



24 August 2016

## Collaboration set to improve South Island transport

The South Island's transport network is set to improve after the chairs of the Regional Transport Committees all agreed on what was important this week.

The formation of the South Island Regional Transport Committee Chairs Group will allow for a more strategic approach to planning the transport network right across the South Island.

With a clear purpose of significantly improving transport outcomes in the South Island through collaboration and integration, the Group is now taking steps to influence central government policy and drive change across the network.

"Collaborative planning initiatives are not new to the transport sector in the South Island, with several regions undertaking joint planning when developing their latest Regional Land Transport Plans," said Councillor Terry Sloan, Chair of the Marlborough Regional Transport Committee.

"The success of these initiatives, and the recognition that journeys do not stop at regional boundaries, has led to a desire to look at new ways to plan and invest for the collective benefit of the South Island transport network. This teamwork will create greater efficiencies and aligned transport programmes to progress improvements on those critical transport journeys and routes across the South Island."

The immediate objective for the Group is to assist the Government to develop the next Government Policy Statement on Transport.

Chair of the West Coast Regional Transport Committee councillor Andrew Robb said, "This statement will set the priorities for investment in the transport network, so it is important that it allows us to respond to the issues that are affecting the network now and into the future."

"In particular, the Government's funding approach needs to be sufficiently flexible to allow us to implement the right modal solution, whether it be road, rail, sea and air, to ensure we remain globally competitive."

This initiative recognises that while roads connect our towns and districts, freight and tourism journeys do not stop at the borders of our districts and regions.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment predicts the New Zealand tourism industry will boom from \$9.6B to \$16.1B by 2022<sup>1</sup>. The South Island plays a critical role in attracting, and catering, to the international visitor market. The transport network, and particularly its roads, provide the means for tourists to experience the very best towns, rivers, mountains, and landscapes the country has to offer.

Coupled with this, the South Island is a powerhouse in the primary production sector, generating goods for the export market. As a result, the NZ Transport Agency forecasts freight movement to increase by an extra 47.7 million tonnes in 2042 compared with 2012. The greatest growth is anticipated to occur between 2012 and 2027<sup>2</sup>.

“Tourism and freight opportunities are at the forefront of our minds as we set out to achieve better outcomes for all transport users,” Sloan said.

“In-depth research to understand the critical tourism and freight journeys and what changes are coming, will help ensure that regional transport committees across the South Island make the right investment decisions to maximise economic growth into the future. We will also be in a better position to respond to future changes in technology.”

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<sup>1</sup> West Coast Tourism Fact Book p.3 - International Visitor Survey – MBIE  
<http://www.westcoast.co.nz/about/statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> Draft South Island Freight Plan, p.3 (2015) <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/draft-south-island-freight-plan/docs/draft-south-island-freight-plan.pdf>