



THE NEW ZEALAND
AUTOMOBILE
ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

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Draft Annual Plan 2014/2015
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NZAA Submission on the Draft Annual Plan 2014/2015

The New Zealand Automobile Association (“NZAA”) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Auckland Council on its Draft Annual Plan 2014/2015 (“Draft Plan”).

The NZAA is an incorporated society with 1.4 million members, including nearly 300,000 Auckland members. Originally founded in 1903 as an automobile users’ advocacy group, today it represents the interests of road users who collectively pay over \$2 billion in taxes each year through fuel excise, road user charges, registration fees, ACC levies, and GST. NZAA’s advocacy role in Auckland is focused on articulating the voice of the reasonable motorist on key transport infrastructure issues, and ensuring that the decisions over which projects to build and how to pay are shaped by value-for-money and principles of equity. Our goal is a safe, sustainable, and strategically aligned transport network that provides greater mobility options for our members and for all Aucklanders.

The NZAA’s advocacy and policy work mainly focuses on protecting the freedom of choice and rights of motorists, keeping the cost of motoring fair and reasonable, and enhancing the safety of all road users.

Transport Capital Projects

NZAA supports the increase in transport expenditure in the Draft Plan. The budgeted \$887 million for transport capital projects, which makes up approximately 50% of the total capital projects budget, will be a positive step towards improving transport infrastructure in the city.

While we broadly support the transport infrastructure programme, we are concerned that it lacks strategic clarity. Transport infrastructure development is typically perceived in terms of a series of individual projects, rather than as investment in a citywide strategic asset. The benefits and costs of projects have often not been well communicated or understood, and we believe that this is standing in the way of a constructive, informed appraisal of the options that are on the table. Providing greater clarity will ensure a higher degree of public buy-in and smoother project delivery.

Rail Investment

We note the extensive planned investment in rail (\$377 million) in EMU procurement, and property purchases and route protection for the City Rail Link (CRL). We support Auckland Council’s protection of the CRL corridor and the acquisition of land required for the project. Route protection provides

greater public certainty, and land will never be as cheap as it currently is, regardless of when construction commences.

However, we believe that timing for investment in the project should be guided by clear demand signals, and certainty around what the project will mean for Aucklanders in terms of costs and benefits (including traffic congestion relief).

Bus and ferry investment

NZAA considers the bus network to be the most important public transport mode in Auckland due to its superior cost-efficiencies and “reach” when compared against the rail network. If Auckland Council wishes to boost greater public transport patronage, greater investment in bus infrastructure and quality of service is essential.

Plans for new and upgraded bus interchanges combined with the development of the Auckland Frequent Service Network are therefore a step in the right direction.

In our submission for the 2013/2014 Annual Plan, we raised concerns about the lack of strategy and investment in the ferry network around Auckland. We are pleased to see that the draft plan allocates \$4 million to upgrade the terminal at Half Moon Bay. This terminal is important for providing an alternative transport option to connect the eastern suburbs of Auckland to the CBD as well as to Waiheke Island.

Roading investment

NZAA welcomes the continued significant investment in the roading network. Projects like the Albany Highway Upgrade and Dominion Road corridor upgrade will provide greater multi-modal connectivity for the network.

NZAA supports the progress made on the AMETI project, with \$177 million spent in the last three years to improve the transport network for the eastern suburbs. However, as we have advocated in previous submissions and to Auckland Transport officials, there appears to be little synchronising of the AMETI project and the current East/West Link investigations. The focus should be on providing a strategic vision of how AMETI will dovetail with greater connectivity between State Highways 1 and 20 as part of the East/West Link.

Footpath investment

NZAA supports the investment in footpath renewal that the Draft Plan proposes. We note that the budget has increased from \$36 million in the 2013/2014 Annual Plan to \$45 million. A safe and reliable footpath network enhances scope for alternative modes of transportation. We would like to stress also that footpaths that are renewed, should be those that require renewal.

Operating Expenses

We note that transport expenses are approximately \$1.014 billion or 31% of the draft total operational expenses budget. As with the transport capital projects we support the priority of transport in the Draft Plan.

Targets

Passenger transport patronage

NZAA is concerned that these stated targets do not align with recent patronage data or with research completed by both Deloitte and the Ministry of Transport. The inconsistency between different patronage forecasts is hindering constructive debate around projects such as CRL, and greater clarity is essential before large and strategically important investment decisions are made.

Walking and cycling targets

We support Auckland Council's desire to improve the share of active modes, given the benefits to congestion, public health and the environment. Our members support initiatives such as making safer connected cycle routes by using empty berms and footpaths as well as more pedestrian and cycle bridges over busy roads. These initiatives may assist in an uptake of active mode usage.

The Planning Transport Interface

NZAA broadly supports the integrated "One System" approach that the Draft Plan takes. We can see from the transport capital projects chosen that the goal is to better manage and plan the use of the transport network with land use development. The Parnell Train Station development combined with the (draft) Unitary Plan, which seeks to develop Parnell into a town centre, is one example of this integration.

We are concerned, however, that the Draft Plan fails to identify the relationship between transport capital projects and the plans that sit below the Auckland Plan. How do relevant transport capital projects dovetail with the City Centre Masterplan or the Waterfront Plan, for example? Which projects will support the progression of these plans? NZAA would like to see these linkages, as they give longer-term certainty to the funding of projects and their rationale.

Safety

NZAA is supportive of the emphasis that Auckland Council has placed on improving the safety of the transport system in the Draft Plan. Creating a safer transport network for all users goes to the heart of the NZAA's advocacy role. We would like to see further information in the Draft Plan as to the projects that make up the safety and minor improvements activities.

Yours sincerely

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