

Auckland Council Submission: Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2018/19-2027/28



Date: 31 March 2017

*He mihi ki te kaahui tūpuna,
te taura-here mō tātou te muka tāngata,
ki ngā mana ātua, kia tau te mauri.*

*He kura tangihia, he maimai aroha,
rātou kua whetūrangitia ki a rātou
tātou te hunga mata-rerehua ki a tātou*

*E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha,
tēnā rā koutou katoa.*

1. Overview

This is Auckland Council's submission in response to the draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2018/19-2027/28.

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This submission has been approved by the Planning Committee of Auckland Council.

2. Introduction and Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2018/19 – 2027/28 (GPS 2018). This submission has been developed in conjunction with Auckland Transport's submission, which will provide more detailed comments in relation to funding.

Context

Auckland plays a critical role in New Zealand's current and future prosperity. It is the country's major centre of population and economic activity. Auckland's large and growing labour market provides opportunities to bring together complementary skills, enable specialisation of activities and a sharing of ideas that supports innovation and productivity.

Auckland's young and diverse population, as well as its attractiveness to international migrants, means that the vast majority of New Zealand's working age population growth – and therefore its economic growth – will occur in Auckland.

In the past three years Auckland's rate of population growth has dramatically increased, growing by around 120,000 people – equivalent to the whole of Tauranga. Statistics NZ now project Auckland's population will reach approximately 1.94 million by 2026 (under a medium growth scenario), up from their previous projection of 1.81 million. Statistics NZ also project that 55% of New Zealand's population growth from 2018-28, the years the GPS applies to, will occur in Auckland.

The sheer pace and scale of Auckland's current growth is placing substantial pressure across our transport networks and creating a critical need to accelerate housing development.

This growth has led to substantial increases in travel demand, across all parts of the transport network:

- Total vehicle travel has grown by around 10% in the past three years for which data is available. This equates to around 360,000 more daily trips.
- Annual public transport boardings have increased by 22%, from 69.9 million in the year to January 2014 to 85.1 million in the year to January 2017. Rail has grown even faster, with boardings increasing by over 70% since 2014.

This increased demand is placing substantial pressure on our transport networks:

- Average peak time travel speeds on Auckland's state highway network have declined from 64 to 55 km/h between 2014 and 2016.
- The arterial road network has become increasingly congested at peak times. 24% of Auckland's arterial road network is now congested at peak times, up from 18% three years ago. Across a very large network this is a substantial reduction in performance.
- Congestion is increasingly spreading into inter-peak times, which is particularly concerning as this affects commercial and freight travel that occur at this time.
- A number of public transport services are facing capacity constraints, particularly bus routes accessing the city centre from the isthmus and the North Shore.

Transport continues to be Auckland Council's largest area of expenditure, with approximately 40% of Council's total investment going on transport. Over the next decade, current funding plans outline that Council anticipates investing approximately \$6.8 billion into operating and improving Auckland's transport system.

Auckland Transport Alignment Project

While our transport challenge is greater than ever, Council and Government are also more aligned than ever on how to meet this challenge. Through the Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP), Council and Government have agreed a long-term strategic approach to the development of Auckland's transport system. ATAP provides an agreed understanding of the most critical challenges facing Auckland and the likely sequencing of major investments over time to address these challenges.

Reflecting ATAP's strategic approach in statutory strategic documents, like the GPS (and Council's upcoming refresh of the Auckland Plan), is necessary to ensure policy and investment decisions into the future are aligned with this approach. The GPS gives guidance

to statutory transport funding and planning documents so is a critical link in ensuring ATAP's direction is given effect to over time. Furthermore, ATAP identified a \$4 billion funding gap over the next decade that will need to be addressed to fully implement the recommended strategic approach.

We note and support the references to ATAP that have been included in the Draft GPS, particularly reference to the most significant challenges as this provides important focus for investment in Auckland. Our submission provides a number of further ways in which ATAP's strategic approach can flow through into the GPS, as well as other key areas that ATAP did not focus on but have strategic implications (e.g. safety and investment in walking & cycling).

Therefore, our key submission points are:

- a stronger focus on the role of transport investment in enabling and supporting growth
- increasing the priority of safety outcomes to address poor recent performance in this area
- ensuring activity classes are sufficient, and flexible enough, to enable delivery of the ATAP indicative package, including greater clarity about progressing the strategic public transport network
- providing clarity on the funding processes for rail improvements
- suggested minor wording changes

These main submission points are expanded upon below.

3. Enabling and Supporting Growth

We recognise that the draft GPS 2018 acknowledges growth as a strategic priority to be supported by Government transport investment, including through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).

However, given the scale of Auckland's growth challenge and the urgent need for substantial investment to enable an acceleration of housing and business land development, we would like to see further emphasis in this area and more clarity on the role transport investment has in enabling growth to occur, especially in the greenfield areas.

