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Report to the Regional Land Transport Committee

By Councillor Terry McDavitt, Chair Regional Land Transport Committee

Review of Regional Land Transport Committee

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper discusses principles and proposals to enable the Regional Land Transport Committee to fulfil its roles more effectively next triennium.
- 1.2 The process proposed is to circulate the paper before the June 2001 RLTC meeting (to enable agency discussion), to arrive at some consensus at the June RLTC meeting, and then to develop a final paper from this consensus for adoption at the final meeting of the RLTC this triennium, in September.
- 1.3 It is suggested a Transport Forum be held in December 2001 (at the start of the new triennium) in lieu of a RLTC meeting. The forum would review the Regional Land Transport Strategy process prior to the next review and would form part of the introduction process for new RLTC members.

2. Background

Several considerations suggest a review of RLTC membership and processes:

- 2.1 There is longstanding concern that the RLTC is too large and unwieldy, leading to lengthy meetings and processes. (It should be noted that 19 of the current membership of 25 are suggested in the legislation so there may only be marginal discretion available here.)
- 2.2 There is concern amongst some Mayors that communication of RLTC agenda and discussion is less effective than it should be – in particular that they are "left out of the loop". This has led to Mayoral discussion of regional transport issues taking place separately from the RLTC.

- 2.3 There is concern both at the Committee and among Mayors that the monitoring role of the RLTC is not being carried out systematically; it works well in respect of Crown agencies for example but less effectively in respect of local authorities. This issue assumes larger importance in the minds of Mayors in respect of urban rail futures – they see RLTC as the main monitoring channel for TLA's rail performance.
- 2.4 Both TLA's and Regional Councillors voice questions around the apparent conflict between the Regional Council's other roles and RLTC's roles. The RLTC acts as regional transport planner and monitor but the Regional Council is also public transport purchaser (hence an agent in regional transport) and environmental policy maker (hence involved in regulatory processes affecting transport). It is felt steps should be taken to more clearly separate and identify the various Regional Council roles.
- 2.5 The transition period between successive Councils is the most appropriate time to review and process any changes. The Regional Council itself normally begins such a review around September of election year.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The RLTS is the **region's strategy** not simply the Regional Council's. To be effective it needs to be 'owned' by the bulk of the region's transport agencies. This is less likely to the extent that it is seen as mainly the Regional Council's strategy. Some separation of RLTC/RLTS from Regional Council is indicated. This would enable the Regional Council too to pursue its other roles.
- 3.2 The Strategy is well developed and technically robust but an effective strategy process does not end there. Robust **implementation and monitoring** processes are also necessary. Notwithstanding the limits placed on implementation by the national decision-making framework the strategy still needs drivers working towards it implementation and monitoring. Implementation is mainly in the hands of agents (including TLA's and the Regional Council) but TLA agents currently do not report their activity, progress, or blockages. The modelling process used in developing the RLTS requires ongoing monitoring. Models date and unmeasured indicators are redundant. The legislative requirement for Annual Reporting on the RLTS provides an appropriate vehicle for monitoring implementation and should be upgraded in the RLTC's agenda.
- 3.3 As 'the only channel for community input into transport decisionmaking' (LGNZ description of RLTS/RLTC mechanism) the transport strategy process needs to connect much better with the community directly – ie. not just transport agents but also users and neighbours. Communication activity around the RLTS needs to be improved.
- 3.4 At **national** level a number of policy directions are being formulated that will or could have implications for the RLTS – as well as a National Land Transport Strategy and a revised Road Safety Strategy, these include an Energy Efficiency Strategy and a Climate Change Strategy. There needs to be a better connection between the RLTC and national policy advisors.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 During the initial period of the RLTC the Chair of the RLTC was a separate person from the Chair of the Regional Passenger Transport Committee. The present alleged confusion roles can be partially addressed by *appointing the next Chair of the RLTC as a separate person from the Chair of the Regional Passenger Transport Committee*. Such separation would underline the different roles being executed. For servicing and accountability reasons the Chair of the RLTC should still be a regional councillor, for the RLTC formal reporting (and budgeting) is done via Wellington Regional Council.
- ... 4.2 The *number of regional councillors on the RLTC should be reduced*. The current number swells the Committee unnecessarily and underlines the impression of Regional Council dominance. The public transport advocacy/monitoring role already has the Passenger Transport Committee Chair, a user representative and technical influence on the RLTC. Further, the number in Wellington is out of alignment with other regional practice (**see Attachment 1**). It is suggested that the number be reduced by appointing in addition to the Chair of the RLTC, only the Chair of the Regional Council, the Chair of the Passenger Transport Committee and the Chair of the Environment Committee (4) with their deputies nominated as stand-ins. An alternative would be to appoint one representative of each regional constituency (5). There seems no reason to appoint any more than 5 regional councillors.
- 4.3 Servicing and resourcing of the RLTC should remain in the Regional Council for reasons of accountability (the ratepayer share of planning costs is spread regionally) and efficiency/capability. The procedure by which the *RLTC reports formally to Regional Council must therefore remain*
- 4.4 The RLTC suffers from a lack of a national perspective. The need for a national perspective will be underlined further by the development of a National Land Transport Strategy and some guidance on the degree to which other government strategies (climate change? regional development?) would be appreciated. It is noted that some other regions have a MOT representative on the RLTC and it is proposed *that a MOT representative be invited to the RLTC table*.
- 4.5 The TLA connection with the RLTC is problematic and needs to be strengthened. It is suggested that the *TLA representative should normally be the Chair of the relevant Committee of Council, or the Mayor* and that either may deputise for the other. Further strengthening of connections is addressed below.
- 4.6 The only other current representation on the RLTC that is truly discretionary is the Regional Chamber of Commerce. This representation was established principally around the development of a new RLTS, to recognise that the Chamber was a genuine regional interest group and to recognise that regional economic development, while an objective of the RLTS, was not otherwise represented. These arguments are still powerful, but perhaps the proposed transport forum mechanism would suffice. Others who occasionally express interest in the RLTC table are Tranz Rail, and bus and Coach Operators. As public transport operators, their interest is represented through the Passenger Transport Committee. They have ordinary participation rights should they feel the need to exercise them. It is suggested that their interests would be accommodated through the transport forum mechanism. For guidance of discussion the relevant legislation is appended (**Attachment 2**)

