

# **Rural Development Strategy**

## **Transport: Issues and Options**



Prepared by Nicci Webb, Policy Planner

## Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Transport .....	4
1.2	Whangarei Context.....	4
2	Policy Framework .....	4
2.1	Legislation Framework.....	4
2.2	National Strategies .....	5
2.3	Regional Documents .....	5
2.4	Local Implementation .....	6
3	Current Issues.....	8
3.1	Whangarei District Growth Strategy: Sustainable Futures 30/50 and Background Papers .....	8
3.2	Stakeholder Consultation.....	11
3.3	Regional Land Transport Strategy .....	11
3.4	Information from other sources .....	13
4	Best Practice.....	13
4.1	Integrated Land Transport Planning.....	13
4.2	Case Law.....	14
5	Options for Whangarei District .....	15
5.1	Whangarei District Growth Strategy: Sustainable Futures 30/50.....	15
5.2	What are the Resource Management Issues?.....	15
5.3	Options for Implementing the Rural Development Strategy.....	16
6	References/Sources.....	18
	Attachment 1 – Satellite Town/Rural and Coastal Villages .....	19
	Attachment 2 - Strategic Tourist Route - Northland .....	20
	Attachment 3 - Strategic Freight Routes – Northland.....	21

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Transport

*“Transport planning is important because it shapes the way we live and work and can have strong, long-term impacts on the economy, the environment and the quality of peoples’ lives”*  
(The International Forum for Rural Transport and Development).

Transportation networks allow the efficient provision of food, water, health services, education and agriculture, facilitating social and economic development. Central and local government invest significant resources on the development of transportation infrastructure. Good planning for transportation networks is essential, as once the infrastructure is put in place it is often very difficult and/or costly to change.

In rural areas, the roading infrastructure is a fundamental component in the development of a successful and thriving community. The roading network is part of the social fabric that links people and communities together improving transport linkages and reducing isolation. Along with connecting people, roads support the trading of goods and services, and sustain the agricultural activities that occur in rural environments.

### 1.2 Whangarei Context

The roading network in the Whangarei District comprises three state highways (State Highway 1, 14, and 15A), and a network of local roads, both urban (234km) and rural (1,499km). Sixty per cent of the District’s local urban and rural roads are sealed.

The Northland rail line also runs through Whangarei District, concluding west of Kawakawa in Otiria. The future of this railway line is uncertain, as Government is currently looking at options for rail throughout New Zealand. This will be discussed further in Section 3 of this report.

A geographically dispersed and largely rural population has resulted in the Whangarei District having a high dependency on private vehicles. The rate of vehicle ownership in the District in 2006 being 6% higher than the national average.

This dependence is compounded by limited opportunities for alternative modes of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport. Whangarei as a District relies heavily on the roading network for personal travel and for freight movement. Roads are also important infrastructure for the tourism industry in Whangarei.

The Whangarei District Growth Strategy 2010 indicates that the recent growth experienced in the economy has been consistent across all sectors, implying the demand for transport facilities will continue into the future.

## 2 Policy Framework

### 2.1 Legislation Framework

#### 2.1.1 Land Transport Management Act (LTMA)

The purpose of the LTMA, including the Land Transport Management Amendment Act 2008 is to provide a framework for achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system. It is the main statutory document for land transport management and funding in New Zealand. Stronger linkages between the Land Transport Management Act and the Resource Management Act were introduced through the 2008 amendments to the Land Transport Management Act. The amendments provide a clear link between transport planning under the Land Transport Management Act (government policy statements, regional land transport strategies, and regional land transport programmes) and land use planning under the Resource Management Act (national policy statements, regional policy statements, and regional and District plans).

#### 2.1.2 Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

The RMA is the primary piece of legislation that governs the use, development, and protection of land in New Zealand. There are several sections under the RMA that are directly or indirectly applicable to land transport. Under the 2005 RMA Amendment Act regional Councils, have a specific responsibility to strategically integrate infrastructure with land use through objectives, policies and methods (s30(1)(gb)). Regional and District plans must give effect to Regional Policy Statements under (ss67(3)(c) and 75(3)(c)) meaning there is now greater potential for Regional Policy Statements to assume a more pronounced role in promoting transport integration. Under Section 31 of the RMA, District Councils are responsible for achieving integrated management of the effects of the use, development or protection of land and associated natural and physical

resources of their District. They are also responsible for managing the effects of the subdivision of land and associated land use activities in terms of their location, servicing, effects on natural features and other amenities.

### 2.1.3 Local Government Act 2002 (LGA)

The LGA makes provisions for an integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system a fundamental requirement of every District Council. Council is responsible for planning, creating, operating, maintaining and rehabilitating all roads, except state highways in Whangarei District. The LGA requires Councils to prepare a Long Term Plan (LTP), and includes provisions for transport infrastructure. Council is also given the ability to make bylaws, and to stop legal roads under the 10<sup>th</sup> schedule of the LGA 1974.

## 2.2 National Strategies

### 2.2.1 New Zealand Transport Strategy

In August 2008, the government launched the New Zealand Transport Strategy 2008 (NZTS). This strategy includes seven key challenges that it wants to see addressed:

- Responding to climate change
- Energy security and cost
- Funding of investment in infrastructure and services while keeping transport affordable
- Increases in the environmental and social impacts of transport
- Changing demands arising from the ageing of the population
- Land use development and its impacts on transport demand
- Global terrorism.

The NZTS outlines a broad range of outcomes and targets to be met by the transport sector, with a 30 year planning horizon and is reviewed every three years.