In the past, it has often been difficult for Council to gain NZTA co-funding for transport investments that are mainly focused on enabling growth, rather than addressing current or projected network deficiencies. Significant effort has been made over the past year to understand and agree upon the transport needs in greenfield growth areas. This work, under the banner of "Supporting Growth" (formerly Transport for Future Urban Growth), was jointly developed by NZTA, Auckland Council and Auckland Transport.

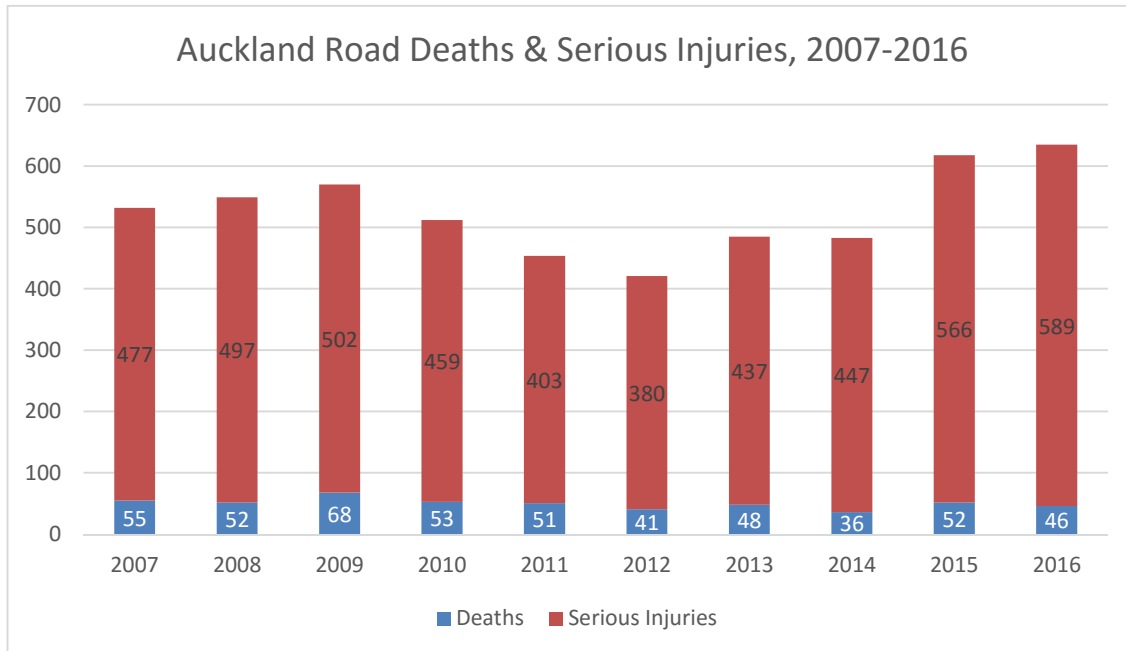
Important next steps for transport investment in greenfield areas are:

- undertaking route protection and acquiring land for future networks
- providing new local infrastructure to support areas "live-zoned" in the Unitary Plan
- upgrading regional and strategic connections (both roading and public transport) to greenfield areas to cater for growing demand.

Strong funding support from NZTA, as directed through the GPS, will be necessary to progress all of these next steps.

4. Improving Safety Outcomes

As recognised in the draft GPS, there is an urgent need to improve road safety outcomes and reverse the increase in deaths and serious injuries that has occurred in recent years. In Auckland the number of deaths and serious injuries has increased by 51% over the past four years, from a low of 421 in 2012 to 635 in 2016.



Because of Auckland’s highly urbanised environment and the intense use of its transport networks by different users, vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) make up a higher proportion of deaths and serious injuries in Auckland (43%) than in the rest of New Zealand (33). This suggests a need to tailor approaches to safety for large urban areas like Auckland. For example, lower speeds in urban areas dramatically reduce pedestrian harm if collisions occur.

Reversing recent safety trends will require new approaches and interventions, particularly in Auckland. As well as increasing investment in road safety promotion and road policing, the GPS should highlight the need to further tilt the balance towards safety when trade-offs are being made against travel-time. Current investment assessment procedures often prevent NZTA from co-investing in improvements to address Auckland’s most dangerous intersections when these improvements result in traffic delays.

For further progress in reducing deaths and serious injuries to be made, we consider it necessary for the GPS to highlight these trade-offs need to be reconsidered.

5. Activity Classes

Flexibility

Through ATAP, Auckland has undertaken a comprehensive planning process with Government to agree the main transport challenges and to develop a strategic approach for addressing these challenges. This provides both parties with a higher level of assurance that investment will focus on the biggest transport challenges facing Auckland.

Because of this alignment, there are significant benefits from ensuring funds available for transport investment can be directed towards the area of highest priority. Paragraph 125 of the ATAP Recommended Approach highlights this point, stating “*Transport investment processes need to ensure the best performing interventions are prioritised for funding regardless of type.*” To give effect to this recommendation, the GPS activity class structure should have broader funding bands that enable greater flexibility to direct funding to the most important investments.

