Our focus in Waikato is on supporting a productive and growing regional economy. One that creates stronger communities with good access to employment, education and essential services, and manages increasing impacts of climate change. Delivering safe and reliable inter-regional journeys that enable the movement of people and freight to key destinations.

**IMPROVE URBAN FORM**
Hamilton and the surrounding towns of Cambridge, Te Awamutu, Ngaruawahia and Morrinsville are experiencing high growth. Pokeno and Tuakau are experiencing strong growth linked to Auckland. Around half the growth in the Waikato is expected in Hamilton and the surrounding towns. Employment and essential services are likely to be concentrated in Hamilton and Auckland. Population growth outside these areas risks increasing the trip length between these two cities and reliance on private vehicles for this journey.

**TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY**
Waikato is highly dependent on private vehicles to access education, employment and essential services.

**TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE**
Sea level rise, increased rain and storm intensity and frequency will affect communities, particularly those in low-lying areas in the region. Waikato has the second highest carbon emission profile in the country, with a significant proportion from inter-regional freight movement.

**SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMs**
Waikato has a very poor safety record, with issues around crashes at intersections, run-off road and head-on crashes, and crashes involving vulnerable road users, speeding, alcohol and drug impairment, and people not wearing seat belts. These are exacerbated by the complexity of the network and high proportion of road transport movements through and within the region.
WAIKATO TODAY

WAIKATO HAS THE FOURTH LARGEST REGIONAL ECONOMY IN NEW ZEALAND and is nationally important for a range of export-facing primary industries such as dairy, meat, forestry and aquaculture.

Tourism has become increasingly important to the Waikato over the past decade. In 2018 the population of Waikato was 458,202, 9.8% of New Zealand’s total. Auckland and Hamilton both have strong growth and this is spilling over into the Waikato and Waipa districts. However, while these areas have experienced growth in population, employment and opportunities over the past decade, the south faces economic challenges and static or falling populations. There is a high proportion of senior residents in Thames Coromandel and Hauraki districts, and this is projected to increase in the future.

Waikato is a significant region for freight transport with 32% of the nation’s freight movements going into, out of, or through the region by both rail and road. The region’s transport network is vital to the nation’s economic prosperity, linking people to key destinations and providing important freight access. SH1, SH29 and the East Coast/Main Trunk Lines between Auckland and Tauranga are the country’s most critical freight connections.

Future Proof is a joint project set up by a group of partners to consider how the sub-region that includes the territorial authorities of Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and Waikato District Council should develop into the future.

The Hamilton to Auckland road and rail corridors connect two of our fastest growing urban centres and are a key part of the supply chain network for the upper North Island. The Hamilton to Auckland corridor that encompasses the settlements along the transport corridor between Cambridge-Te Awamutu and Papakura has been identified as a priority area for planning.

Pōkeno to Tauranga on SH2 supports local trips and is also a key tourist journey providing access to the Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty and Hobbiton (near Matamata). The western end of the journey also carries high freight volumes, but the majority diverts onto SH27 to avoid the Karangahake Gorge.
WAIKATO TOMORROW

Waikato’s population is forecast to grow 23% by 2043 to 562,100 with high growth projected on all sides of Hamilton and in the surrounding towns, which is already home to more than half of the region’s population. Some of this population and employment growth will be located along the Hamilton to Auckland corridor but existing constraints will limit growth in some communities.

There is a risk that growth patterns will lock communities into dependence on private vehicles and travelling relatively long distances to access employment and essential services. Waikato’s reliance on private vehicles creates a number of challenges. Without a significant shift to public transport, walking or cycling, vehicle travel will increase substantially, leading to more congestion, less access to opportunities, more emissions, a less safe and healthy population, and overall a poorer quality environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

Low-growth, static or declining populations are projected for the remainder of the region. An aging population will be most noticeable in Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki districts so ensuring suitable transport options are available for older residents will be important.

Employment in service industries is growing in the Hamilton urban area but manufacturing, dairy, meat and forestry continue to be important across the region. Aquaculture will grow in the Coromandel Peninsula. The region’s economy will continue to be influenced by the growth of Auckland. Domestic and international tourism growth is forecast to continue in the short-term.

There is a challenge to fund new infrastructure and services to keep pace with growth in the wider Hamilton and north Waikato urban areas. In areas with significant numbers of people living on fixed incomes, local councils will face increased pressure to raise funds to maintain existing and deliver new infrastructure.

Rural communities will look for improved connections to urban areas for access to health, employment opportunities, and social services. Those living in the Hamilton urban area and visitors will have a growing expectation to plan, book and pay for different types of transport on one digital platform.