### 2.2.2 Government Policy Statement

The Government Policy Statement guides the National Land Transport Programme, which in turn, guides regional land transport programmes and LTCCPs. The Government Policy Statement outlines how transport funding is managed, initiates an infrastructure unit, identifies roads of national significance, details how the transport network contributes to economic growth and productivity, outlines activity funding, and generally adopts and encourages an integrated approach to transport planning and provision. The document is reviewed every six years and the next statement is due to come out in 2012 for the period 2012-2022.

## 2.3 Regional Documents

### 2.3.1 Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS)

This document is of particular importance to the Rural Development Strategy, as it sets the direction for the region's transport system over the next 30 years, focusing on achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable transport system.

A RLTS must be prepared every six years, and cover a period of at least 30 years. Under the Transport Management Act, a RLTS must, amongst other things, identify inter and intra-regional transport outcomes for the region, and strategic options for achieving those, as well as define the role of each land transport mode in the region. This must be done in order to assist economic development, safety and personal security, improve access and mobility, protect and promote public health, and ensure environmental sustainability.

The Northland Regional Land Transport Strategy identifies eight key challenges that Northland will need to address over the next 30 years which are economic success, safety, climate change, route security, freight, connecting communities, better integration of land use and transport, and environmental effects.

More details about the issues raised in the Regional Land Transport Strategy are contained in Section Three.

### 2.3.2 Regional Policy Statement (RPS)

The RPS seeks to maintain and enhance the safety and efficiency of the region's transport network, while minimising adverse environmental effects. Council is directed to undertake investigations and/or include provisions in District plans, where appropriate, relating to the scale, sequence, timing and relative priority of transport facilities, including improvements to roading and rail networks to cater for future forest production.

Section 29 of the Regional Policy Statement details the issues, objectives and policies for transport. Issues include:

- *Exhaust emission*
- *Noise from road traffic*
- *Run off from street surfaces*
- *Dust from vehicles on unsealed roads*
- *Erosion from roading systems*
- *Maintenance of adequate transport systems*
- *Land use developments and subdivision adjacent to railways and roads can affect their safety and efficiency.*

The one objective for transport is:

- *Maintain and enhance the safety and efficiency of the region's transport network, while minimising adverse environmental effects.*

With the associated policies listed are:

- *To promote the development of an integrated transport network which makes efficient and environmentally sustainable use of resources*
- *To reduce conflicts between heavy vehicles and other users of the roading network*
- *To minimise the adverse effects of land use and subdivision activities on major transport facilities, particularly strategic and arterial roads and railways*
- *To ensure that safe and convenient vehicle access is available to all sites and adequate provision is made for on-site parking and loading of vehicles*
- *To promote appropriate buffer areas around ports and other major transport facilities for noise mitigation purposes*
- *To promote the incorporation of appropriate noise mitigation measures into the design of new road and rail facilities, especially those which pass through residential areas*
- *To encourage the use of noise reduction materials in the design of buildings*
- *To control, where appropriate, any adverse noise effects on the environment arising from the use of modes of transport*
- *To promote noise mitigation measures in port planning and operation and where appropriate noise performance standards in plans.*

The Northland Regional Council is currently in the process of reviewing the RPS. Transport is looked at within the infrastructure section. Within the 2010 Discussion Document, the issues raised include managing the adverse effects arising from subdivision, affordability of infrastructure, and equity of access. There are also options put forward ranging from 'status quo' (do nothing) to prioritising infrastructure and the land-use for it, incorporating assessment criteria and using the best practical option; and managing the demand for infrastructure. Whangarei District Council is awaiting the new RPS becoming operative before it will take be taken into consideration. Thus, more focus is placed on the operative RPS.

## **2.4 Local Implementation**

### **2.4.1 Transportation Activity Management Plan**

The purpose of the Transport Activity Management Plan is to outline the Council's long-term approach for the provision, maintenance and management of Whangarei District Council's transport activity over the next 10 years. The plan is an important input to the Long Term Plan, and considers the management activities over a 20 year profile. Its aim is to meet the Council's statutory obligations under the Local Government Act in a structured way, and in a manner that will assist Council to manage its transport activity in a more integrated, coordinated, effective and efficient manner. The scope of Council's Land Transport activity includes the assets and activities associated with roads, bridges, traffic management, footpaths, walking and cycle provision, lighting, retaining walls, drainage and providing transport options.

The need for Activity Management Plans for Council's major infrastructure and other major assets is an implied requirement of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Long Term Plan (LTP). Such Activity

Management Plans define agreed Levels of Service, and the expenditure required to maintain the agreed service levels for the period of the plan. Activity Management Planning is a management tool that provides the link between strategic planning and managing areas of Council's business and the desired outcomes of the community.

The Transportation Activity Management Plan currently used by Council is under review.

