

Attn: GPS Policy team
Ministry of Transport
P.O Box 3175
WELLINGTON 6140

Tēnā koe

Re: Submission on the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on this consultation document.

Regional Public Health serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and as a service is part of the Hutt Valley District Health Board.

We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population, with a particular focus on children, Māori and working with primary care organisations. Our staff includes a range of occupations such as medical officers of health, public health advisors, health protection officers, public health nurses, and public health analysts.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. The contact point for this submission is:

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Kind regards

Dr Stephen Palmer
Medical Officer of Health

Peter Gush
Service Manager

Regional Public Health (RPH) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS). While the health system and health care services have a major impact on the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders, a wide range of factors contribute to the health of communities and individuals. The World Health Organization defines the social determinants of health as ‘the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.’¹ Government decisions on transport have a significant effect on the environment in which we live and therefore the health and wellbeing of people.

Transportation touches on all aspects of our lives, contributing to how and where we live, how we access social and economic opportunities and how we move around our environment. RPH supports the development of a transport system that puts the health and wellbeing of people at the centre of all transport policy and implementation decisions.

RPH supports the strategic priority areas and the shift in funding away from new roads towards safer roads and more active and public transport. RPH also endorses the GPS’s supporting priority –‘The Environment’, however we recommend that further attention be given to the harmful effects of transport related emissions and the effects of transport on climate change. **RPH supports** the strategic priority ‘Value for Money’; however, we recommend that the GPS make more explicit the NZTA’s appraisal system for funding investments. We also recommend the incorporation of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a key component of all cost benefit analysis in transport investment.

Safety - Support

RPH supports the adoption of ‘safety’ as a key strategic priority for the GPS.

RPH commends the Ministry of Transport’s shift in focus towards a safe transport system that does not seek to merely reduce the “road toll” and road related serious injury, but also considers broader harms to health and potential health gains related to the land transport system.

RPH supports the development of a new road safety strategy that makes walking and cycling safer. Significant health gains such as lower levels of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiorespiratory disease² can be made through increased levels of physical activity from the uptake of active modes of transport. **RPH supports** the increase of funding for walking and cycling infrastructure, safety improvements and promotion.

Safety – Recommendations

- **RPH supports** section 2.2.1: 32 and recommends the public health scope be widened to also explore the co- benefits of safer streets for active modes of travel.

¹ http://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/

² <https://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2018/vol-131-no-1472-23-march-2018/7529>

Access - Support

RPH supports the GPS' statement: "Transport investment and land use should therefore prioritise the ability of people and goods to access opportunities and markets. This recognises that greater mobility is a means to achieve better access, but not an end goal in itself".

Access to social and economic opportunities are crucial to physical and mental wellbeing. **RPH supports** the development of a transport system that integrates land use and transport planning in order to create safe, liveable and connected cities and regions.

RPH supports the increase of funding to public transport. Efficient, affordable and well-connected public transport systems are vital to providing access to services and opportunities especially for those who are transport disadvantaged.

Increasing access to public transport also facilitates health gains by:

- Reducing exposure to greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution.
- Increases in incidental active travel between transport connections.
- Reducing the number of cars on the roads, making it safer to walk and cycle.

RPH supports the GPS' 'Access Objective: A land transport system that enables transport choice and access'. Currently, our transport system is car-centric, requiring people to have access to private motor vehicles. The development of a transport system that provides choice in transport mode increases access to vital services such as health care and varied food environments which support the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

RPH is pleased to see the inclusion of the rapid transit and transitional rail activity classes.

Access – Recommendations

- Given our current, car-centric transport system, increases in fuel excises and road user charges will effect vulnerable people and the transport disadvantaged. **RPH recommends** that appropriate measures are taken to improve public transport affordability such as the proposed 'green transport card'.
- Increased funding to transitional rail particularly in the regions, where rail provides vital connections to other regions and cities.

The Environment

RPH endorses the inclusion of 'The Environment' as an area of focus for the GPS, however we recommend that 'The Environment' be shifted to a key strategic priority area, alongside 'safety' and 'access'.

The Environment – Support

RPH commends the Ministry of Transport's acknowledgement of the significant environmental and public health impacts of transport related emissions and the correlated health harms and health

benefits of transport. **RPH supports** the encouragement of modal shift away from single occupant vehicles to public and active transport modes.

RPH is also pleased to see the Government will support the uptake of low emission vehicles including electric cars, buses, trains and bikes. **RPH supports** the GPS' intention to improve transport planning that takes environmental impacts such as air, noise and water pollution into account. **RPH supports** the Ministry of Transport's recognition that a whole of system approach must be taken in order to effectively mitigate the significant contribution that transport systems make to climate change. A 2014 New Zealand Medical Journal Special Article: 'Health and equity impacts of climate change in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and the health gains from climate action' states: Climate change poses an urgent threat to human health, wellbeing, and health equity globally, and in Aotearoa-New Zealand.³ **RPH supports** the GPS' intention to address the effects of the transport system on climate change.

The Environment – Recommendations

- **RPH recommends** reprioritisation of 'The Environment' to sit alongside 'Safety' and 'Access' as a key strategic priority. In order to achieve the GPS' objective: A land transport system that reduces the adverse effects on the climate, local environment and public health, 'The Environment' must be recognised as a key priority to creating a sustainable, safe and equitable transport system.

Value for Money – Support

RPH supports the GPS' intention to "deliver value for money". **RPH supports** the GPS' objective of delivering the right infrastructure and services to the right level at the best cost.

Value for Money – Recommendations

- **RPH recommends** the GPS' explicitly outlines the NZTA's investment appraisal system used to assess projects. Defining 'value' when seeking "value for money", must include the health and wellbeing of people at its centre in order to achieve the stated goal of: improved performance for the land transport system.
- **RPH strongly urges** the Ministry of Transport to incorporate Health Impact Assessment as central components of its appraisal system for transport projects.
- **RPH strongly urges** the Ministry of Transport to incorporate environmental and climate impacts as central components of its appraisal system for transport projects.

³ <http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2014/vol-127-no-1406/6366>