



THE NEW ZEALAND
AUTOMOBILE
ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

Unitary Plan Submission Team
Auckland Council
Freepost Authority 237170
Private Bag 92300
Auckland 1142

Level 16
99 Albert Street
Auckland 1010
PO Box 5
Shortland Street
Auckland 1140
T. +64 9 966 2522
M. +64 27 510 2817
E. avoutratzis@aa.co.nz

NZAA Submission on the Draft Unitary Plan

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

Approach

Our submission on the Unitary Plan draws heavily on findings from our Auckland Transport Funding Survey conducted at the end of 2013. The survey touches on transport, intensification and housing affordability, three critical areas within the Unitary Plan. Our intention is to help inform the development of the Unitary Plan by providing insights into the views of our Auckland members on these issues.

Auckland Transport Funding Survey

The survey’s objective was to examine the specific cost-benefit trade-offs based on the outcomes of the Consensus Building Group. Its goal was to inform further participation in planning and prioritising projects in Auckland.

To represent our 300,000 members in the Auckland region, NZAA randomly selected 14,320 members aged between 18-80 years old to partake in an online survey. Of the members selected, we obtained 949 useable survey responses, representing a margin of error of 3.2%. We were unable to capture all the demographic information the survey asked for, as 200 respondents did not complete the survey. 747 members, of which 42% were female and 58% male completed the survey. Approximately 52% were aged over 55 and 48% between 18-54 years of age. Members were located across the Auckland region, but there was a stronger representation from members in the north compared to the south.

Transport

Survey Results

Our members are deeply concerned about the impact transport has on their cost of living, particularly our younger members and those located in South Auckland. Congestion and quality public transport services ranked second and third (after affordable housing) as the issues most affecting member's perceptions of livability; regardless of age, gender or financial confidence.

Our members are generally in favor of "big ticket" infrastructure projects such as the Central Rail Link, additional Waitamata Harbour Crossing, AMETI and the East-West Link, which are detailed in the Auckland Plan and 1.C.3.3 Transport (4) (i-v) of the Unitary Plan. However, support is dependent on how Auckland Council intends to fund these expensive projects. Members are concerned about their ability to pay for transport infrastructure. Nearly a quarter of respondents suggested cutting the transport projects to fit the existing funding arrangements. While 68% preferred a user pays approach to funding (increases to fuel tax, tolling and congestion charge), only 8% supported a uniform increase to rates across Auckland.

Planning alignment

NZAA notes and supports the high-level strategic alignment between the Unitary Plan and the Integrated Transport Plan ("ITP"), specifically around the Four-Staged Intervention that the ITP proposes. However, we would like to see greater alignment between the Unitary Plan and the sub-plans that sit below the Auckland Plan, such as the City Centre Masterplan and the Waterfront Plan. Greater alignment will give longer-term certainty and continuity between the Unitary Plan, the sub-plans and the projects Auckland Council will fund in the future.

1. C.3.3. Transport Objectives

We welcome the objectives of 1.C.3.3 Transport that focus on providing an effective, efficient and safe transport system that facilitates choice and enables accessibility. These objectives align well with the priorities of our members and the objectives of our advocacy role.

Modifying Provision 1.C.3.3 Transport (9) (c)

One area of priority for our organisation is safe access to highways and arterial roads. The current wording of provision 1.C.3.3 Transport (9) (c) does not spell out the road hierarchy or alternative modes of transport. NZAA would like to see the following changes to the provision:

managing activities along freight routes, other heavily trafficked roads, rail lines, or adjacent to ports and airports so that they do not compromise the effective, efficient and safe operation of these routes or give rise to reverse sensitivity effects

To (changes in bold):

*managing activities along freight routes, other **road hierarchy**, rail lines, **bus lanes**, **cycle paths**, **footpaths** or adjacent to ports and airports so that they do not compromise the effective, efficient and safe operation of these routes or give rise to reverse sensitivity effects*

From a safety perspective, we believe that there should be a rationalisation of access points and a stronger focus on well-designed and safe intersections. We believe that more use should be made of

median separation, feeder roads and specific turning facilities as well as providing limited turning options at intersections to promote and support a safe transport system.

Reverse Sensitivity

We also endorse the emphasis that the Unitary Plan places on seeking to dampen reverse sensitivity effects on all types of infrastructure and spatial planning. For NZAA, an important concern is that reverse sensitivity effects do not put users of the transport system at a safety risk.

Intensification

Survey results

We note the aspirational intensification targets of the Auckland Plan and the provisions of the Unitary Plan that seek to achieve these. While intensification is a spatial planning issue, and not strictly within the ambit of our organisation, we recognise the impact, it will have on the development of a safe and reliable multi-modal transport network. In general, our members appear comfortable with increased intensification. Breaking this down, the survey drew the following conclusions:

- Members in areas more likely to be intensified (e.g. North Shore, CBD and Eastern Bays) are supportive of it
- Members in areas where intensification is less likely (e.g. South Auckland and rural based communities) are not as supportive
- Our more well-off members support intensification.

Unintended Consequences of Intensification

We would like to know what consideration Auckland Council has given to the unintended consequences of intensification. For instance, there is an assumption that intensification of an area will lead to an increase in public transport patronage, and therefore a reduction in congestion. Evidence suggests, however, that people continue to use their cars as the key mode of transport, including commuting. Consequently, there is in fact an increase in congestion, due to the increased number of cars on the network.

Also, as intensification is a key driver in the increase of land prices, particularly in CBD areas, the impact on construction costs for all transport projects within the Rural Urban Boundary needs to be considered. To what extent has Auckland Council factored this into cost estimates for the “big ticket” projects like the Central Rail Link or additional Waitamata Harbour Crossing? Has this also been factored into smaller-scale projects?

Housing Affordability

Survey Results

All members, regardless of their financial confidence rated housing affordability as their highest living cost concern. Geographically, our members in South Auckland and in suburbs such as Onehunga, Penrose and Mount Wellington expressed most concern about the lack of housing affordability.

Housing Affordability and Funding for Transport Infrastructure

As a social issue, housing affordability has previously been an issue that NZAA has chosen not to advocate on. That said there is a link between housing affordability and the willingness and ability of Aucklanders to help fund infrastructure projects in the future. NZAA would like to know to what extent Auckland Council has considered the impact on housing affordability of any decisions to limit the outward growth of Auckland and, in turn, the impact this will have on transport infrastructure funding options in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Voutratzis
NZAA Senior Advisor-Infrastructure