

**Before a Panel of Independent Hearing Commissioners
appointed by Porirua City Council**

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

IN THE MATTER OF the hearing of submissions on the Variation 1 to the Proposed Porirua
District Plan

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF AKHYLESH BABU KESHABOINA FOR WAKA KOTAHI NZ
TRANSPORT AGENCY**

Dated: 24 February 2023

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 My full name is Akhylesh Babu Keshaboina. I am the Regional Manager, Systems Design, for the Wellington region and Top of the South Island at Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (**Waka Kotahi**) and am presenting evidence on behalf of the organisation.
- 1.2 My evidence outlines the statutory functions and obligations of Waka Kotahi and some of the aspects of the wider transport planning system, such as the Government Policy Statement.
- 1.3 Waka Kotahi is responsible for contributing to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system in the public interest. This includes managing the state highway network, shared paths and funding councils to manage the local road network. The location and nature of development strongly influences the demand for travel and subsequent infrastructure and operational investment by Waka Kotahi.
- 1.4 My evidence is in support of the Waka Kotahi submission on Variation 1 to the Proposed Porirua District Plan (PDP) in respect to the DEV – NG – Northern Growth Development Area Chapter (**Northern Growth Development Area chapter**). The purpose of my evidence is to outline the Waka Kotahi role in maintaining a safe, efficient and effective land transport network, describe the existing and future transport environment and outline the outcomes Waka Kotahi seeks in relation to the Northern Growth Development Area chapter.
- 1.5 My evidence is also in support of the Waka Kotahi submission on the need for an overarching transport strategy to be included in the Northern Growth Development Area chapter (referred to as submission number OS81.7 and OS81.9¹).
- 1.6 To briefly recap, Waka Kotahi submitted that an overarching transport strategy for the Northern Growth Area would be highly beneficial as it could identify how development would be staged and how land use and transport will be integrated between each area. Having such a strategy in place will:
 - (a) Ensure development of the Northern Growth Development Area is informed by national and regional integrated transport strategies / policies on integrated transport planning and climate change; and

¹ Section 42A Report, Officer's Report: Part B – Northern Growth Development Area, 10 February 2023, paragraph 343, Page 50

(b) Ensure the NPS-UD integrated transport planning directives are given effect to in the provisions of the Northern Growth Development Area chapter.

1.7 Mr Blackmore expands further on the reasons why having an integrated transport strategy in place prior to detailed design progressing on the stages proposed for the Northern Growth Development Area would be of benefit.

1.8 Ms Kirkbride's evidence proposes mechanisms by which an overarching transport strategy could be practically given effect to within the Northern Growth Development Area chapter. I support Ms Kirkbride's recommendations.

2. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

2.1 My full name is Akhylesh Babu Keshaboina. I am the Regional Manager, System Design, for the Wellington region and Top of the South Island at Waka Kotahi. In this role I am responsible for leading and supporting the design of the integrated transport system with our partners, such as local councils, in the Lower North Island and Upper South Island areas. I have been in this specific role since 2020. However, I've held various transport planning roles at Waka Kotahi since 2014.

2.2 As Regional Manager, System Design, I help lead the Waka Kotahi relationship in the Wellington region with iwi and local and central government, to bring spatial and integrated transport planning ambitions for the region to life. I am accountable for ensuring the transport system is designed right from the start. This involves working with our partners to ensure land use and development is integrated with the current and future transport network needs and delivers the appropriate outcomes for the region and New Zealand.

2.3 While I am not giving expert evidence, for completeness I have the following qualifications and experience relevant to my evidence

(a) ME (Civil) transport engineering and planning from University of Canterbury and B Civil ENG from Karnatak University

(b) I have led and continue to lead at a political, strategic and systems thinking level which includes stakeholder management, local government collaboration and procurement of large packages of works.

2.4 I am authorised to give evidence on behalf of Waka Kotahi.

3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 The purpose of my evidence is to outline the Waka Kotahi role in maintaining a safe, efficient and effective land transport network, describe the existing and future transport environment and outline the outcomes Waka Kotahi seeks in relation to the Northern Growth Development Area chapter.
- 3.2 This evidence takes into account Waka Kotahi objectives and statutory obligations, as well as prior experience with integrated land use and transport planning and funding across the region.
- 3.3 My evidence addresses the following matters:
- (a) Waka Kotahi statutory obligations and the transport framework;
 - (b) Key national and regional transport strategies, including the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (**NPS-UD**); and
 - (c) Planning for growth in the region and the effect of growth on Waka Kotahi operations and investment.

4. STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS AND TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Waka Kotahi is a Crown entity whose purpose is to deliver transport solutions for New Zealand. This includes investing:
- (a) In public transport, local roads, pedestrian and cycle networks;
 - (b) In the construction and operation of the state highway network on behalf of the government;² and
 - (c) In integration of the network including with the rail network.
- 4.2 The functions and operating principles relevant to Waka Kotahi are set out in the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (**LTMA**) and the Government Rounding Powers Act 1989 (**GRPA**).

² Government Rounding Powers Act 1989, section 61 provides Waka Kotahi with the sole power of control for all purposes, including construction and maintenance, of all state highways and has the power to do all things necessary to construct and maintain in good repair any state highway.

4.3 The Waka Kotahi statutory objective under the LTMA is:

To undertake its function in a way that contributes to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest.³

4.4 A "Land transport system" is defined broadly in the LTMA as including "*transport on land by any means*" and "*coastal shipping and associated infrastructure*".⁴ The relevant functions include:⁵

- (a) to contribute to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest...
- (c) to manage the state highway system, including planning, funding, design, supervision, construction, and maintenance and operations, in accordance with this Act and the Government Roding Powers Act 1989...

4.5 In meeting its objectives and functions, Waka Kotahi is required under section 96(1) of the LTMA to exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility and use its revenue in a manner that seeks value for money.⁶ This means Waka Kotahi aims to provide environmentally and socially responsible outcomes in particular transport projects, within the overall funding allocation.

4.6 The above functions reflect a general duty to ensure that all forms of land transport (not just state highways) operate in an effective and integrated manner. For this reason, Waka Kotahi is an approved requiring authority not only for the construction and operation (including the maintenance, improvement, enhancement, expansion, realignment and alteration) of state highways, but also cycleways and shared paths.⁷ It also means that Waka Kotahi has an interest in how local roads (including walking and cycling networks and public transport facilities) are managed and funded. As a consequence, it has a duty to ensure district plans and changes to district plans are not inconsistent (at minimum) with the environmental and social responsibility outcomes it seeks.

5. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Transport Outcomes Framework

5.1 The Transport Outcomes Framework (2020)⁸ identifies that the purpose of the transport system is to improve people's wellbeing, and the liveability of places. The Framework

³ Land Transport Management Act 2003, section 94.

⁴ Section 5.

⁵ Section 95.

⁶ Section 96(1)(a) and (1)(b).

⁷ Resource Management (Approval of Transit New Zealand as Requiring Authority) Notice 1994; Resource Management (Approval of NZ Transport Agency as a Requiring Authority) Notice 2015.

⁸ See: [Transport Outcomes Framework | Ministry of Transport](#)

identifies five outcome areas to contribute to this purpose, these been: inclusive access; healthy and safe people; economic prosperity; resilience and security and environmental sustainability. With regards to the last outcome, the Framework defines this outcome to be a transport system that transitions to net zero carbon emissions, and maintains or improves biodiversity, water quality and air quality.

Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

- 5.2 Waka Kotahi also must give effect to the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (**GPS**). The GPS is required under the LTMA and outlines the Government's strategy to guide land transport investment over the next ten years.
- 5.3 The four strategic priorities of the current GPS 2021 are safety, better travel options, climate change and improving freight connections. A key theme of the GPS is integrating land use, transport planning and delivery. There is also a focus on investment in “providing people with better travel options to access places for earning, learning, and participating in society”.
- 5.4 The Government has recently released its strategic priorities for the next GPS (2024).⁹ It has signalled that the new GPS will have an overarching focus on emission reductions. This is to ensure that emissions reduction / impacts are considered in all investment decisions, and the government’s overall transport investment programme must be consistent with the Government’s target of reducing transport emissions by 41 percent (from 2019 levels) by 2035, as outlined in the Emissions Reduction Plan (**ERP**) that I discussed further below. It is also proposed that the new GPS’s overarching focus be supported by five strategic priorities: sustainable urban development; safety; integrated freight system; maintaining and operating the system and resilience.
- 5.5 Land use planning has a significant impact on transport policy, infrastructure and services provision, and vice versa. When development is completed, it has a long-term impact on the transport network. Changes in land use can affect demand for travel, creating both pressures and opportunities for investment in transport infrastructure and services, or for demand management. Likewise, changes in transport can affect land use in both positive and negative ways. As such, well considered integrated transport planning for developments such as the Northern Growth Development Area is vital for delivering on the current GPS priorities for the transport network.

Emissions Reduction Plan

⁹ [Government Policy Statement on land transport 2024 | Ministry of Transport](#). The current GPS 2021 applies until the end of this 2021-24 NLTP period (June 30 2024).

