MAI TE PUKU O TE IKA A MAUIKI TE HIKU O TE IKA A MAUIUPPER NORTH ISLAND

AT A GLANCE Four regions make up the upper North Island (UNI) area: Northland, Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty. This area is vital to New Zealand’s social and economic success, home to over half of New Zealand’s population and generating more than 50% of the national GDP. The main urban centres in the upper North Island are all experiencing strong population growth.

POPULATION Auckland is New Zealand’s largest urban area and home to about 1.6 million people, one third of the national population. It dominates New Zealand economically and in terms of population growth. As a total area, the UNI population grew by 13% on average over the last five years.

With growth pressure and house prices in Auckland increasing sharply, economic activity and population has extended beyond Auckland into the northern Waikato and rural areas north of Auckland. The Hamilton–Auckland Corridor plan provides a summary for how this growth could be managed, supported by high quality rail and road links between the two cities.

By 2043 Auckland is projected to grow by 37%, creating a knock-on effect for Hamilton, Tauranga and Northland. Growth in other urban centres is forecast to be steady while in many rural locations populations are expected to remain static or decline.

ECONOMY In all the main urban centres, economies are driven by service and construction sectors, with pockets of specialist manufacturing. Outside of the urban centres, production and processing is tied to primary sectors, with dairy prominent in Northland and Waikato, forestry in Bay of Plenty and Northland, and horticulture in the Bay of Plenty and Northland.

Auckland provides highly specialised service sectors used by both Aucklanders and neighbouring regions. This is forcing a shift in land-use and businesses that need more space, such as manufacturing, are moving into neighbouring areas.

Industries such as construction, food cultivation and freight, have higher numbers of people commuting to their place of work while living somewhere else.

The tourism sector links through and across the UNI. It is also a key contributor to the region’s economy and visitor numbers are forecast to grow significantly over the coming decade. Over 70% of New Zealand’s international visitors arrive at Auckland Airport, making connections, both land and air, between the airport and key tourist destinations.

These current drivers in the UNI economy are expected to continue. This includes ongoing growth in commercial, service and construction sectors in the main urban centres, particularly Auckland, with primary industries continuing as the key drivers of provincial economies in Northland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty.
TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The land transport system in the UNI is centred on the three largest urban centres of Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga and the key corridors that link them. The country’s highest traffic volumes are found in and around these cities.

The UNI land transport network is subject to safety and resilience issues. A significant level of roading, bridges, infrastructure and residents are exposed to flooding risk.

Neighbourhood growth patterns and improved transport corridors are driving interregional movements for employment and residential living. Increasing population and employment will also add to the freight demand.

Over half of New Zealand’s freight movements are within and between the UNI regions with freight expected to double by 2035.

In addition to the inter-regional corridors, the rural road network also plays an important role in the efficient movement of freight from production to processing sites and domestic distribution centres or international ports. This is particularly true for the first and last kilometre of journeys.

The UNI is currently well-served by the three-port freight system of Northport, Auckland and Tauranga, supported by a network of inland ports. Tourism, in the form of cruise ships, is also an important part of Ports of Auckland and Port of Tauranga’s business and will begin in Northport from 2020.

The government review of the UNI logistics and freight is to ensure New Zealand’s supply chain is also fit for purpose in the longer-term.
The review will guide the development and delivery of a freight and logistics strategy for the UNI. The work includes a feasibility study to re-locate the Ports of Auckland. The work will include priorities for investment in rail, roads and other supporting infrastructure, with the goal of creating a robust supply chain that delivers to New Zealand’s interest over the next 30 years.

Rail plays a key role moving exports to the port and moving imports from Port of Tauranga to distribution hubs in the Waikato and south Auckland. The East Coast Main Trunk Line carries over a third of New Zealand’s rail traffic and is the most densely utilised sector of the national network. Rail freight services operate north of Auckland. Recent investments in Northland rail will support an increased role of rail freight, but the current tunnel size places constraints on the movement of containerised goods.

Domestic petroleum transport starts mainly from the Northland refinery, then is shipped to coastal storage centres, and transported by truck to the service stations. Waikato coal production serves the domestic market in the UNI.