#### 2.4.2 Long Term Plan 2009-2019 (LTP)

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) directs local authorities to prepare community plans for Council expenditure over the next 10 years. The LTP promotes a sustainable development approach to strategic land use planning based on environmental, social, cultural and economic wellbeing. The 2009-2019 LTP sets out all the transport projects, funding and projected timeframes, and levels of service committed to over the period of the plan. The provision of an integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable 'land transport' system is a fundamental requirement of every District Council. Noted in the LTP is the level of service Council will provide for transportation, such as:

- *Council will provide a reliable, safe and accessible roading network such that residents and ratepayers are satisfied with the way traffic flows around the District, the cleanliness of streets and gutters, and with the safety of the roading network. All roads will have at least one lane available within 24 hours of a road closure, and the percentage of motor vehicle accidents involving contributing roading factors will remain at 9% or better. The seal roading network smoothness; index will be maintained at 78% or better*
- *Council will encourage sustainable transport options to increase the percentage of residents using alternative transport to more than 6%. It will ensure that roading complies 100% with Northland Regional Council resource consent requirements and that the percentage of roading projects completed on time and within budget is 95% or better.*

#### 2.4.3 Whangarei District Plan

Chapter 22 of the Operative Whangarei District Plan contains the Road Transport Objectives and Policies. The Chapter begins with a list of three significant issues:

- *Road transport activities and infrastructure can have adverse effects on the environment and community*
- *Land use activities can have adverse effects on the safety and efficiency of the roading network*
- *An acceptable public roading network is necessary to enable appropriate subdivision, use and development of land.*

An overview is given in the District plan discussing the interrelationship between land use activities and transport; an example given for the rural environment being forestry and associated transport demands. The private automobile is described as being essential to many people in the Whangarei District and the population is heavily dependent on it. The overview section describes the environmental impacts of road transport including noise, amenity effects and health and safety issues.

There are four objectives detailed in section 22.3 of the District plan. These are:

- *Establish and maintain a safe and efficient road transport network*
- *Avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of road transport activities on the surrounding environment*
- *Protect the road transport network from the adverse effects of adjacent land use, development or subdivision*
- *To ensure that the effects of roading infrastructure on landscape and ecological values are avoided, remedied or mitigated.*

There are eight policies to support the above objectives, the topics are:

- *road hierarchy*
- *road linkages*
- *new roads and intersections*
- *ecological, landscape and amenity values*
- *location of activities*
- *pedestrian safety*

- *parking and manoeuvring*
- *visual obstruction, and*
- *accessible parking.*

Chapter 22 continues with a section describing the methods and anticipated environmental outcomes.

The District Plan establishes a road hierarchy that identifies the function of the roads within the District. Land uses are assessed against the number of traffic movements and the impacts that this would have on the function of the road network. Some land uses, because of the traffic volumes they create, may be better directed to roads that are capable of accommodating increased levels of traffic rather than local roads.

The District Plan also refers to roading in Chapter 8 Subdivision and Development. Under significant issues, sporadic subdivision and ribbon development is raised due to the potential affects on the rural character and amenity from development occurring along transportation routes.

Roading is also given specific mention in the objective and policy, below:

#### **Objective 8.35 states**

*Subdivision and development that allows for the efficient and orderly provision of services and infrastructure, including the roading hierarchy and airport.*

#### **Policy 8.4.11 Traffic and Aircraft Noise**

*To ensure that control, design and location of subdivision and development are designed and located so as to avoid, remedy or mitigate the impact of traffic noise from existing state highways or arterial roads and the impact of aircraft noise on the health and amenity of present and future residents.*

#### **2.4.4 Rolling Review of the Operative District Plan**

Under the Resource Management Act, Council is required to monitor the effectiveness of the District Plan and complete a review of all District Plan provisions within any 10 year time period. Monitoring of the Whangarei District Council Operative District Plan has identified areas of inconsistency and ineffectiveness, and has examined what new issues have emerged since the District Plan was first drafted.

The District Plan will become a live document, as Council staff will review chapters of the plan every year, in what is called a “rolling review”. The rolling review examines whether the current objectives, policies and methods in the plan are consistent with legislation and are working the way the community needs and wants them to.

The review updates the District Plan to recognise the role different areas of the District will play in the District in the future, given the population changes and estimated economic growth over the next 10 years. This ties in with Council’s long-term planning project, Whangarei District Growth Strategy: Sustainable Futures 30/50.

#### **2.4.5 Iwi Management Plans**

Under Section 74(2A) of the Act, Council must take into account any relevant planning document recognised by an iwi authority and lodged with the territorial authority, to the extent that its content has a bearing on the resource management issues of the District. At present there are three such documents, being Te Iwi O Ngatiwai Environmental Policy Document (2007), Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust Board Environmental Plan (2007), and Ngati Hine Iwi Environmental Management Plan (2008).

These documents do not have any direct discussion about transport infrastructure or the roading network. However, the development of transport networks can have adverse effects on the environment which is an integral and essential part of Māoridom.

### **3 Current Issues**

#### **3.1 Whangarei District Growth Strategy: Sustainable Futures 30/50 and Background Papers**

To manage projected growth sustainably, Whangarei District Council has committed to formulating a long term sub-regional growth strategy. This project, entitled Sustainable Futures 30/50, sought to identify economic drivers of development, assess future growth potential, determine existing and potential land use patterns and assess and plan for infrastructural requirements for the District over a 30/50 year time frame. Environmental, social and cultural constraints on, and consequences of, anticipated development were identified and assessed. Early in the process, Council identified the need to consolidate growth, identify

areas for infill, create a transition from urban to rural, and provide a choice of living styles and locations. This research and analysis enables a long term, integrated, strategic planning programme to be developed, which will assist the sustainable development of the District over the next 50 years. Major infrastructural developments like roading network projects require long term strategic planning, and a 30 year planning horizon ties in with land transport strategies and plans formulated under the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

The population growth in Whangarei over the past ten years has resulted in scattered development throughout rural and coastal areas and widespread ribbon development along transport corridors. This development pattern has created a number of issues for Council. The first one detailed in the Growth Strategy is the difficulty Council has in providing for infrastructure in a cost effective manner when the location of future development is unknown or fragmented. Ribbon development on transport corridors is also of concern as there can be continuing detrimental effects on historic and cultural heritage such as stone walls and sites of significance to Maori.

