

Transportation - Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

1.0.1 Transport is an integral part of Southland's economic, social, cultural and recreational framework. The internal and external linkages are vital to ensure that the transport network, be it road, rail, sea or air, best serves the community's needs.

1.0.2 In future there will be a greater need to be aware of society's impacts on the environment and recognise that, where possible, these impacts must at least be taken into account and at best be mitigated. National trends that have emerged in the transport sector in recent years are:

- carbon dioxide emissions increased by 64% between 1990 and 2006 and are expected to increase a further 30% by 2030 if nothing is done. Vehicle emissions in NZ are estimated to contribute to the death of 500 people annually. This is significantly higher than the road toll;
- New Zealand is experiencing significant growth in the land transport sector; the total annual kilometres travelled since 1995 has increased by 30%;
- most transport in NZ is now road based. NZ has one of the highest levels of vehicle ownership in the world;
- the predominant users of roads are people in cars, accounting for 80% of road traffic. Around 90% of people travelling to work in cars do so alone;
- the rate of reduction in the number of deaths from road crashes appears to be slowing while hospitalisations from road crashes have increased in recent years. Southland has one of the country's highest crash rates in relation to distance travelled;
- although public transport use has increased markedly from 2000, it is still low compared to the middle of the last century. Southland's Public Transport usage is currently trending downwards at around 5 to 7% annually;
- transport choices appear to be associated with more sedentary lifestyles, to the detriment of people's health and fitness.

1.0.3 On a local level Southland is dependent on an efficient land transport network to utilise and develop its resources and mobility and access for its people and communities. Nearly all people and a very large proportion of freight travel by road. The rail network is sparse with the main rail line from Dunedin to Bluff and a fragile secondary line from Invercargill to Ohai. Coastal shipping plays a small but significant part in the movement of Southland's freight.

- 1.0.4 Air transport is important in the Milford Sound/Te Anau area for servicing the tourist industry. It is vitally important for both Stewart Island residents and tourists as it is one of only two forms of access. The other is by sea.
- 1.0.5 Rural residential growth versus urban infill/consolidation is an issue that needs to be debated. Rural residential growth leads to a greater reliance on private cars due to the distance from homes to shops and schools and workplaces. Spread out and low density development makes the provision of public transport, walking and cycling difficult and, in most situations, uneconomic. Southland has one of the highest distances travelled by single occupant vehicles in NZ.
- 1.0.6 The only regular bus passenger transport service is in Invercargill City. Interest has been expressed in a wider public transport servicing, for example, Winton to Invercargill and Gore to Maitua.

2.0 Relevance of Existing RPS and District Plan Issues

2.1 *Regional Policy Statement*

2.1.1 The existing Regional Policy Statement generally identifies the issues that need to be addressed. These are:

- vehicle emissions
- global warming
- energy conservation
- hazardous materials
- urban design and
- public transport.

2.1.2 The issues are only identified in a generic form. As a consequence the desired outcome is not clear. Since the RPS was published in 1997, awareness has increased of what needs to be put in place to achieve the desired outcomes. In that regard the RPS could be strengthened to give direction on the benefits of good urban design and the implementation of travel demand management, which over time will result in an integrated and sustainable transport system.

2.2 *Southland District Plan*

2.2.1 In addition to the above issues Southland District Council is seeking the community's views on the following issues as they relate specifically to the district.

- land transport – road, rail, sea, public transport, walking, cycling etc
- rural residential vs urban consolidation
- impacts of land use change

- financial contributions
- land use change rules – permissive vs regulatory
- impacts of stock movement

2.2.2 These issues have been identified as matters of interest through the application of the current District Plan. As council prepares for the second generation of the district plan they need an understanding of the community's views on these matters and to what extent the Regional Policy Statement should be incorporated into this plan.

3.0 What has changed?

3.0.1 Since the RPS and Southland District Plan were adopted, a raft of legislation and policy has been published to help define the Government's expectation of what is an appropriate transport system and to attempt to counter the adverse effects of transportation. The key documents are the New Zealand Transport Strategy (2008) and the amended Land Transport Management Act (2003). These changes were targeted at better aligning the transport system to the requirements of the Resource Management Act. In other words, environmental sustainability, economic development, safety and personal security, and protecting and promoting public health are all factors that need to be considered. Other matters that need to be taken into account are the response to global warming, energy security and cost, affordable solutions, changing demands for the ageing population, land use/transport interaction and global terrorism. Simply put, the Government is looking for an integrated and sustainable transport system that takes into account the adverse impacts of that system. This is a simple objective that has substantial challenges if it is to be achieved.