Hamilton is emerging as a major distribution and logistics centre, with access to both road and rail networks, and strategically located to service Auckland, the Port of Tauranga and markets to the south. The road and rail freight routes between Tauranga and Auckland (via Hamilton) form the country’s most important freight corridor. SH1 between Marsden Point and Auckland provides a critical freight link, enabling overnight services from Northport.

The upper and lower North Island have relatively low volumes of transport moving between the two. Transport links between the regions are limited and have slow journey times due to the terrain. Nonetheless, these transport corridors are critical to New Zealand’s economic performance by enabling the movement of people and goods between key centres of production, consumer markets, freight distribution hubs and export ports.

Constraints on road and rail networks arise where they intersect with local traffic and in the major urban areas, particularly Auckland. This affects journey times and operating costs.

In Northland, increased freight demand is also causing congestion and some damage to roads from heavy vehicles.

Future transport demand in the UNI is expected to be strongest within the main urban centres and on the key inter-regional journeys that link them, reflecting the forecast population and economic growth in these areas.

More effective integration of land-use, transport planning and investment will be needed to address growing demand. Providing people with different ways to travel will also contribute to managing demand. Once operational, the Hamilton to Auckland passenger rail service will provide mass transit connections between Frankton in Hamilton and Papakura, in South Auckland. The service is expected to open mid-2020.

Future enhancements of the regional passenger rail could include services in the middle of the day and travelling north of Papakura as track upgrades are made on the Auckland network. The start-up service will be monitored, improved and extended to as passenger numbers increase.

