



HUTT CITY COUNCIL'S SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENT

02 April 2024

Introduction

Hutt City Council welcomes the opportunity to submit on the *Draft Government Policy Statement on land transport 2024-34* (GPS). We have a bold and ambitious long-term plan with a significant focus on new infrastructure projects to build resilience and meet the demand of our rapidly growing population. The GPS will help us meet our goal of creating a connected, resilient and inclusive city where people thrive. We do, however, have concerns that funding that was previously assured and built into our planning might now be at risk. Our submission highlights the need for the final GPS to provide funding certainty to ensure we can continue to deliver our ambitious transport projects to Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt.

Key points

Hutt City Council supports the following aspects outlined in the GPS;

- the four Strategic Priorities;
- the proposed direction indicated via System Reform;
- the indicative plan for investment in land transport; and
- the Statement of Ministerial expectation.

We are pleased to see the inclusion of Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi RiverLink in the draft GPS as State Highway 2 Melling Transport Improvements. This initiative holds immense significance for Hutt City Council, encompassing pivotal components such as the city link bridge to connect the new train station with the CBD, a new road bridge and interchange to improve traffic flows and safety on SH2 and local roads, and local road and streetscape improvements. We are concerned, however, that the GPS provides no long-term certainty over the funding for the city link bridge which is a key component of Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi RiverLink.

We would also like to see more certainty in the GPS over public transport investment for the Wellington region, and funding to build resilience, mitigation for the impact of the changing climate, and initiatives to improve cycling options within urban areas and between cities.

Hutt City Council would welcome further clarity in the GPS on the issues noted above, along with great consideration to other revenue sources, funding and delivery models and Value for Money. As we look to finalise our 2024–2034 Long–Term Plan, Council is cognisant of its responsibility for the planning and spending of rate and taxpayer funds in the current economic climate.

Strategic priorities and direction

Hutt City Council supports economic growth and productivity and welcomes the increased focus on maintenance and renewals in the GPS. We expect to also see focus given to promoting permanent solutions in place of short–term interventions (i.e. more investment in renewals across the network rather than just fixing potholes). Through our strategic transport planning we have identified opportunities where additional renewals funding through the National Land Transport Fund would enable us to apply permanent solutions asset maintenance. This would encourage significant investment in improving road user safety and also enable us to support the GPS direction on using transport solutions to unlock sustainable economic growth.

We note and support the direction signalled in the GPS of significant investment of \$1.5 billion required by local councils. We would welcome further clarity of the Government’s expectation of “public private partnerships, and other opportunities to use private expertise and finance”, and the possibility of offsetting tolling, or other, costs via PPE or other funding models.

Hutt City Council agrees with the GPS priority on economic growth and productivity and the incentive to implement improvements to the rail system. While we note the importance of rail networks, we note there is less incentive for other means of public transport and overall safety.

The GPS should take a more holistic view across the entire transport network so that councils can achieve better outcomes when promoting the use of the rail system. As the GPS does not state other maintenance improvements which are required in our network to improve safety, the GPS should also include the use of better materials to be used on

our road surface and on regular inspections, planning, and funding to respond to failures quickly.

Roads of national significance programme

We agree that the Roads of National Significance Programme (RoNS) will boost sustainable economic growth and productivity.

We particularly support the intention of the GPS that “new Roads of National Significance and major public transport projects will unlock access to greenfield land for housing development and support greater intensification to ultimately improve housing supply, choice and affordability.”

Although Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt has very limited opportunities for greenfield development, we are actively pursuing intensification in our existing urban areas. The inclusion of the Cross Valley Link project in the GPS as a RoNS is vital in supporting housing growth on the valley floor, as well as supporting sustainable economic growth in the Seaview–Gracefield employment area. With an estimated increase in population of circa 40,000¹ over the next 30 years, Council supports the programme, including unlocking access to sell or purchase assets in the form of land to support housing development via major to local roads.

We look forward to working with New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi and other agencies to scope and deliver the Cross Valley Link. This will enable us to maximise housing development and drive sustainable economic investment in the city.

Ongoing support of current major projects

Support in the GPS for projects like Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi RiverLink and the Cross Valley connection are vital for Hutt City Council’s ability to unlock the revitalisation of its central city. Improving transport links through these major projects will also help meet the government’s IAF investment in stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to enable residential development in the central city

¹ Hutt City Council Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment, August 2023, page 122.

Improved safety through greater police enforcement including specific targets

Whilst Hutt City Council agrees on the strategy for the Government to promote more police enforcement and road safety educational campaigns, Council disagrees with the solution outlined in the GPS to reduce/eliminate Death & Serious Injuries (DSI) crashes across the country.

The GPS omits the number of crashes associated with speeding issues; intersections and other crash types that cause more fatalities across the country. Analysis of these numbers in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt illustrates the need for more investment in road safety improvements. While speed is a contributing factor for DSI in our network, the social costs associated with these types of crashes are not shown in the GPS – these numbers would justify the need to keep investing strongly in road safety.

Although low-cost safety interventions help reduce crash likelihood, these solutions are unlikely to reduce the number of crashes on key Arterial and Collector roads. Major intervention investments such as intersection upgrades and/or changes on speed limits, should be highlighted more strongly in the GPS. This would alleviate our concern of any unintended consequences to a possible reduction of low cost, low risk funding to improve safety.

Value for money

The GPS states: “There has been a significant increase in investment transport in recent years, however, this is not translating to better outcomes.” We would highlight since the implementation of the 2021 GPS, Transport Engineers have been focusing on studies and design of new infrastructure across the city and given some projects have been implemented in recent years, there is a possibility of low monitoring to show the likely effectiveness of projects.

In terms of investment distribution, we would encourage more focus on safety and public transport infrastructure.

Value for Money considerations are acknowledged as important for all publicly funded spend.

Walking and cycling

We note the statement that “investment in walking and cycling should *only* take place where there is either clear benefit for increasing economic growth or clear benefit for improving safety and demonstrated volumes of pedestrians and cyclists already exist.” Our experience is there is latent demand for active modes but safety concerns with the existing network deter many potential users. Using existing volumes of pedestrians and cyclists to forecast options to justify future investment would be supported.

Activity class

Overall, priorities for safety and the use of public transport should be incentivised as the priority for these are directly associated with improvements on the Rail Network, which will have a significant cost incentive.

Hutt City Council - Conclusion

Hutt City Council looks to partner with Government and other providers, to deliver on opportunities outlined in the draft GPS 2024/25–2033/34. Through a partnership approach, we are optimistic that existing and future Council programmes to revitalise Hutt City will be realised. This, in turn, will enable Council to improve the city’s resilience and unlock sustainable economic growth for the people of Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt.