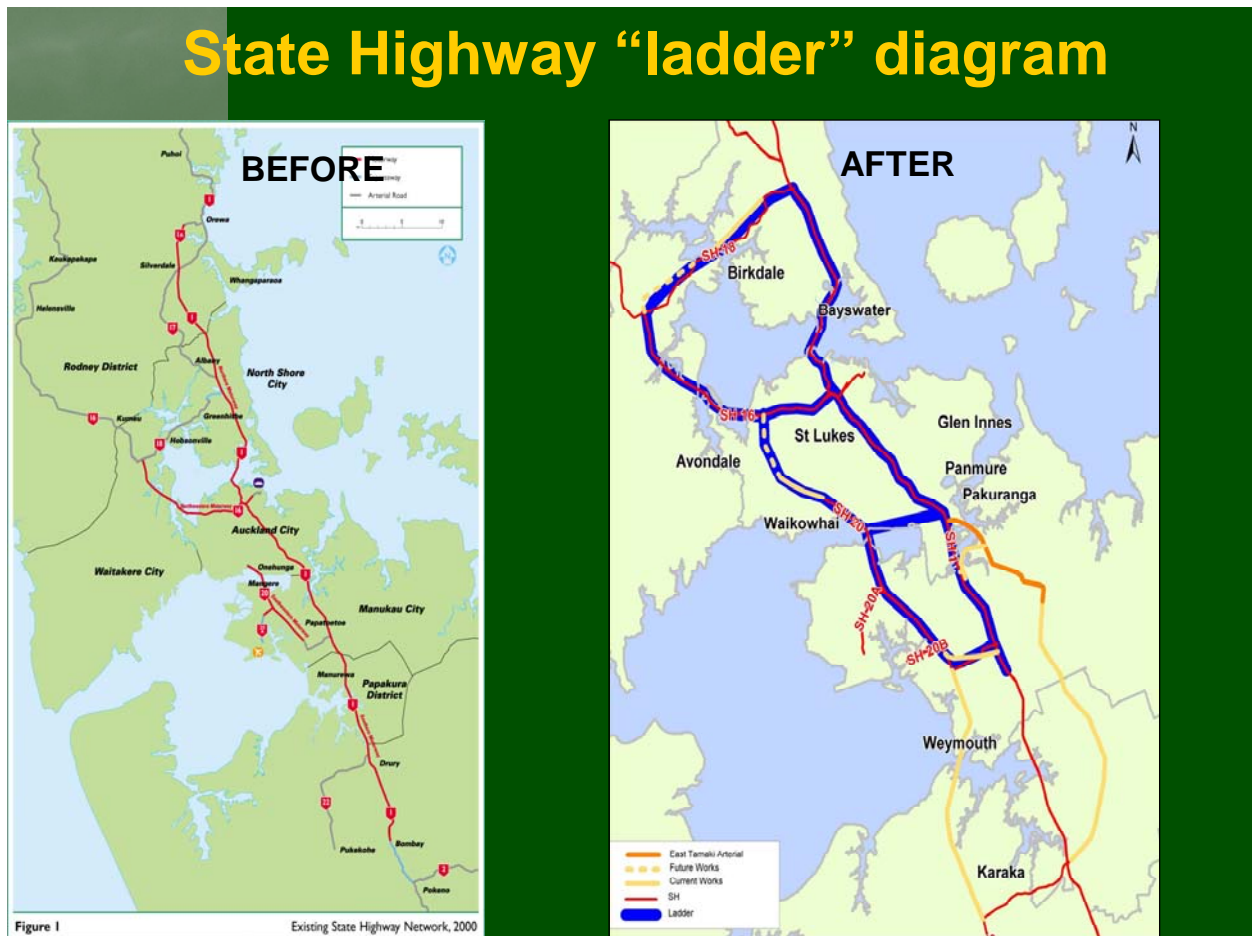
⁷ For example, Manukau Harbour Crossing Alliance report (CA2876), February 2009, page 1.

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- **Onehunga community access to and performance of local roads:** Auckland City Council (and Onehunga Community Board and Enhancement Society (TOES)) have undertaken a number of urban planning improvement projects that have included looking at ways to separate through traffic from local roads including the main street of Onehunga, Onehunga Mall.

NRC contends that it would be more efficient and beneficial to assisting the freight sector to increase its contribution to the national economy if the above separate projects were consolidated into a single corridor development project with the priority for action as a “Road of National Significance”.

A ‘before’ and ‘after’ depiction of the corridor is seen in the NZTA map below:



Source: NZTA 2008 presentation to Auckland Business Forum 2008, showing indicative E-W ‘corridor’. The ‘ladder’ will help improve efficiency of the Western Ring Route when the Waterview section is completed by 2015.

Summary

In summary, the **current situation** confirms strong indicative evidence supporting an initiative to provide a high quality E-W corridor. NRC contend it would deliver significant benefits to the road network and freight sector in particular, and therefore Auckland's (and New Zealand's) economy by improving access and reliable mobility across urban Auckland between critical business (and resultant employment) hubs, including freight distribution centers and ports.

The **desired outcome** NRC requests the National Infrastructure Unit give consideration to is to:

Firstly, highlight in the forthcoming National Infrastructure Plan the importance of the E-W (freight) corridor to the national economy and the merits of declaring the project as a "Road of National Significance".

Secondly, undertake a benefit-cost and wider economic benefit assessment to support prioritization of the project implementation with speed and urgency.

For more information about the importance of addressing the road freight concerns in this area of Auckland please contact NRC Executive Director on the numbers above. If appropriate, NRC would welcome the opportunity to invite the Unit's Executive Director or nominee to visit the corridor in order to directly assess the situation the freight sector faces every day in distributing goods to the rest of Auckland and throughout New Zealand from the many freight distribution hubs and other manufacturing businesses located in this area of Auckland.

David Aitken

Executive Director