- 5.6 The Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 (Zero Carbon Act) provides a framework by which New Zealand can develop and implement clear and stable climate change policies.
- 5.7 A key change introduced by the Zero Carbon Act is the requirement for Government to set greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, including specific transport reduction targets, establish a system of emissions budgets and develop and implement policies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- 5.8 Transport is one of New Zealand’s largest sources of emissions, so decarbonising transport will be critical to the overall success of our collective response to the climate change imperative. The transport chapter of the first ERP¹⁰ (released in 2022) sets out a comprehensive and ambitious approach to reducing emissions, including for transport.
- 5.9 Through the ERP, the Government has set four (national) transport targets that will support these focus areas and align with achieving the sector sub-targets for transport. This is approximately equivalent to a 41 per cent reduction in transport emissions by 2035 from 2019 levels. The national targets are as follows:
- a) Target 1 – Reduce total kilometres travelled by the light fleet by 20 per cent by 2035 through improved urban form and providing better travel options, particularly in our largest cities;
 - b) Target 2 – Increase zero-emissions vehicles to 30 per cent of the light fleet by 2035;
 - c) Target 3 – Reduce emissions from freight transport by 35 per cent by 2035; and
 - d) Target 4 – Reduce the emissions intensity of transport fuel by 10 per cent by 2035.
- 5.10 Waka Kotahi is responsible for some of the actions under the ERP, including some of the targets related to reducing reliance on cars and supporting people to walk, cycle and use public transport. Reaching these targets is closely dependent on ensuring well-functioning urban areas that support better use of infrastructure and more liveable cities to reduce the number and distance of trips that people need to make. Effective integrated transport planning and stakeholder collaboration for new developments such as the Northern Growth Development Area will be crucial for achievement of these targets.
- 5.11 Sub-national targets are in the process of being developed for Tier 1 urban areas, including Wellington. These targets are expected to be ready by the end of 2023. While these targets are currently unknown, it is likely that ‘business as usual’ (or a do-

¹⁰ See: [Aotearoa New Zealand's first emissions reduction plan \(environment.govt.nz\)](https://environment.govt.nz)

minimum) approaches to integrated transport planning will be insufficient to meet the national and pending regional targets. Hence, amending the Northern Growth Development Area chapter to require an overarching transport strategy to be developed to inform the detailed development of the Northern Growth Development Area will no doubt help to achieve better integrated planning outcomes and to reduce future regional emissions.

National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020

5.12 As documented in Variation 1, the NPS-UD came into force in 2020. This policy statement provides national direction on objectives and policies for urban development under the Resource Management Act 1991, and I note that territorial authorities, such as, Porirua City Council must give effect to these objectives and policies. With regards to the role of integrated transport planning, the NPS-UD has specific objectives and policies that promote integrated transport planning in order to achieve good urban development outcomes.

6. REGIONAL CONTEXT

Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021

6.1 The Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021's 30-year vision and strategic objectives are supported by three "Ten-year headline targets".¹¹ The Plan describes the purpose of these targets as "*indicators of the scale of change sought in the short to medium-term to move towards our vision and strategic objectives.*" The targets are as follows:

- (a) Carbon emissions 35 percent reduction in transport generated carbon emissions by 2030;
- (b) Mode share 40 percent increase in active travel and public transport mode share by 2030; and
- (c) Safety 40 percent reduction in deaths and serious injuries on our roads by 2030.

6.2 To achieve these targets, and the pending VKT regional target for Wellington, is going to require a concerted "integrated transport planning effort" not only at a regional level, but also at a local level including for new subdivisions / land developments.

¹¹ Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021, 2021, page 9. See [Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 \(gwrc.govt.nz\)](https://www.wgtn.govt.nz/transport/wellington-regional-land-transport-plan-2021)