Coastal erosion, sea level rise, flooding and storms are predicted to intensify over the next 30 years increasing risk to the road and rail network. This will add to existing resilience issues, particularly in the Coromandel Peninsula and Hauraki Plains. Emerging technologies, such as on-demand shuttles, could provide additional transport options to help people get around urban centres and help connect rural communities to employment and service hubs. Technological changes expected during the next decade will offer new travel choices that will reduce carbon emissions, the reliance on private transport and improve network management. These include the increase of alternative fuels, shared transport, on-demand travel options, micro-mobility such as electric scooters and intelligent transport systems.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Strong population growth is forecast in Hamilton and the surrounding towns and in north Waikato. The Future Proof Strategy that covers the sub-region that includes Hamilton city and Waikato and Waipa districts and the Hamilton to Auckland Corridor Spatial Plan project provide scope to manage growth and support existing communities, supported by high quality inter-regional road and rail connections.
- Care must be taken to ensure that the location of housing, jobs, schools, healthcare (and other key community facilities) will support thriving communities, reduce the need to travel and grow the share of public transport, walking and cycling options.
- Completion of the Waikato Expressway will enable through-traffic to bypass Hamilton city, freeing up the urban network to support local journeys. It is critical that future growth patterns do not prevent the expressway from providing efficient inter-regional connections.
- Waikato has one of the busiest land transport networks in the country because of its strategic location in the upper North Island. It will be important to provide reliable road and rail connections for freight between Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga and key freight hubs, as well as the routes south to Taranaki, and Wellington and the South Island.
- Increasingly severe storm events, flooding and sea level rise will impact coastal communities and low-lying transport networks with the Hauraki Plains and the Coromandel Peninsula particularly at risk.
- The safety record for the Waikato region is very poor, with a need to focus on reducing DSI within the Hamilton urban area, and on rural state highways (especially SH1 and SH2), high-risk rural roads and high-risk motorcycle routes.
FOCUS OF EFFORT: 2018-21

The East Coast Main Trunk Line provides a major link for freight movement between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. Investments are being made in the Auckland to Hamilton passenger rail connection to help reduce pressure on the road network in Auckland, and support growth and urban development outcomes.

The completion of the Waikato Expressway in 2021 will improve safety and reliability outcomes by enabling the majority of north-south through traffic to bypass the city, which will reduce pressure on the urban networks providing local trips. Ensuring that urban development, particularly in Hamilton, remains on the western side of the Waikato Expressway is important to maintaining efficient inter-regional connections.

The state highway connections from Waikato south to Taranaki (SH3) and east to Rotorua (SH5) are also critical in enabling the movement of people and goods to and from those regions and supporting their economic development. While these journeys are generally fit for purpose, the 53km section of SH13 through Mt Messenger and the Awakino Gorge runs through rough terrain and is narrow and winding. Several projects are progressing to improve the safety, resilience and travel time reliability of this route, including the Mt Messenger and Awakino Tunnel bypasses.

There is an ongoing programme of investment in safer roads and roadsides at high-risk locations, including SH2 Pokeno to Mangatarata and SH29 Piarete to Te Poi/Te Poi to Kaimai Summit projects. Improvements to the SH1/SH29 intersection at Piarete will be delivered as part of the NZ Upgrade Programme.
**SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS (HIGH)**

**SAFETY**
Support implementation of the Road to Zero Safety Strategy for New Zealand and associated Action Plan (2020-22), and regional safety strategies, with a particular emphasis on:

- continuation of safety treatments targeting high-risk intersections, and run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads (rural roads are roads with speed limits >80km/h)
- separated facilities and infrastructure improvements in areas with significant levels of walking and cycling
- road policing and behaviour change programmes with a focus on alcohol and drug impairment, people not wearing seat belts and speeding.
- safety treatments on high-risk motorcycle routes.

**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 works.

**TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY (HIGH)**
Projected population growth in Hamilton and the surrounding towns will increase travel demand on the region’s networks and provides opportunities to support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Our focus will be on:

**HAMILTON**
- supporting delivery of Access Hamilton and the Hamilton-Waikato Metro Spatial Plan
- supporting development of Mass Transit Plan/Mode Shift Plan to deliver on the target of doubling the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport over the next 10 years
- supporting the development and delivery of walking and cycling networks
- investigating opportunities for improved public transport services and reduced journey times
- supporting Hamilton City Council to prioritise public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure
- working with Hamilton City Council to encourage actively 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.

**HAMILTON-AUCKLAND CORRIDOR**
- supporting delivery of interim inter-regional passenger rail between Hamilton and Auckland and investment in associated station infrastructure
- supporting the Hamilton-Auckland corridor partnership to (1) implement the key initiatives contained in the Hamilton to Auckland Corridor Plan and (2) continue with the ongoing growth management partnership.
**AREAS OF FOCUS: WAIKATO 2021-31**

**IMPROVE URBAN FORM (HIGH)**

**HAMILTON**

Waka Kotahi is a partner in developing cross-government initiatives that aim to better support growth and increase connectivity in an integrated way, as follows:

- **Through the established Future Proof partnership, a sub-regional tool to guide the future strategic direction of Hamilton, Waikato and Waipa.** This will include completion of Phase 2 of the Future Proof strategy. The Future Proof settlement pattern provides a blueprint for growth and development in these areas. This is aligned with the Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy.

- **By supporting the development of the Hamilton-Waikato Metro Spatial Plan, which seeks to determine a shared 100-year vision and framework for the emerging Hamilton-Waikato area.**

- **Through these partnerships, we will work to deliver urban development that enhances existing communities, supports an increase in walking and cycling, reduces the need to travel and improves safety and climate impacts.**

Across the region we will engage in planning processes, with a goal of delivering urban development that:

- enhances existing communities, making them a better place to work, live and play
- supports an increase in active modes, including trips by foot, bike and e-scooter etc
- reduces the need to travel long distances to access employment and services
- results in lower emissions per capita
- maintains or improves the safety and efficiency of the transport system.

**TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE (MEDIUM)**

**ADAPTATION**

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
- maintaining system resilience and managing the impacts of climate change, especially in the Coromandel Peninsula and low-lying coastal areas. Investigate options for alternate routes that are less likely to be subject to disruption
- enabling continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance and renewals, and ‘low cost/low risk’ investments
- 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
- identifying low carbon transport options, infrastructure and services in major urban areas to support shift from cars to low-emission options
- ensuring network design and operations 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.