Whangarei District Council's approach to these issues has traditionally been reactive, however there is now a focus on seeking to provide infrastructure on a more proactive basis. This will require quality planning decisions to ensure that the location of potential development is both suitable and cost-efficient.

In the Growth Strategy, 'Future One' describes the status quo and gives a clear indication of the current issues that the Whangarei District is facing:

- *The cost of developing and maintaining the roading network for development that is dispersed throughout the District*
- *The further from resources development occurs, the greater are the development costs. Topography often makes the job more challenging*
- *Providing infrastructure for development that is unregulated is not cost effective*
- *Providing and maintaining access to widely dispersed and low density developments is often compromised. Emergency response such as civil defence could become complicated*
- *Provision of alternative transport modes and infrastructure becomes limited due to economic viability*
- *The ability to effectively manage the impacts of roading development on the natural environment due to dispersed development*
- *Environmental risks to roading assets are increased due to increased development around rivers and the coast*
- *Ad hoc development may result in a failure to provide for the needs of the community.*

Subdivision and land development creates demand for both new roading and the upgrading of the existing roading network. The scattered distribution of recent development poses problems for the timely and cost-effective provision and maintenance of the District's roads network. It is difficult to plan for new roads and upgrades of existing roads if the location of future subdivision and development is unknown. In these circumstances the provision of roading infrastructure tends to be reactive rather than proactive. The efficient and timely provision of roading infrastructure requires integrated transport and land use planning. If development is not appropriately managed and provided for, it will have significant adverse impacts on the capacity of the existing transport network.

The Whangarei District Growth Strategy "Sustainable Futures 30/50" was adopted by Council in September 2010. Within this document, on page 54 is a table (shown below) that represents the 'Means of Travel to Work'; with 70% of people in the Whangarei District travelling to work by car. This is an increase of 18% from 2006. Point five per cent of the Whangarei District travelled to work by public transport. This very low percentage reflects the rural nature of the District and the lack of public transport system in some areas.

**Table 1 Main Means of Travel to Work**

	Whangarei District	Northland Region	New Zealand
Drive <sup>1</sup>	70%	71%	71%
Passenger	6%	6%	5%
Walked/Cycled <sup>2</sup>	6%	7%	9%
Public Transport <sup>3</sup>	0.5%	0.4%	5%
Work at home	11%	16%	10%
Other <sup>4</sup>	6%	8%	7%

Source: Whangarei District Council (2010)

Access to motor vehicles and household incomes are compared in the Growth Strategy. As income increases so does the proportion of people who have access to two or more motor vehicles. In 2006, 7% of households in the Whangarei District did not have access to a motor vehicle for private use, while, 23% of households in the rural residential areas of Whangarei have access to three or more vehicles, compared with 11% of urban households. Access to motor vehicles in the Whangarei District is relatively high, compared with the rest of New Zealand.

The residents of Whangarei's reliance on private vehicles could be due to dispersed population as a result of sporadic subdivision, the lack of a financially viable public transport system, and the high per centage of the District's population living in the rural areas.

### Other Types of Transport Infrastructure

#### Rail

The rail component of the transportation network for Northland is not 100% certain for the future. Kiwirail has published their 10 year 'The KiwiRail Turnaround Plan' which states that the North Auckland line (Auckland to Whangarei) will be reviewed from the beginning of 2011. This includes looking at the business that uses this rail line; and consultation with community, customers and staff.

However, the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) talks positively about the use of rail, does not see it as becoming a redundant transportation possibility, and also sees an opportunity for rail to provide an alternative to road freight. One of the stated priorities in the RLTS is to upgrade the North Auckland line.

The Growth Strategy makes the observation that Whangarei is dependent on the state highway network for moving goods in and out of the region, with less than 2% of the total freight volume in Northland (12.36 million tonnes) moved by the rail network in 2006/07. Usually, there are two return freight trains (one for logs and one for general freight) per weekday between Whangarei and Auckland.

#### Port

The Whangarei Harbour is currently home to two port facilities, Marsden Point and Portland Cement Terminal. There is the potential for more produce/product to be transported via sea however this potential is heavily dependent on construction of the Marsden Point Rail Link going ahead. Notwithstanding this, the Ports are located in the coastal environment and, while transport linkages (including ferries) remain important, there will be no further discussion on these matters in this particular document.

#### Alternative Transport

Whangarei City currently has a bus service subsidised by Northland Regional Council and provided by private operators. This service provides an alternative mode of transport for many urban areas of the city. With growth expected to occur in the rural and coastal areas, there may need to be more services provided, to ultimately link the rural growth nodes of Waipu, Hikurangi and Parua Bay.

Whangarei District Council has developed a Walking and Cycling Strategy which looks at advocating for alternative methods of transport. There are a number of routes in the rural environment which are used by cyclists, such as the Maungatapere area. However, many rural roads are considered to be unsafe for cycling as they are narrow, and are used heavy trucks.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Drove a Private Car, Truck or Van; Drove a Company Car, Truck or Van; Motor Cycle or Power Cycle

<sup>2</sup> Includes Bicycle; Walked or Jogged

<sup>3</sup> Includes Public Bus; Train

<sup>4</sup> Includes Other; Not Elsewhere Included

### 3.2 Stakeholder Consultation

Meetings with key stakeholders were held in December 2010 and January 2011. These have included meetings with Northland Regional Council, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, NZ Archaeological Association, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Winstone Aggregates, Quarry and Aggregate Association, Fonterra and New Zealand Transport Agency. The following points summarise those of relevance to transport in the rural environment:

#### Winstone Aggregates

Winstones transport significant material for Golden Bay Cement from their Otaika and Hikurangi quarry operations. Discussion was had around the possibility of a separate access way and how this would need to be addressed as part of a comprehensive strategic look into transport. The potential reverse sensitivity impacts from any development at Blue Goose and Toetoe Road would also need to be investigated. The metal collected at Winstone's sites is usually carted to where there are road works in truck and trailer units and dumped in piles to be spread by smaller units.