Sufficient Funding

The Draft GPS notes (paragraph 161) that the funding requirements of ATAP have not yet been incorporated into the funding ranges. Auckland Transport’s submission provides further detail on some of the adjustments to funding ranges likely to be required to enable the ATAP indicative package to be progressed. Likely areas where activities classes would need to be increased to enable the ATAP indicative package are:

- Public Transport (noting the further submission point below about how to progress strategic public transport initiatives)
- Local Road Improvements (particularly to enable route protection for networks in greenfield growth areas)
- Local Road Maintenance (subject to finalising work on the “One Network Road Classification” system and Auckland Transport reaching agreement with NZTA on appropriate levels of service and funding requirements).

Furthermore, depending on whether the Urban Cycleway Fund is extended beyond 2018, there may also be a need to increase the walking and cycling activity class to enable a continuation of momentum in cycling investment and to maximise the benefits of current and committed investment by linking up projects and completing networks.

The extent to which the NLTF can help address the funding gap identified in ATAP depends on the overall size of the NLTF and the proportion of the fund that ends up being allocated to Auckland. Council supports an increase to either/both of these approaches, particularly noting that around 55% of New Zealand’s population growth over the next decade is projected to occur in Auckland – meaning investments in Auckland are likely to provide strong value for money.

Strategic Public Transport

ATAP identifies a substantial expansion of Auckland’s strategic public transport network over time. This network forms the backbone of Auckland’s public transport system, providing for high volumes of travel on fast, frequent, high-capacity services that operate along corridors separated from private vehicles and are unaffected by road congestion. Depending on the particular situation, the strategic public transport network may be implemented in the form of bus rapid transit, busway, light rail or heavy rail.

There is a lack of clarity in the GPS in relation to strategic public transport projects, which flows through into inconsistencies about which parts of this network NZTA or Auckland Transport should be progressing, and what the funding arrangements are. Currently some busways are being progressed by Auckland Transport (e.g. AMETI), others by NZTA (e.g. Northern Busway extension) and some where the responsibility is unclear (e.g. Northwest Busway). The mass transit route between the city centre and Airport identified in ATAP partly follows local roads and partly follows state highway corridors, resulting in complex and unclear responsibilities and funding arrangements.

It would be helpful for the GPS to clarify these funding arrangements, potentially through creating an activity class for strategic public transport network improvements or clearly signalling that the state highway activity class can be used for strategic public transport projects.

6. Rail Funding

ATAP identified the need for ongoing investment in Auckland’s heavy rail network to cater for passenger and freight growth, incorporating investments identified in the *Rail Development Plan* that was jointly developed by Auckland Transport and KiwiRail. Beyond City Rail Link, this investment includes track infrastructure upgrades, additional electric trains, removal of road/rail level crossings and extending electrification to Pukekohe. Around \$1.25 billion of rail investment (in addition to CRL) is included within the ATAP indicative package to occur between 2018 and 2028.

Under current arrangements, some of this investment (e.g. additional trains, station upgrades and level crossing removals) could be co-funded by Council and NZTA, while “below track” infrastructure is funded by the Crown. Given the scale of investment required over the next 10 years to deliver the *Rail Development Plan* it would be very helpful for the GPS to clarify and confirm these funding arrangements – and to ensure there is sufficient available funding in the relevant activity classes.

7. Minor Wording Changes

In addition to these high level points, we have identified a number of more minor changes that we would like to see in the final version of the GPS 2018. These changes are outlined below:

Section/Paragraph	Suggested Amendment
Paragraph 47	Final bullet point about increasing public transport use should not just be to “relieve” congestion, but also refer to enabling greater throughput on key corridors to improve economic productivity.
Paragraph 48	Additional wording that reflects ATAP’s strong direction that a “ <i>fundamental shift</i> ” to a greater focus on influencing travel demand is required to achieve a step-change in the performance of Auckland’s transport system. It would also be very helpful for this paragraph to pick up on the key early priorities for this shift that are outlined in the table on page 33 of ATAP’s recommended strategic approach. This greater emphasis on influencing travel demand should also be reflected in paragraphs 78-84.
Paragraph 89-90	Additional wording highlighting the need to ensure transport infrastructure is resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and greater storm intensities and frequency.
Paragraph 108	Amend fourth bullet point as congestion is increasing in Auckland due to rapid growth in recent years.
Paragraph 110	Additional wording that links to the need to “focus on addressing the most significant challenges” would be helpful here to increase alignment with ATAP.

Section/Paragraph	Suggested Amendment
Paragraph 121	Clear distinction of peak/off-peak PT is blurring in Auckland due to congestion outside the peak. It is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to provide additional PT capacity at peak times. Improving travel choice can also improve the affordability of travel for users as they don't need to own and operate as many vehicles.