

Submission

Te Tauāki Kaupapa Here a te Kawanatanga mō ngā Waka Whenua

Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024

PREPARED BY: Ashburton District Council
PO Box 94
ASHBURTON 7774

SUBMITTED TO: Te Manatū Waka
Ministry of Transport
via email to
gps@transport.govt.nz

Contact: Mayor Neil Brown
mayor@adc.govt.nz

-
1. Ashburton District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit feedback on the **Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024**. This submission has been prepared by the Council.
 2. Ashburton District (the District) is located in the middle of Canterbury, an hour's drive south of Christchurch and an hour's drive north of Timaru. More than 36,300¹ residents live in our district. Approximately 50% of our residents live in the main town of Ashburton, with the rest of our residents living rurally or in smaller towns or villages across the district.
 3. We support the direction of the Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024, and generally support the strategic priorities it outlines, namely maintaining and operating the system, increasing resilience, reducing emissions, safety, integrated freight system and sustainable urban and regional development. We are particularly supportive of the strategic priorities of maintaining and operating the system and increasing resilience.
 4. We endorse the submissions made by Local Government New Zealand, the Canterbury Mayoral Forum and Taituarā. This submission comments on areas of the Policy Statement that are particularly relevant to the Ashburton District.
 5. We note and welcome the ongoing mahi on critical infrastructure. Regardless of where communities are located and the infrastructure that meets their needs, every community has points of vulnerability in their transport network. It is critical that future investment in the land transport network ensures these points of vulnerability are mitigated and ideally eliminated.
 6. To this end, we are supportive of additional funding and financing being injected into the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) over 2024/25 – 2026/27.

Second Ashburton bridge

7. We are wholeheartedly supportive of the inclusion of the second Ashburton Bridge in the Strategic Investment programme. Council has been advocating for funding towards the second bridge for the more than 10 years, and is delighted that these efforts have finally been recognised. We are glad to

¹ Statistics New Zealand Estimated Population 30 June 2022

see the project is proposed as a Waka Kotahi State Highway project and is to be fully funded by government.

8. The existing Ashburton River bridge on State Highway One is a very real and pertinent reminder to us of the vulnerabilities of our critical infrastructure. The bridge has been closed on two separate occasions within the past 2 years because of high river flows, severe flooding and subsequent build-up of debris. This severed connections in the South Island, ground traffic flows to a halt and heightened concerns about just how vulnerable we are to the loss of infrastructure that we assume will always be accessible.
9. These events highlighted the importance of building a second bridge, not only to maintain connectivity for the Ashburton District community, but for the entire transport network along the east coast of Te Wai Pounamu. This is further accentuated by the acceleration of impacts because of climate change, causing more frequent flooding events of greater intensity. Based on the trigger levels in the Waka Kotahi Trigger Action Response Plan (TARP) for the Ashburton Bridge, we note that future flooding events will result in bridge closures much more frequently, further reducing connectivity.
10. We note the statement in the supporting documents relating to a second bridge (p.17) – “A second bridge alone would not resolve resilience issues, this would require a replacement of the SH1 bridge”. While we agree this is accurate, construction of a modern bridge built to much higher standards will contribute significantly to resilience in the face of more frequent flood events. It will maintain connectivity across the Ashburton River in the event of the SH1 bridge closure.
11. We also note the statements in the supporting documents that “Improvements along the corridor could include a new second river crossing providing improved pedestrian and cycling access” and “Work could start in 2024/25 for pre-implementation and property purchase for a second bridge, with construction starting in 2026/27 and taking two years to complete”.
12. In light of the above, we urge the GPS to take a much more positive stance on the bridge project and provide a guarantee of funding. We note the comments of Rangitata MP Jo Luxton in the Otago Daily Times (18 August 2023) confirming this – *“But Rangitata MP Jo Luxton cleared it up, confirming the government was committed to fully funding a second bridge and that it will be the Chalmers Avenue option, if that is what Waka Kotahi decides. “State Highway 1 is the South Island’s main freight route. Ensuring the resilience of this route is a no-brainer”, Luxton said.”*

Additional funding for road maintenance and the rural road network

13. Council is also strongly supportive of the additional funding and investment proposed for essential maintenance of our roads, with a proposed 34% increase over 2024 – 27 compared to the previous 2021 – 24 cycle.
14. Ashburton District has one of the largest roading networks in New Zealand. This supports an extensive agriculturally based economy which is the engine room of Ashburton District’s economy. Road funding remains continuously under pressure and is wholly inadequate in the light of increasing pressure on the network, significant cost escalation for roading work, contracts and increasing community expectations.
15. The draft Policy Statement (p.34) notes that for rural and regional communities, Government expects to develop new funding and asset management tools that better support councils to

manage land transport infrastructure. We strongly support this. As mentioned in the submission on behalf of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum, Canterbury has a very extensive roading network which means we need greater investment in ongoing maintenance and renewals, not to mention the additional impacts that the changing climate is having on the network.

16. We commend Government's intention to advancing the work on critical infrastructure. We are certain that events in Auckland, Coromandel, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay, as well as in Ashburton, will keep this work a close focus for Parliament's attention.

State Highway 1 upgrades

17. We also continue to support the upgrades of State Highway 1 between Christchurch and Ashburton. We are fully supportive of the proposed corridor study (supporting documents, page 21) to determine what is needed in future to support safety, resilience and growth.

General

18. We commend the draft Policy Statement for its recognition of the land transport needs of different users, such as rural communities and Māori. Council has often noted this in previous submissions to Government, as it is important that our rural roading network is resilient due to a lack of alternative routes in many areas.
19. Council also notes the recognition of Māori as partners under Te Tiriti in the draft Policy Statement, and strongly supports the commitment to ensure Māori aspirations for the transport system are better reflected at the strategic level.
20. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Draft Government Policy Statement on land transport. We look forward to the positive outcomes it will enable for the Ashburton District community.

Kā mihi,



Neil Brown
Mayor



Hamish Riach
Chief Executive