#### New Zealand Archaeological Association

New Zealand Archaeological Association stated that subdivision developments (including the construction of roads) have lead to the destruction of a number of archaeological and historic sites.

#### Fonterra

Milk tankers are running around the clock, doing day and night collections. Night collections in Whangarei District is a big issue. They are predominantly in the Whangarei area due to driving hours/health and safety. The collections further out of Whangarei (the longer trips) are made during the day. Non-dairying people living in the rural areas are often opposed to the tankers, due to noise and dust nuisance. There is also potential conflict with the morning bus service for schools, between the house of 7am and 8.30am. Access is another issue, with certain roads having access issues for the milk tankers doing collections.

There is less tanker traffic in the summer months as this is the dry season for farmers. However, in a dry summer water is transported into the Fonterra site from the Hikurangi dam. Contractors are also shifting bulk products, including the Waikato Palm Oil, butter milk and cream between factories.

Fonterra also uses the rail service which runs once a day to Auckland. The commuter trains operating in Auckland restrict the potential freight service being increased. Fonterra could also make more/better use of the port in the future.

#### New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA)

NZTA is very supportive of the consolidated approach indicated by 30/50 Growth Strategy, and believes Council should be following the 30 Year Transport Strategy for Northland as all the themes are in there. Consolidation is also a process supported by NZTA's transportation planners. NZTA suggests the Council should continue to limit access to and off the state highway (by subdivision and development).

NZTAs focus is fairly narrow in regards to the transport network, as its responsibility is solely on the state highway network. They believe it is very important to secure the integrity of the State Highway. This can be done through the consolidation of the rural residential nodes. The message needs to be relayed to developers that subdivision of land along State Highways will be resisted by NZTA..

NZTA wants to assist with economic development, whilst managing traffic effects. For example, if an industry wants to locate in a rural area, they must provide information about the possible traffic effects, while taking into consideration the surrounding community. Good locations for industries are available, for example, where there are no traffic impacts on the nearby intersections.

In regards to WDC's policy development, there is opportunity to reflect NZTA's wishes. Council needs to provide direction, for example, through the development of policy that focuses on land use and transport planning. Also discussed with NZTA was the use of structure plans. NZTA wants structure plans to go one step further and be linked through the District plan.

### 3.3 Regional Land Transport Strategy

As detailed previously in this background report, the Regional Land Transport Strategy for Northland details nine key challenges that the Northland Region is facing. The challenges of particular relevance to the Rural Development Strategy background paper are route security, freight, connecting communities, better

integration of land use and transport, environmental effects; and rural communities and the rural roading network, all of which are detailed briefly below.

### **Route Security**

The creation of new roads will need to give consideration to terrain and underlying geology, to reduce the possibility of road closure. Northland often experiences heavy rainfall events which lead to landslips in the region's steep and unstable areas. Council needs to develop and use information such as, flooding risks, soil classification, geology, and erosion prone land, before considering the development of new infrastructure in hazard prone area.

### **Freight**

Freight transported on Northland's roads is generated by:

- forestry
- dairy products
- livestock
- fertiliser
- horticultural produce
- aggregate, and
- other general freight.

The demand for freight transported via the roading network is expected to increase in the future. The transportation of forestry and aggregate products in particular, are both expected to increase. With rail presently being limited and its future uncertain, transferring freight from road to rail is not expected to occur in any significant measure in the near future..

### **Better integration of land use and transport**

Integrating land use and transportation planning is essential in the development of Whangarei's rural areas. The Regional Land Transport Strategy identifies the need for the strategy to be responsive to the changing needs of the community and the economy while at the same time being proactive to the needs of the community through integrated planning.

### **Environmental Effects**

- environmental effects created by the transportation network include impacts on:
- coastal processes
- historic and natural heritage sites
- landscape values, and
- ecological and habitat values.

The issues of:

- stormwater runoff from sealed areas such as roads, car parks, and service areas
- the spillage of stock effluent, pollutants and hazardous substances, all contribute to the contamination of water
- stormwater runoff can contain a variety of contaminants including heavy metals, silt, and oil
- Northland also has a very high per centage of unsealed roads that have associated high sediment run off and issues with dust nuisance.

The effects of:

- removal or alteration of vegetation with a subsequent loss of habitat
- introduction of noxious weeds and predators to natural habitats
- changes to natural drainage patterns and wetland system
- creation of a physical barrier to the movement of some wildlife
- effects on wildlife from the noise, lights, and movements of traffic

- the loss of, or damage to, historic buildings and sites is of concern during the construction, maintenance and operation of the land transport network
- the construction, maintenance, and operation of the land transport network can have adverse effects on culturally sensitive areas, including waahi tapu, urupa and coastal areas, and
- the road and rail networks are also known to have effects on the environment from the spread of pests, weeds, and litter within their operating corridors.

### Rural communities and the rural roading network

The RTLS identifies that the sealing of the rural roading network (seal extensions) will continue in the future. There are a number of adverse effects from unsealed roads which include effects on personal health and wellbeing, degradation of crops, native vegetation, animal health and water quality from silt runoff.