Rail infrastructure connecting to Auckland and rest of New Zealand is also being improved to provide better connections between Northport and the rest of the rail network. Recent investment in rail lines includes a significant investment to maintain base levels of service on the line between Auckland and Northport, and the construction of line from Avondale to freight hubs at Southdown.
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<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>KEY INSIGHTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 North of Whangārei</td>
<td>Resilience and safety issues on the state highway network north of Whangārei will continue to affect community and freight access.</td>
<td>These corridors provide an essential lifeline to Northland and is critical to supporting economic and social outcomes in the region.</td>
<td>Improve the corridor safety, resilience and access for communities and tourists.</td>
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<td>2 Whangārei to Auckland (SH1 &amp; rail)</td>
<td>A potential expanded role for NorthPort in the future could significantly increase freight flows between NorthPort and Auckland. SH1 has existing safety and resilience issues. Rail corridor has capacity constraints (track conditions and tunnel dimensions) and no connection to Northport.</td>
<td>These corridors provide an essential lifeline to Northland and are critical to supporting economic and social outcomes in the region.</td>
<td>Road and rail to deliver safe and reliable journeys and support potential expanded role of NorthPort. Consider options to increase transport choice between Whangārei and NorthPort.</td>
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<td>3 Coromandel (SH25 &amp; SH25A)</td>
<td>Resilience and adapting to climate change will influence future land and transport planning needs.</td>
<td>The region is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and communities are highly reliant on a limited number of corridors to access essential services.</td>
<td>Initial focus on safety, with an ongoing focus on resilience, climate change, and community wellbeing. Work with partners to understand the future vision and transport needs of the Coromandel.</td>
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<td>4 Pokeno to Mangatarata (SH2)</td>
<td>The existing corridor has a poor safety record. Growth is placing pressure on the transport system, particularly at peak holiday periods.</td>
<td>The corridor provides for high numbers of local trips and the movement of locally produced exports to Port Tauranga.</td>
<td>Manage the corridor to support local journeys. Focus on improving safety outcomes and maximising use of existing infrastructure, including travel demand management and transport choice initiatives to help manage peak demand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Waithi to Tauranga (SH2)</td>
<td>Road safety risks are high on this corridor. Continued high growth is increasing travel demand on the network.</td>
<td>The corridor provides for high numbers of local trips and the movement of locally produced exports to Port Tauranga.</td>
<td>Focus on improving safety outcomes, providing access for multiple transport options and improved transport choice between Omokoroa and Tauranga. Maintain efficient port access.</td>
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<td>6 Urban Auckland (road)</td>
<td>The Auckland road network experiences significant congestion at peak periods due to reliance on private vehicles. Forecast strong growth in population and freight will increase access and transport needs.</td>
<td>There is significant scope to move bulk and containerised freight by rail between Auckland and Tauranga ports, and distribution hubs located in between. If the role of NorthPort expands significantly in the future rail freight is likely to increase between the port and distribution hubs in south Auckland.</td>
<td>Enable an increased role for rail in Auckland to support the movement of freight across the upper North Island, increase commuter movements and support the Hamilton-Auckland Corridor initiative.</td>
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<td>7 Urban Auckland (rail)</td>
<td>Increasing number of commuter rail movements in Auckland is impacting on the ability of the rail network to support freight to the port, inland ports and freight distribution hubs. Investment in the Hamilton-Auckland corridor could increase passenger movements and place further pressure on rail networks in urban Auckland. There are constraints on the wider rail network due to the age and type of rail infrastructure.</td>
<td>There is significant scope to move bulk and containerised freight by rail between Auckland and Tauranga ports, and distribution hubs located in between. If the role of NorthPort expands significantly in the future rail freight is likely to increase between the port and distribution hubs in south Auckland.</td>
<td>Enable an increased role for rail in Auckland to support the movement of freight across the upper North Island, increase commuter movements and support the Hamilton-Auckland Corridor initiative.</td>
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<td>8 Hamilton to Auckland (SH1 &amp; rail)</td>
<td>Ongoing high population growth and housing affordability challenges in Auckland and Hamilton are causing a knock-on effect with housing growth and other land uses moving into north Waikato. A planning exercise is underway to consider options managing growth between Auckland and Hamilton, supported by high quality road and rail connections.</td>
<td>This corridor links two of the country’s fastest growing urban centres. The Hamilton-Auckland Corridor initiative has the potential to transform patterns of land-use and development in key locations along the corridor and to manage transport demand more effectively, protect the environment and avoid urban sprawl.</td>
<td>Support delivery of growth aligned to the outcomes of the Hamilton-Auckland Corridor initiative in a managed way with multi-modal transport choices along the corridor and within communities. Collaborate with partners to agree the sequencing and timing development of residential and industrial land across the upper North Island.</td>
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<td>9 Hamilton to Tauranga (SH1 &amp; SH29, rail)</td>
<td>Forecast growth in population and freight will place increasing pressure on road and rail corridors. The existing road corridor has a poor safety record.</td>
<td>Connection between Tauranga and Hamilton and on to Auckland is the country’s primary freight corridor and the key connection between two of New Zealand’s fastest growing cities.</td>
<td>Provide safe and reliable journeys for people and freight within the current alignment in the short-term. Respond to capacity pressures when needed, including consideration of different transport options.</td>
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<td>10 Piarete to Waiouru (SH1)</td>
<td>The road corridor has a poor safety record and resilience challenges. There are also physical network constraints in places beside Lake Taupō and on the Desert Road.</td>
<td>This area is the key road connecting people and freight between the upper and lower North Island. It is strategically important connection that supports regional economies and local communities.</td>
<td>Focus on online improvements to address safety, resilience, and access (for communities and freight) in the short-term. More transformational improvements may be considered in the longer term between Piarete and Taupo if safety and capacity triggers are met, including beside Lake Taupō and on the Desert Road.</td>
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<td>11 Īpōtiki to Gisborne (SH2)</td>
<td>The road connection between Gisborne and Īpōtiki is subject to significant resilience challenges.</td>
<td>SH2 provides the primary connection north from Gisborne to the Bay of Plenty. It is critical to supporting the Gisborne economy through the movement of goods to market and enabling tourist journeys.</td>
<td>Work to improve resilience, particularly around Waioeka Gorge and high productivity motor vehicle capacity to support freight access to markets.</td>
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EXISTING AND EMERGING SIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF SERVICE DEFICIENCIES

LEGEND

- Rail constraint
- Journey reliability
- Safety*
- Resilience*

*(Numbers relate to table shown on previous page)

* Work is currently underway on the Road to Zero – Road Safety Strategy (2020-2030) and National Resilience Programme Business Case. This work may result in amendments to the safety and resilience layers in the above map.