Wellington Regional Growth Framework

- 6.3 Regional spatial planning has taken place through the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC), a joint committee established in 2021 under the Local Government Act 2002, of which the mayor of Porirua City Council is a voting member of, and Waka Kotahi is an observer in.
- 6.4 The WRLC has produced the WRGF, which is a non-statutory regional spatial plan for the Wellington Region and Horowhenua District. The WRGF provides an agreed regional direction for growth and investment.
- 6.5 WRGF predicts that the Wellington-Horowhenua region's population will grow by a further 200,000 over the next 30 years, and about 100,000 new jobs will be created over this same time period.¹² For completeness, for Porirua City, I note that the Porirua Growth Strategy 2048 medium growth scenario predicts population to grow from 58,000 to the mid 60,000s by 2048 (the high growth scenario would see Porirua's population grow to the mid 80,000s by 2048).¹³
- 6.6 To plan for growth, the WRGF has adopted a corridor view of future development areas. Porirua City, including the Porirua Northern Growth Area, forms part of the Western Growth Corridor (Tawa to Levin) where over 40 per cent of housing growth is expected to occur under the WRGF.
- 6.7 The objectives and 'key moves' of the WRGF include:
- (a) Objective 1 – Increase housing supply, and improve housing affordability and choice;
 - (b) Objective 2 – Enable growth that protects and enhances the quality of the natural environment and accounts for a transition to a low/no carbon future;
 - (c) Objective 3 – Improve multi modal access to and between housing, employment, education and services;
 - (d) Objective 4 – Encourage sustainable, resilient and affordable settlement patterns/urban forms that make efficient use of existing infrastructure and resources;
 - (e) Objective 5 – Build climate change resilience and avoid increasing the impacts and risks from natural hazards;

¹² See: [Wellington Regional Growth Framework Report JULY 2021 \(wrgf.co.nz\)](#), page 29

¹³ Porirua Growth Strategy, 2019, page 11. See [Porirua Growth Strategy 2048.pdf \(storage.googleapis.com\)](#)

- (f) Objective 6 – Create employment opportunities.
- (g) Key move 1 – Harness growth to make the region’s housing and urban areas more affordable and liveable and provide more housing choice – 'walkable neighbourhoods';
- (h) Key move 2 – Make better use of the region’s limited supply of well-located greenfield land;
- (i) Key move 3 – Fully unlock the urban development potential of current and future rapid transit orientated corridors particularly the Let’s Get Wellington Moving corridor;
- (j) Key move 4 – Unlock new areas for housing and urban development and deliver greater regional resilience with a major west-east multi-modal corridor;
- (k) Key move 5 – Deliver transformational housing and development outcomes for iwi/Māori;
- (l) Key move 6 – Address the urban development challenges of climate change and transitioning to a zero-carbon economy at a regional scale.

6.8 Waka Kotahi through the National Land Transport Programme is a co-investor with Porirua City Council for transport infrastructure. Integrated planning of transport investment with land-use through the district plan settings and related growth planning processes, such as the WRGF, ensure that the transport system can function safely for all modes and also allows for the mode shift that is required to support regional and national strategy / policy direction.

6.9 In terms of the Porirua Northern Growth Area, and as outlined in the evidence of Mr Blackmore, requiring a specific overarching transport planning strategy for the Porirua Northern Growth Area would enable the WRGF outcomes listed above to be considered when detailed development of the Area commences.

7. LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES

7.1 I can advise that Waka Kotahi is leading or is involved with a number of local transport planning activities in the Porirua City area. Examples of such strategic planning activities include the Access Porirua Programme Business Case and the Porirua Network Operating Framework, which were both completed in 2022, and Kainga Ora’s Porirua Northern Growth Area Specified Development Project (scheduled to commence later in 2023). Following on from completion of the Porirua Network Operating Framework, I also

note that Waka Kotahi and Porirua City Council are in discussions on “next step” strategic planning for the function and form of SH59. The Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan, led by Greater Wellington Regional Council, is under review this year. Waka Kotahi will play an important role in the review of this plan. I note that these planning activities have recently been completed or just commenced or have yet to even commence. Therefore, many of these strategic planning activities will not be in place in time to inform Variation 1.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In conclusion, Waka Kotahi has a direct interest in the Northern Growth Development Area chapter. Waka Kotahi has a statutory obligation to contribute to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system in the public interest and must give effect to the GPS and support other national and regional policy / strategy direction.
- 8.2 I therefore respectfully request that the Northern Growth Development Area chapter be amended to include provision for an overarching transport strategy, or the chapter is deferred until such a strategy is in place. Having such a strategy in place will:
- (a) Ensure development of the Northern Growth Development Area is informed by national and regional integrated transport strategies / policies on integrated transport planning; and
 - (b) Ensure the NPS-UD integrated transport planning directives are given effect to in the provisions of the Northern Growth Development Area chapter.
- 8.3 I note that Mr Blackmore expands further on the reasons why having an integrated transport strategy in place prior to detailed design progressing on the stages proposed for the Northern Growth Development Area would be of benefit.
- 8.4 I further note that Ms Kirkbride’s evidence recommends planning mechanisms which could enable an overarching transport strategy to be given effect to within the Northern Growth Development Area chapter. I support Ms Kirkbride’s recommendations.

Akhylesh Babu Keshaboina.

24 February 2023