### 3.4 Information from other sources

There were a number of other issues raised in informal discussions, which are outlined below.

- **Roading standards**, including the construction and maintenance of roads are also an issue in rural areas. For example, should the cost be borne with the population that lives in these areas? The provision of roading access is for this rural population, therefore should the upkeep and development of the roading infrastructure be paid for by them. The future demand on rural roads, from tourism, logging and milk tankers also needs to be considered in the planning process.
- **Reverse sensitivity** is a specific topic addressed in the Rural Development Strategy. However, it is a concern in regards to transport, as transport activities in the rural environment, such as quarry trucks, or tankers can create adverse effects on nearby land and/or future residents. This issue is also raised in the District Plan under Chapter 8 Subdivision and Development, which states that a significant issue is the *'conflict between incompatible land use activities, including reverse sensitivity effects, can arise where new subdivision and development occur'*. Transportation noise is another issue that could be captured under 'reverse sensitivity' topic.
- **Accessibility** to the roading network is an issue when developments are created where there is not roading infrastructure nearby to cater for the residents of the development. This also includes the problem where the road may not be to a standard where emergency services can access the homes or communities.

## 4 Best Practice

### 4.1 Integrated Land Transport Planning

Today, there is a greater emphasis being placed on land use and transportation planning undertaken in conjunction with each other. This is called *'integrated land transport planning'* and is given significant importance in the Regional Land Transport Strategy and the Growth Strategy. NZTA identified in our consultation that they are supportive of this approach.

Integrated land transport planning looks at the management of adverse environmental effects on land use activities resulting from land transport systems. Transportation systems also need to be safeguarded from any adverse effects that may arise from land uses that could affect the provision of an integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport network.

#### Quality Planning website states:

- "...land transport provision in District plans should:
- integrate land use and transport planning
- allow for the development and management of integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable transportation systems
- give effect to the land transport provisions included in the relevant RPS
- have regard to national and regional transport strategies
- seek to address the environmental effects of transportation on land use and the effects of land use and transportation."

Planning for integrated land use and transport provides certainty for infrastructure provision, for example by identifying and protecting future routes for rail and road construction. It also enables the provision of future transport infrastructure to be 'future-proofed' against such eventualities as climate change, which could threaten coastal routes, especially those prone to flooding.

Integration of land use and transport planning is a fundamental concept that underpins the New Zealand Transport Strategy and the Land Transport Management Act. They both encourage a planned and coordinated approach to development to ensure land use decisions do not affect the integrity of the transport system. The RLTS encourages this approach, by directing transport planners to steer away from the traditional "predict and provide" approach and placing more emphasis on using network management and transportation demand information.

In order to better manage development, Quality Planning encourages that the following matters be covered in objectives, policies and possibly rules:

- *restricting the maximum or minimum number of lots that can be created in specific areas (**Note:** medium-high density development is more efficient than low density in terms of land use and public transport provision); access restrictions and the maintenance of a lower density of development are sometimes required to maintain the efficiency of important routes in specific areas*
- *encouraging development within close proximity to transport corridors and nodes*
- *reverse sensitivity*
- *promoting higher public transport use near transport nodes (e.g. allow medium-high density within 400-800m of a railway station or along a bus corridor; reduce carparking requirements near public transport nodes). The same should also be applied near shopping areas to encourage people to walk, cycle and to use public transport*
- *minimum access requirements for properties (Note: there are some innovative subdivisions that want to restrict vehicle access; rules should not be so restrictive as to prevent this from occurring)*
- *minimum roading and access standards*
- *the status of the access connection in respect of the road hierarchy*
- *the impact that development may have on the existing transport infrastructure and how this will be managed*
- *including a statement that NZTA be considered an affected party in relation to state highways, and that Transit NZ approval is required before any consent can be granted along any limited access road that it administers*
- *creating transport hubs at strategic locations in the rail and passenger transport network to act as major receivers and distributors and to provide important linkages. This can assist in promoting high-quality and intensive urban environments that support public transport modes. There is also potential for a scaled-down hub to serve rural communities.*

## 4.2 Case Law

Particular case law of relevance to the formulation of an integrated transport planning framework has been identified below:

*R & B Mulligan Ltd and Transit NZ v Whangarei DC, A96/2006 and J B Farms Ltd and Transit NZ v Dunedin CC, C140/2006* identified the importance of land use and transport integration in making land use decisions. It also placed considerable weight on the use of structure planning as a tool to resolve both District-wide and site-specific integration issues.

*Auckland Volcanic Cones Soc Inc v Transit NZ A203/02*, in relation to the effects of the SH20 Motorway extension on the amenity, landscape and integrity of the Mount Roskill volcanic cone.

*Middleton v Transit New Zealand W21/99*, which confirmed the designation for the Mana Esplanade reduced upgrade in Porirua and considered the effects on local residents and businesses, particularly in relation to noise.

*Transit New Zealand v Southland District Council C42/2006* relating to intersection improvements remote from the site. The Court found in this particular circumstance that it was inappropriate for Transit NZ to seek development contributions. This was in part because the District plan did not include provisions allowing financial contributions to be taken for this purpose.

*Transit New Zealand v Papakura District Council A061/06* relating to a change to the Papakura District Plan. The plan change allowed for the Hingaia Structure Plan area. The Court confirmed that it was reasonable for Transit NZ to seek contributions from developers in order to mitigate effects. It also strongly encouraged the parties to reach a financial agreement regarding the costs of the upgrade of the state highway interchange outside the RMA process.