3.0.2 Alongside these legislative changes, society has also become aware of global warming and its causes and potential impacts. Peak oil has re-emerged as a concern. Globalisation/rationalisation of industrial activities has continued, which means raw product is transported over greater distances and the measurement of carbon use (i.e. carbon footprint) is becoming accepted practice, leading to the community asking regulatory agencies for more environmentally responsible solutions to transport and for accountability for these solutions.

4.0 What are the issues now and for the future?

4.0.1 Although the RPS identifies what should be taken into account for an appropriate transport system, there no clear direction on implementing good transport planning practice. As a consequence the RPS' intent is not clearly reflected in the various district plans of the region. Development and change have tended to proceed in an ad-hoc fashion over the region without any real consideration being given to an efficient and effective transport system.

- 4.0.2 A lot of development requires access by vehicles for access and servicing. Although congestion is not an issue in Southland, the inefficient use of the transport system adds to the growing concern about vehicle emissions and road safety.
- 4.0.3 The current growth in rural residential developments requires an increased reliance on the private car with many trips being for a single occupant. This expansive development compared to infill/consolidation or integrated planning, means that it is uneconomic to provide public transport and in most cases it is not really practical for people to cycle or walk. An integrated planning approach, along with good urban design, will in time result in developments that rely less on single occupant vehicle trips and have more trips by walking, cycling and public transport. Integrated planning will also minimise the adverse effects of transportation on the community by encouraging compatible development adjacent to key transport routes.
- 4.0.4 An aspect of the transport system that needs to be carefully managed is that of ensuring that the community's need of an effective and efficient transport system is balanced against the adverse effects that a transport system can impose on an area's natural, cultural, historic and recreational values. The adverse effects can to a large degree be minimised by best practice planning; however, it is important that the network is not subjected to an excessively regulatory regime. This is especially so in situations where repairs are required to existing infrastructure that has been damaged by natural hazards, accidents etc. An example would be coastal erosion damaging existing roads, as has occurred on Stewart Island and around the south-west coast
- 4.0.5 Peak oil and global warming are significant issues to consider as we look to future transport systems. More environmentally friendly transport systems need to be implemented. These range from better urban design and travel demand management to more environmentally sustainable transport vehicles (road, rail, sea and air).
- 4.0.6 The demand for transportation growth in Southland is likely to come from expansion in dairying, forestry, coal mining, oil exploration and the development of the Awarua Industrial Zone. Nearly all the raw materials for these industries will be delivered by road. Although the community would like to see an increased use of rail, the high investment costs for new rail routes mean that this is unlikely. There is more potential for rail to be used for delivering the finished product and this is being done in some cases, but only where the industry is close to the rail network. Under current national policies, sea freight is unlikely to increase significantly.
- 4.0.7 Tourism is another key transport issue. The issues here are road crashes and the significant impact if one of the shorter travel time options/ routes between Queenstown and Milford is developed. There are proposals for a number of new transport links between Queenstown and Milford including options involving the construction of a monorail and a tunnel. If any of these proposals went ahead they would change the travel patterns and

volumes of traffic on existing key routes and would have implications for the various communities that service them. From a transport viewpoint, such changes would generally be beneficial, though the section of SH94 the Milford Road from the Lower Hollyford Valley to Milford will continue to be challenging to manage. There are also economic and social costs associated with a proposed new transportation route between Queenstown Milford that need to be considered.

