

**AA**

**2026**

# **Election Calls**



**Less Politics  
Smarter Spending  
Safer Roads**



Transport shapes how, when and what we can do on any given day.

Every election is a chance to improve New Zealand's transport system.

In this booklet, the AA sets out five Election Calls for the next Government.

These are practical changes, shaped by our Members' views, aimed at making transport safer, more efficient and more affordable over time.

Over the last decade, AA Election Calls have helped deliver significant increases in road maintenance funding, more roadside drug and alcohol testing, speed camera signage, devices that stop drunk drivers being able to start their car and a scheme to environmentally dispose of old tyres.

Our 2026 Election Calls have been built on surveys of our Members, plus views from our community-based AA District Councillors and respond to the funding and delivery challenges transport currently faces in New Zealand.

They set out a focused package of actions that can improve safety, protect the quality of our transport infrastructure and make the system work better for everyone - no matter who forms the next Government.

**Simon Douglas**

AA Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer

**AA**

## 5 ways the Government can make transport better.

**1 Put maintenance first. Always.**

**2 No more stop-go on big transport projects.**

**3 Belts on. Phones down.**

**4 Reward drivers doing the right thing.**

**5 Make it easy to get to public transport.**

**1**

## Put maintenance first. Always.



### The opportunity

New Zealand is trying to catch-up on a backlog of essential maintenance work from years of under-funding.

There has been a welcome increase in road maintenance investment in recent years but this will need to be sustained for some time after a decade-and-a-half where roads have not had the maintenance needed to stay fit-for-purpose and safe.

Road quality (and the quality and frequency of repairs) is consistently the highest concern across our Members nationwide and the evidence is clear: the quality of the road surface has a real impact on safety.

Even the best drivers can lose control if the road surface they are driving on doesn't provide the vehicle with good grip.



### The call

Spending on maintenance and renewals should be treated as the top budgeting priority in transport. It should have the first call on funding.

Regular, well-timed maintenance is significantly more cost-effective than letting assets deteriorate and addressing issues sporadically.

Over time, regular maintenance delivers better value-for-money and frees up revenue for upgrades or other transport investments.

The AA expects authorities to deliver a year-on-year increase in the lane kilometres of resurfacing and renewals delivered, with performance over the next three years surpassing the levels last reached in 2010/11.

# 2

## No more stop-go on big transport projects.



### The opportunity

For decades, major transport projects have been started, stopped, or changed as governments come and go. This has caused delays, blown-out costs and wasted money.

Much of our transport infrastructure is old and needs upgrading to handle growth, safety risks and extreme weather. Roads and public transport are also often argued about as if we must choose one or the other. We need both working together as one system.

The cost of inaction is real. Recent research in New Zealand has shown how big transport projects can reduce crashes and congestion. When projects stall or are cancelled, New Zealanders miss out on these benefits.

### The call

The next Government must put an end to the stop-start approach to big transport projects.

New Zealand needs a long-term programme of major transport projects that are delivered no matter who is in power. This programme must cover both roads and public transport and treat them as parts of one connected system.

With long-term agreement, New Zealand can build better, safer transport that lasts.

Without long-term agreement, we will keep wasting money, delaying progress and putting safety and resilience at risk.

We need to rely more on independent analysis to decide which transport projects go ahead, rather than short-term political choices. This would help ensure the right projects are prioritised based on need, value, what people will actually use and what the country can afford.

# 3

## Belts on. Phones down.



### The opportunity

Far too many people continue to use their phones while driving, putting themselves and others at completely unnecessary risk.

The largest study carried out in New Zealand has shown that at any given moment, around 1 in 60 drivers is using a phone. This is not a mistake or momentary lapse – drivers must actively choose to pick up their phones and every distracted driver on the road increases the chances that someone will be too slow to react to something unexpected. When many drivers get away with this behaviour, it can also become normalised, encouraging others to do the same. Research consistently shows that drivers are around four times more likely to crash when using a phone.

Seatbelt use is generally high in New Zealand but there is still a concerning group of people who fail to buckle up. In recent years about 1 in 3 of the drivers who die in crashes are not wearing a seatbelt and it is estimated about 25 lives a year could be saved simply through everyone buckling up.

### The call

Reducing phone use by drivers and increasing seatbelt compliance must be key road safety priorities for authorities.

The AA wants the introduction of safety cameras that can detect drivers who are using their phones or not wearing seatbelts. This technology is already in widespread use in Australia.

Improving detection and enforcement, combined with strong public awareness campaigns and appropriate penalties are essential to changing driver behaviour. Together these measures can deliver meaningful and sustained improvements in road safety.

# 4

## Reward drivers doing the right thing.



### The opportunity

Household budgets are under pressure and transport costs keep rising. At the same time, AA Members are clear that improving road safety must remain a priority.

These aren't competing goals — they go hand in hand. Safer drivers impose fewer costs on the system, so it makes sense to reward that behaviour.

Clear incentives can help shift behaviour over time, encouraging more focus by drivers on sticking to the rules and keeping their skills up to date.



### The call

Introduce a 'rewards for safety' programme that links lower costs to safer driving and ongoing learning.

- Reduced annual vehicle registration fees for drivers who go 12 months without any safety-related infringements.
- Discounted driver licence renewals for those who complete an online refresher around road rules and driving behaviour.

These measures would encourage safer habits and ongoing learning, with the added bonus of some modest cost relief to responsible drivers.

The discounts could be funded from the revenue from transport fines — recycling penalties into positive incentives that support safer driving.

# 5

## Make it easy to get to public transport.



### The opportunity

Large parts of our cities are still beyond the reach of reliable, frequent public transport.

While ongoing investment is needed as cities grow, it will never be possible to bring public transport to everyone's doorstep.

That means the journey to and from stations matters. For many people, the first and last leg is the deciding factor in whether public transport is a realistic option — or not.

Improving access extends the reach of high-quality public transport to more people — without needing to build entirely new lines.



### The call

The AA wants the next Government to prioritise funding to improve access to major public transport hubs.

This includes:

- Park-and-ride facilities, including safe and efficient pick-up and drop-off areas
- Better connections between public transport services
- Improved walking and cycling access, including for e-scooters
- Support for ridesharing and emerging mobility options

These would maximise the value of existing investment in trains and busways and can ease pressure on congested local roads.



**The New Zealand Automobile Association (Incorporated)**

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