[Source: *Quality Planning* ([www.qp.org.nz](http://www.qp.org.nz))]

## 5 Options for Whangarei District

### 5.1 Whangarei District Growth Strategy: Sustainable Futures 30/50

The Growth Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2010. After assessing a number of different growth strategy options, a consolidated future development pattern (future three) was chosen and adopted by Council (Attachment One). This will guide future decision making on infrastructure and the spatial arrangement of development across the District. The District Plan is one tool that will be used to implement the Growth Strategy. The information in the Growth Strategy considered relevant to transport was discussed in Section Three of this report.

In order to align with the Growth Strategy this Rural Development Strategy must focus on the outcomes sought by Future Three. Future three represents a five tier settlement pattern including the CBD, a satellite town and rural and coastal villages.

Many of the key issues are a result of the dispersed nature of subdivision that has occurred in the District. To address these issues it is essential for development to be concentrated in defined rural areas, as this will:

- increase the potential for managing the effects of cultural based conflict with roading developments
- enable Council to predict development (as it will be within identified nodes)
- improve the ability to provide and maintain access to isolated communities, emergency responses becomes easier
- improves the ability to provide alternative transport modes and infrastructure in an economic manner
- improve the ability to effectively manage the impacts of roading developments on the natural environment
- environmental risks from/to roading assets are reduced due to reduced development around rivers and the coast.

However, it is noted that concentrating development in existing defined nodes may require the development of less suitable and more expensive land.

As a result of the background research to the Growth Strategy, Whangarei District Council now has enough information to inform a review of the current objectives and policies in the District Plan. This information includes:

- population statistics, showing the number of people who live in the areas, and how the settlements are expected to increase or decrease in population.
- economics, where people are working and how they will get to work, and what business will be required.
- social infrastructure, how people will get to their friends, family, church and other leisure activities.
- the types of transport people and business will need to use.

### 5.2 What are the Resource Management Issues?

The transport network creates effects on the surrounding environment, both positive, and negative. While transportation improves accessibility and assists in economic viability, it can also adversely impact the surrounding area through the use of roads (noise, dust, fumes etc) and the construction of roads (air and water quality, noise, visual/landscape effects).

The following resource management issues relate to transportation in rural Whangarei:

- Council is expected to provide safe and efficient transportation infrastructure in rural areas that are experiencing growth

- dispersed and unplanned development affects Councils ability to effectively manage the fiscal and environmental impacts of roading development
- the rural community relies heavily on private motor vehicles for personal transport, and the roading network for freight transport. The lack of diversity in our transport system exposes us to risks from external factors outside our control e.g. rising petrol and diesel prices
- inappropriate or poorly located land use activities can have adverse effects on neighbours and the safety and efficiency of key transport links
- development pressure in areas subject to natural hazards increases the risk to roading assets. The effects of climate change will exacerbate these risks in some areas
- development contributions toward providing and maintaining the roading network is dispersed throughout the District.
- high traffic loads on unsealed roads can result in dust problems affecting the surrounding environment, including the health of existing residents.

### 5.3 Options for Implementing the Rural Development Strategy

The following options have been identified in relation to the provision of transportation networks and in consideration of the issues raised above:

