Many areas in Dunedin and Queenstown have limited access to public transport, and poor walking and cycling facilities, resulting in increasing the use of private vehicles. Dunedin has a relatively young demographic due to the number of university students and this contributes to a relatively high level of walking journeys in the inner city.

There are sections of the inter-regional coastal corridor, containing both a major rail line and the state highway north and south of Dunedin, at risk from the impacts of climate change. Residential and commercial areas in south Dunedin are also experiencing coastal inundation impacts.

Crashes in the region highlight the need to focus on Dunedin and surrounding townships, Queenstown and Wanaka, SH1 between Dunedin and Oamaru and high-risk rural roads.

Queenstown’s geographical constraints have limited the size of the main centre and access roads. With limited transport options this has created a heavy dependency on private vehicles. The new Dunedin Hospital, investment in Otago University infrastructure, and the central city upgrade will support renewal of the central city, influencing both transport connections and the wider urban area.

Our focus in Otago will be on supporting urban development in Dunedin and Queenstown to enable thriving communities and encourage increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Across the region we will work to create a safer, more resilient land transport system, that supports economic and regional growth, maintains critical connections and provides appropriate levels of service across all transport networks.
Queenstown is a nationally significant tourism destination. While the resident population of the town is relatively small, it has grown strongly in recent years boosted significantly by increasing numbers of domestic and international visitors. Ensuring the effective movement of people and goods in and around Queenstown is important to the region and the country, although tourism demand in the short to medium-term had reduced as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Otago’s economy is dominated by the accommodation, food service and education sectors, reflecting the importance of tourism and Dunedin’s educational assets (the University of Otago alone has been estimated to contribute to around 15% of the city’s GDP). In rural areas, primary production and processing continue to be the key economic drivers.

The Otago transport system is largely fit for purpose, with much of the system providing good capacity and reliable travel times on a day-to-day basis. While some parts of the system are subject to resilience issues and disruption, particularly during winter storms, there are appropriate alternate routes in most locations.

While Dunedin’s transport is dominated by private vehicle use, trips by public transport, walking and cycling make up a significant contribution in some locations, particularly the city centre and North Dunedin. Queenstown is very car-dependent, which is increasingly restricting access to the town centre.

The key inter-regional journeys in Otago are the north and south road and rail connections to Canterbury and Southland respectively, and the road corridors that link Queenstown to Milford Sound and other key tourist destinations across the South Island. High-quality access to the port and airport in Dunedin is important to the success of the wider Otago, and Southland, economies.
Dunedin is forecast to continue to grow, with economic and employment growth focused in and around the city centre. High-growth population and visitor growth is projected in Queenstown and towns such as Wanaka and Cromwell. Most of the population and business growth in Queenstown is expected to be in and around Frankton, while the Queenstown town centre will remain the hub for tourism. With limited alternative transport services, there is a risk of increasing network constraints and locking visitors and residents into dependence on private vehicles.

Sheep and beef farming, along with fruit growing are likely to remain important contributors to the regional economy. International tourism will continue to strengthen Otago’s economy although future growth may be impacted by climate conscious consumers’ reluctance to travel long distance by air. Employment in public services, service industries and construction is growing in Dunedin, Queenstown and other urban centres. Employment in the electricity industry is increasing and manufacturing and health will continue to be important.

Otago faces a range of effects from climate change. Sea level rise, flooding, and storms are predicted to intensify over the next 30 years along with increased slips and erosion, increasing risk to communities and the road and rail networks that support them. South Dunedin, the most densely populated part of the city, is particularly at risk of sea level rise and rising groundwater levels. Surface flooding is also expected to increase around Dunedin Airport.

Technological changes expected over the next decade will offer choices to reduce carbon emissions and reliance on private transport in the main urban centres. These include the increase in use of alternative fuels, shared transport, on-call transport services and micro-mobility such as e-scooters. For the region as a whole, improved access to high-quality data and information will enable better management of the transport system to get the most out of existing infrastructure. We anticipate increasing demand from customers in Dunedin and Queenstown to plan, book and pay for journeys using digital platforms. Regional and rural communities will look for improved connections to Dunedin, Queenstown and other urban centres for their young people to access education and employment, and for senior residents to access health and social services. If population and visitor growth return to pre-COVID-19 levels, the Queenstown-Lakes and Central Otago districts will face challenges to fund new infrastructure and services to keep pace with that growth. There will also be greater pressure on the ability of councils such as Waitaki and Clutha to maintain and fund new infrastructure and provide appropriate services to residents, as a result of an aging population living on fixed incomes.

**KEY INSIGHTS**

- Dunedin is forecast to experience moderate growth, with a focus on intensification within the existing urban area. The city centre is undergoing a period of renewal, with ongoing expansion of Otago University and the construction of a new hospital. This extended period of construction will create traffic management challenges in the central city.
- Increasing population and tourist numbers drove strong growth in Queenstown pre-COVID-19, placing heavy demands on the land transport network. Levels of demand will need to be carefully monitored to understand the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector and the Queenstown transport system.
- Both Dunedin and Queenstown’s transport are currently dominated by private vehicle use with low, but growing, public transport usage. There are opportunities to deliver transport choice and support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling and away from single occupancy vehicles.
- Coastal flooding in South Dunedin and coastal areas, especially SH1, along with potential seismic events on the Alpine Fault are key challenges for maintaining system resilience and managing the impacts of climate change.
- The state highway network is critical to the movement of tourists, and rural goods to production centres and markets. Safe and reliable access to Port Otago and airports in Dunedin and Queenstown is important to the success of the wider Otago and Southland economies. Forecast growth in freight volumes at Port of Otago will need to be provided for, while managing safety and noise impacts on nearby residential areas.
- Otago’s safety record is poor with issues on high-risk rural roads, at high-risk urban intersections, and in urban areas with high numbers of vulnerable users.
FOCUS OF EFFORT: 2018-21

With strong growth during recent years in both population and tourist numbers, work is underway to better understand the future transport needs for Queenstown. The Queenstown Integrated Transport Programme Business Case (QITPBC) has been developed in partnership with Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), Otago Regional Council and Queenstown Airport Corporation. The QITPBC signalled the requirement for four detailed business cases (DBC). These being a Town Centre DBC, SH6A DBC, water taxi DBC, and an Active Travel Network DBC. This work is needed to better understand the future transport needs and options for Queenstown.