- 4.0.8 In recent times there has been an increase in the number of cruise ships visiting Fiordland and Stewart Island. While the existing RPS has objectives and policies for managing the effects of this activity, the number of cruise ship visits has the potential to increase further and if an accident were to happen, the adverse effects could be very significant. High tourist numbers on these ships can place pressure on existing infrastructure if not appropriately managed and this is a concern of the Southland District Council.
- 4.0.9 Recreational walking and cycling by both locals and tourists are areas of potential growth and have health benefits. Though there are few dedicated walkways and cycleways in Southland, there are many potential off-road routes that could be developed. Links between Te Anau and Manapouri and from Invercargill to Bluff are just two examples.
- 4.0.10 User pays is an issue that requires clear direction. The existing Southland District Plan recognises that development can place additional pressure on infrastructure and notes that wherever possible these activities should contribute to the provision of facilities. Under the existing District Plan, the Council can require a financial contribution for several purposes, one of which is roading. However, permitted activities for example changing from pastoral to dairy farming or pastoral land use to forestry do not need resource consent and therefore cannot be required to make a financial contribution to facilities. An option that could be used in the next generation Southland District Plan could be to modify the existing permissive approach to land use change. Resource consent could be required where conversion from pastoral to dairy farming or forestry is proposed. This would enable the imposition of conditions such as financial contributions in relation to roading, which may enable contributions to be obtained which reflect additional demands imposed by such change on the roading network, rather than the general ratepayers having to fund the works required due to this additional demand.
- 4.0.11 In summary, the key transport issues are the retention of the existing transportation network and growth of rail and sea freight; road safety; tourism to Milford Sound (air, sea and road); connectivity to Stewart Island; location of industries and industry service areas; expansion of Public Transport services; adoption of urban design protocols; travel demand management and financial contributions.

5.0 Options for addressing the issues

- 5.0.1 Environment Southland and the Southland District Council are seeking guidance from the community on how they should proceed with updating the Regional Policy Statement and

the Southland District Plan as they set the overview and approach toward resource management in the region.

5.0.2 There are several possible approaches to address the region's transportation issues. They range from being very prescriptive on the outcomes required to specifying the practices to be adopted. The first, while it clearly sets out what outcomes are required, has limited flexibility to accommodate changes in community expectations over time. The second has a lot more flexibility but less definition of the outcomes and therefore is harder and possibly would take longer to achieve an acceptable outcome. In transportation many of the targets necessary for an integrated and sustainable system are not easily measured. Over the next two years Environment Southland will review and update the Regional Land Transport Strategy to bring it up to date with the Government's expectations set out in the NZ Transport Strategy (2008). This will regionalise the national targets and it would be beneficial to link it to the Regional Policy Statement. By March 2009 the Government is planning to develop an action plan that will identify accountabilities and timing of actions to implement the strategy.

5.0.3 Therefore on balance it is suggested that the updated RPS lean towards hard targets with a robust monitoring regime, backed up by the requirement that transportation issues are managed from best practice principles with a regional perspective.

6.0 Questions for Discussion

6.0.1 The following questions seek your guidance on the significance of transportation issues and how they should be managed.

6.1 *Regional Policy Statement*

1. Have we accurately interpreted and identified the transportation issues for the Southland transport network (air, road, rail and sea)? Are there other issues that should be recognised for the region? Alternatively, have the issues been overstated?
2. How important is it to provide strategic management of regional transport systems and urban design principles? Is it appropriate to reinforce good practice in urban design and transport systems? Should intensification of development be encouraged to enable better public transport services and more walking and cycling options? Would it be helpful if the RPS was more specific and directive in its requirements identifying priorities, responsibilities and timescales? If so, what would you expect to be included?
3. What is your ideal transport system in say 30 years time? What areas would you like to be given priority and addressed? – reduced emissions, environmentally friendly vehicles, less reliance on individual vehicles, safer modes etc.

4. Do you consider that public transport and maybe walking and cycling are areas that should be given priority? Should the existing public transport services be expanded from the Invercargill urban area? If so, what other areas should be included? How should public transport be funded within Southland? Describe the barriers to people using public transport, walking or cycling?
5. How might Southland's councils work together to ensure that the transport system is more integrated between modes, land use, and urban design/planning?

6.2 *Southland District Plan*

1. Currently rural landuse change from pastoral farming to dairying is placing significant pressure on roading infrastructure. Should a regulatory approach to rural landuse change be adopted to ensure that these landuse activities contribute financially towards roading infrastructure?
2. Should there be more of a focus on encouraging the use and development of alternative modes of transport from the roading network such as rail, cycling and walking?
3. Is the provision of public transport services something that the Southland District Council should examine further? Is there demand for public transport services and what transportation options would be viable, cost effective and realistic?
4. Would the development of a subsidy scheme for use of existing transport services currently provided by private transport operators be appropriate?
5. Should more be done to encourage infill development in existing towns rather than ongoing sprawl, so as to reduce travel demands?