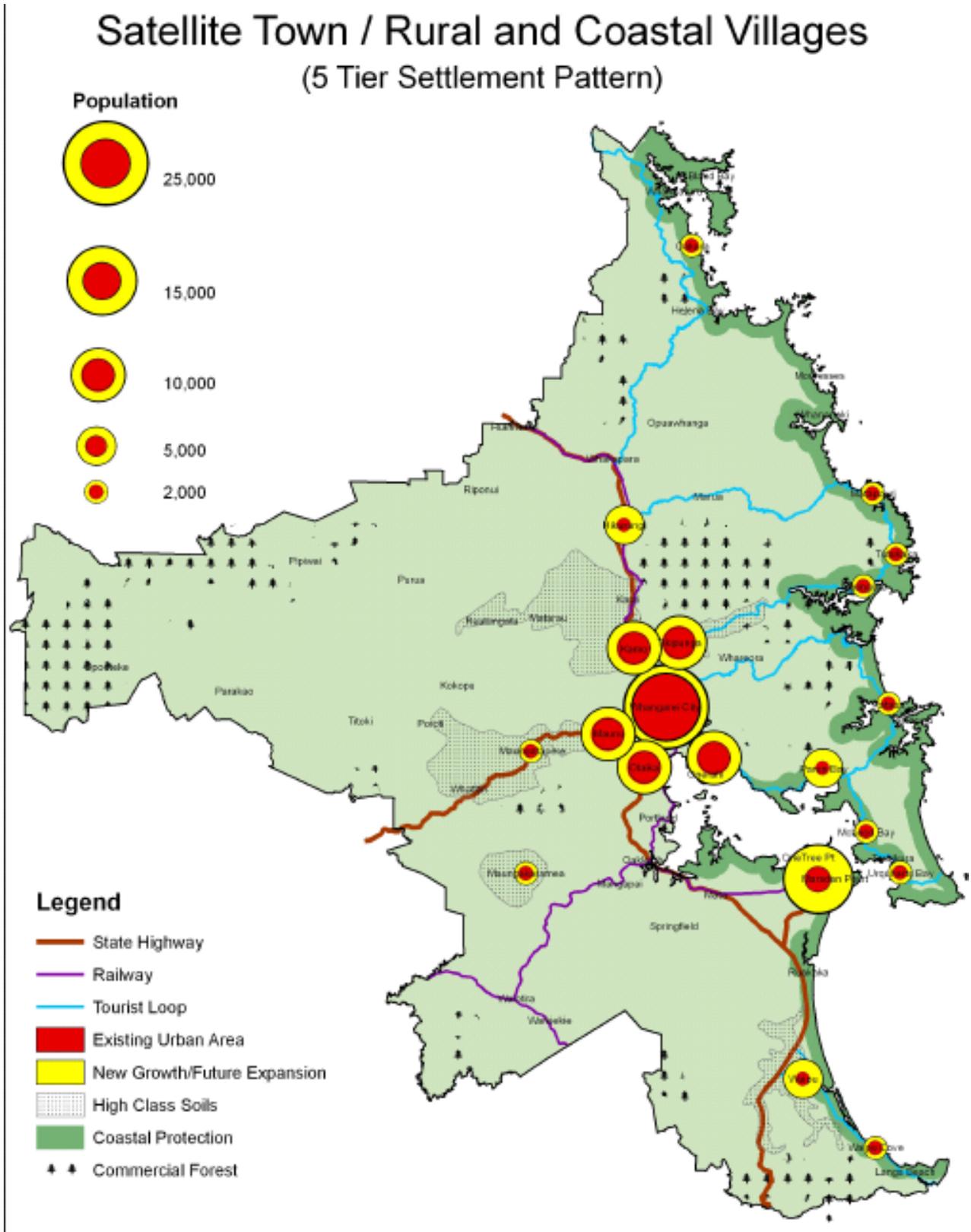
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the District Plan objectives and policies, to ensure appropriate and robust policy in support of the consolidated approach identified in the Growth Strategy. There is a requirement for the District Plan to ensure development occurs sustainably and that adverse effects are avoided or mitigated accordingly. Policy must give consideration to:
  - potential effects including, cumulative effects and reverse sensitivity
  - strategic issues, such as congestion, land transport noise, air quality and social effects
  - environmental issues, such as climate change and sea level rise.
- Protect transport routes, such as those required for logging trucks, milk tankers and tourism, by limiting development along these routes (Attachments Two & Three). Transportation corridors can be protected or created through designations, zoning provisions, indicative roads, and may also be identified through structure plans. Roding priorities need to balance accessibility and safety, with the provision of freight corridors to support economic development. In particular, Northland has a significant rural economy that relies on an effective rural road network
- Identify routes suitable for high productivity vehicles (over 44 tonnes).
- Emphasise the transportation management approach; which looks at identification, protection and enhancement of transportation corridors as the best means to mitigate the effects of future growth in travel demand. This could also include, investigating and supporting transport connections between significant population centres and centres of employment
- Integrate land use and transportation planning, as detailed in legislation and higher level strategies. Coordinating land use planning and infrastructure provisions is essential to successfully plan for community development in rural environments. This will require objectives and policies relating to both the potential positive and adverse effects of transportation and the effects of land use on the transportation system. Roding hierarchies can also be used to integrate the transport network with land use expectations
- Update the District Plan to accurately reflect the policies of the RLTS, RGS, RPS etc. These higher level policies must be given effect to in the District Plan
- Investigate linking transport routes and noise provisions, for example, high noise routes could have a 100 metre set back rule for new developments. This method would link the roading network and aggregate/logging industries. This could include an objective and/or policy that focuses on the potential adverse effects resulting from traffic noise and ensuring that noise-sensitive land uses are not located close to arterial roads or rail corridors
- Prepare structure plans to ensure that roading networks and land uses are integrated
- Investigate the potential use of financial contributions or development contributions to manage land uses on strategic transport routes

- Encourage walking and/or cycling through consolidated growth, to allow for shorter travel distances that can be covered by cycle or on foot
- Follow the demand management philosophy proposed in the RLTS, which includes identifying growth areas through District planning initiatives, and planning infrastructure to encourage development where it is desirable, sustainable and affordable
- Ensure that roads are upgraded to a satisfactory level to allow the efficient flow of traffic to and from locations and the state highway
- Ensure that there is an adequate funding commitment for transport infrastructure included in plan change and resource consent documentation
- Develop funding mechanisms with NRC, to follow on from present regional development funding to allow key forestry routes to be upgraded with minimal cost burden on ratepayers.

## 6 References/Sources

- Kula, Dominic. 2009. *Infrastructure & Services – Three Future Analysis*. Whangarei District Council. Whangarei.
- Northland Regional Council. 2010. *30 Year Transport Strategy for Northland*
- Northland Regional Council 1999, *Regional Policy Statement*
- Northland Regional Council 2009, *Regional Policy Statement Monitoring and Review Report*
- Northland Regional Council 2010, *New Regional Policy Statement Background Document*
- Northland Regional Council 2010, *New Regional Policy Statement Discussion Document*
- Quality Planning. [www.qp.org.nz](http://www.qp.org.nz). Sourced: 5 March 2011
- Whangarei District Council 2008, *Whangarei Growth Model*
- Whangarei District Council 2009, *Long Term Council Community Plan 2009 – 2019*
- Whangarei District Council 2010, *Whangarei District Growth Strategy, Sustainable Futures 30/50*
- Quality Planning - [www.qp.org.nz](http://www.qp.org.nz)

## Attachment 1 Satellite Town/Rural and Coastal Villages



## Attachment 2 Strategic Tourist Route – Northland



Source: 30 Year Transport Strategy, NRC, 2010

### Attachment 3 Strategic Freight Routes – Northland



Source: 30 Year Transport Strategy, NRC, 2010