4.7 To remind RLTC members of the ongoing nature of their various roles it is proposed that the *RLTC agenda be divided into three sections*:

- (1) Developing the RLTS
- (2) Implementing the RLTS
- (3) Monitoring the RLTS

Agency reports come under "implementing" and would normally include Transit New Zealand, Land Transport Safety Authority or Police, Transfund or Ministry of Transport, Wellington Regional Council and one TLA, (ie. 5 per meeting). It is suggested Transfund and MOT would alternate their reports and similarly LTSA and Police.

4.8 It is proposed to revive the practice of *rotating venues around the corridors* (Western, Wellington, Hutt, Wairarapa), to invite the hosting locality to present its report on its RLTS related activity since the last meeting at that location and to arrange an on-site tour of 1-2 significant transport issues chosen by the host. This was a previous practice, it was first phased down and is now discontinued completely. Initially it is suggested that half of the meetings be at rotated venues. A programme would be drawn up early in the triennium. Convenience is a powerful argument against rotation and the fact that a core of RLTC members were veterans who had seen it all before added weight to that argument. But most RLTC members, next triennium will not be veterans in that sense, and the intermediate period has seen a loss of RLTC familiarity with local transport issues – and just as importantly a loss of local connection with the RLTC. Tying the TLA implementation report to the local visit will reduce the reporting burden on each TLA (and heighten the significance of the actual report) and the 'absorbing' burden on RLTC members. Relevant Councillors of the host authority could attend (but not speak) at the RLTC meeting in their area.

4.9 Practice has established 4 RLTC meetings a year. It is not proposed to change that, but it is proposed to *revive Transport Forums and to hold up to two annually*, in approximately June (to deliver the Annual Report) and approximately December. Forums enable the wider community interested in transport issues (interest groups, non-RLTC Councillors with an interest in transport and officers of agencies) to mingle with RLTC members, enable relevant national and international speakers to attend and be quizzed, enable working group sessions to take place and/or enable focus on a particular policy, issue or corridor. They normally take half a day and take place at a 'neutral' venue. Forums are strongly oriented around development of the RLTS – especially the pre-public consultation stages and the introduction or discussion of relevant national policy – the 2002/03 period will therefore see a need for forums anyway.

4.10 As a step towards Transport Forums it is proposed to *re-establish a 'forum mailing list'* of invitees to each forum. Such a list already exists but needs updating. Suggested inclusions would be regular "public participants", principal transport consultants, transport and related officers of agents (Crown, Regional Council, TLA's), Councillors on the relevant TLA or Regional Council Committee, iwi representatives, representatives of operators, representatives of "transport-affected interest groups" (eg. Regional Economic Development Agency, Chamber of Commerce, Port and Airport, Tourism) relevant government agencies (MfE, EECA), some community representatives. The forum and forum mailing list is seen as a primary vehicle for pre-public consultation in development of the RLTS.

- 4.11 The *RLTC communications process needs attention*. Formal order papers have statutory timelines but agendas should be sent to the Mayor and CEO of each TLA and also the RLTC representative and principal transport officer. Where possible and appropriate **principal papers** can be circulated separately up to a month in advance, as in recent practice, the intention being to assist the 'representative' function of members.
- 4.12 Induction needs to emphasise that *TLA reps have a responsibility to their TLA to report back formally* from the RLTC and that assistance is available to expedite that. For example, the recent innovation of a **Chair's Report** on the RLTC meeting should be continued and it is suggested that it be attached to (or form the basis of) any report to the next relevant TLA committee. The Chair's report could be circulated more widely to the 'forum mailing list'.
- 4.13 An *introduction process* should be planned for members of the next RLTC. It can cover familiarisation with legislation and the current RLTS, the RLTS procedure including reporting back, the roles of the RLTC, current developments (NLTS etc.) and the programme for the triennium.

5. **Recommendations**

- (1) *That the report be received.*
- (2) *That the Regional Land Transport Committee endorse the Principles of this report (Section 3).*
- (3) *That Proposals (Section 4) lie on the table for resolution at the next meeting of the Regional Land Transport Committee.*
- (4) *That representatives of agencies respond in writing to the Proposals by 15 August 2001.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1 : Composition of Regional Land Transport Committee

Attachment 2 : Legislation Excerpt