Investigations will continue during the next three years into Otago’s public transport networks. These will focus on opportunities to expand the network, increase capacity and frequency of services, and the use of new technology to increase use of public transport.

Addition commitments include:

- improved network integrated planning in Dunedin
- improved flood mitigation on SH1 north of Kakanui River/South of Oamaru
- planning for improved safety on SH1 between Oamaru and Dunedin
- continuing the expansion of Dunedin’s cycleway network, including completion of the SH1 separated cycling lanes
- intersection upgrades to address safety issues on SH6 and SH88 in Cromwell.

Queenstown:

- SH6 improvements including bus hub and public transport priority intersection improvements.
- Walking and cycling underpass and crossing facilities.
- Public transport projects on SH6 and SH6A, between Ladies Mile, Kawarau Falls Bridge and Queenstown’s town centre.

This map shows all projects underway during the period.
Projected population growth in the region will increase travel demand on the region’s networks and provides opportunities to support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling.

**QUEENSTOWN (HIGH)**
To support the wider vision for Queenstown we will:

- Support delivery of the outcomes of the QITPBC
- Support improvements to walking and cycling networks, with a focus on providing safe and efficient access to, and within, activity centres and schools, and connecting and expanding existing infrastructure to provide better connected networks
- Support public transport services including on demand services where these provide a basic level of access to employment and essential services, more affordable transport choice, improve throughput on constrained corridors and help shape a more vibrant city
- Work with QLDC to manage car-parking in the city centre, city fringe area and other key centres to increase uptake of public transport, walking and cycling for trips to these locations.

**DUNEDIN (MEDIUM)**
- Support improvements to walking and cycling networks, with a focus on providing safe and efficient access to, and within, activity centres and schools, and connecting and expanding existing infrastructure to provide better connected networks.
- Support public transport services, including on demand services where these provide a basic level of access to employment and essential services, more affordable transport choice and help shape a more vibrant city.
- Support the Connecting Dunedin project which seeks to better coordinate and improve the design of walking and cycling, and public transport improvements in the central city.
- Work with Dunedin City Council to consider options to support mode shift through more active management of commuter parking.

**IMPROVE URBAN FORM**
We will support a well-integrated and well-designed land-use and transport system to make Queenstown and Dunedin great cities to live, work and play.

**QUEENSTOWN (HIGH)**
Continue to strengthen the partnership between Waka Kotahi and councils through planning work with central government and other surrounding local bodies to:

- Work with QLDC and central government to implement the Queenstown Spatial Plan
- Support further development where it supports relevant transport capacity enhancement measures
- Work with QLDC to help ensure urban development occurs around corridors that have potential for public transport.

**DUNEDIN (MEDIUM)**
While our focus for delivering improved urban form is on multi-agency partnerships in major urban areas, we recognise the potential for growth in and around Dunedin and the need to support a safe and thriving city, with increased access to public transport, walking and cycling options and reduced carbon emissions.

We will focus on engaging in planning processes and supporting improvements to ensure that new development:

- Enhances existing communities and supports healthy and safe streets, making them a better place to work, live and play
- Supports an increase in active modes, including trips by foot and bike
- Reduces the need to travel long distances to access employment and services
- Results in lower emissions per capita to support a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality
- Maintains or improves the safety and efficiency of the transport system
- Enables an increase in the number of residents residing in central Dunedin.
TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE (HIGH)

We will continue to work to understand the opportunities to support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

ADAPTATION

We will focus on:

- engaging in local planning processes to avoid infrastructure and development in areas at increased risk of natural hazards and effects of climate change
- investigating options for alternate routes that are less likely to be impacted by sea level rise
- seeking continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance and renewals, and ‘low cost/low risk’ investments
- engaging in long-term strategic planning to respond to the vulnerability of existing assets
- enabling quick recovery following disruption to the land transport system.

MITIGATION

We will focus on:

- engaging in local planning processes to ensure urban form and transport planning supports reductions in emissions, private vehicle travel and average trip length
- ensuring network design and operation makes the best use of existing systems to manage demand and reduce emissions by prioritising the movement of public transport and low emission options, and actively managing speed, urban freight and congestion
- ensuring climate change and carbon emission targets are embedded in the Regional Land Transport Plan
- supporting walking, cycling and lower emission modes.

SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS (MEDIUM)

SAFETY

We will support implementation of the Road to Zero Safety Strategy for New Zealand and associated Action Plan (2020-22), and regional strategies, with an emphasis on:

- safety treatments targeting high-risk rural and urban intersections, and run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads (rural roads are roads with speed limits >80km/h)
- infrastructure improvements to provide safe walking and cycle trips
- speed management to provide safe and appropriate speeds on high-risk rural roads, at high-risk urban intersections, and in urban areas with high numbers of vulnerable users.

HEALTH

Our approach to delivering better health outcomes, particularly the reduction of harmful emissions, will primarily be through initiatives that target other step changes, including improved urban form, increasing access to and use of public transport, walking and cycling, and efforts to reduce carbon emissions. We will also continue to work to ensure that the noise impacts of transport are appropriately managed through a mix of land-use planning and mitigation work.