

17 April 2025
Committee Secretariat
Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Teena koutou katoa,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging) Amendment Bill (the Bill).

Waikato District Council (Council) acknowledges the significant traffic congestion challenges that the Government is seeking to address in this legislation, and we recognise the impact that this congestion has on access to work, education, health services and social activities, while also impacting on productivity and quality of life.

Key messages

1. Council supports the establishment of a framework for proposing and implementing time of use charging schemes in New Zealand.
2. Council recommends an amendment to Section 65E of the Bill to include local authorities outside of the scheme region with resident populations that will be significantly impacted by the introduction of a charging scheme.
3. Council recommends that this Bill does not preclude the ability of local authorities to propose smaller-scale or seasonal charging schemes, such as communities with high seasonal traffic congestion due to increased traffic volumes from domestic and international tourism.

Introduction

Waikato District Council | Te Kaunihera aa Takiwaa o Waikato is a territorial authority in the northern part of the Waikato Region. With a population of 92,500 residents, Waikato District is the beating heart of the 'golden triangle' between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. As one of the fastest growing districts in New Zealand, the district population is expected to grow by 36.7% between now and 2054.

While Waikato District is classed as a tier 1 urban authority, the district covers more than 400,000 hectares, most of which is rural land used for agriculture and horticulture. Key towns in Waikato District include Tuakau, Pokeno, Te Kauwhata, Huntly, Ngaaruawaahia and Raglan.

Council manages over \$2 billion in infrastructure assets, including 2,502km of roads, 402 bridges, and 334km of footpaths, cycleways and walkways. Over the next nine years of Council's proposed Long

Term Plan, which we are currently consulting on with our communities, capital and operational expenses are estimated to be \$2.9 billion, with 93% of Council's capital works budget allocated towards waters and transport infrastructure investment.

It is critical that Council continues to work alongside central government, neighbouring councils and the sector to explore alternative funding schemes for infrastructure investment.

Auckland and northern Waikato communities

Council acknowledges that the Waikato Region currently contributes to traffic in Auckland, as many of our northern residents work in Auckland and engage in a diverse range of pursuits including educational, economic and social activities across the regional boundary along the Bombay Hills.

The proposed legislation provides a framework for time of use charging schemes that may be able to influence traffic volumes on the State Highway 1 Waikato Expressway and Southern Motorway, if the funds collected were not only used in Auckland but also used to facilitate alternative modes of transportation such as inter-regional public transport.

We support the introduction of a framework that enables local authorities to identify areas of problematic congestion and to propose indicative scheme areas and potential charging zones.

However, Council recommends an amendment to section 65E of the Bill, proposing the following change:

Current wording: "before submitting a scheme proposal to the responsible Minister, the scheme board must carry out public consultation in the scheme region, and must consult any local authority in the scheme region that is not a member of the scheme."

Proposed wording: "before submitting a scheme proposal to the responsible Minister, the scheme board must carry out public consultation in the scheme region, and must consult any local authority in the scheme region that is not a member of the scheme and any local authority outside of the scheme region who have a reasonable resident population that will be impacted by the scheme".

Council recommends this broader definition to include other local authorities outside a scheme region where a reasonable portion of the resident population will be impacted by the scheme, such as neighbouring local authorities with interconnected traffic flows and strong economic and social ties.

For example, the northern communities of Waikato District are outside of the Auckland region, yet these communities are a significant contributor towards traffic volumes on Auckland's Southern Motorway and the Auckland roading network. The introduction of a scheme in the Auckland region may have a significant impact on the northern residents of Waikato District, yet Council may not be considered a notifiable local authority for consultation during the initiation and development of a proposed scheme.

While Council has a constructive partnership with Auckland Council through the Hamilton to Auckland Corridor Partnership and the Future Proof Partnership, we would like to ensure that local authorities like Waikato District Council must be consulted with given the impact on residents.

A requirement of consultation will ensure that all impacted residents and businesses are considered by the scheme board, the responsible Minister and NZTA when determining whether to recommend to Cabinet that a charging scheme is introduced. It will also ensure that potential cross-boundary discussions are considered not just for the charging scheme, but also for any initiatives that the charging scheme may provide funding for to support the Bill's objective to reduce congestion.

Council acknowledges that a minimum threshold would need to be determined to define an impacted local authority outside the scheme region. Staff are available to work with the Ministry of Transport and NZTA for any assistance that we can provide on this matter.

Seasonal congestion from domestic and international tourism

Waikato District faces transport congestion in other areas in addition to the northern interconnected communities along the Auckland boundary, but this is typically limited to seasonal variations. In the summer months, domestic and international tourism results in congestion in Raglan with the single lane Wainui Bridge being unable to cope at peak times.

Council is unsure if this Bill can contribute towards potential schemes that support the reduction of congestion at peak times for smaller communities such as Raglan, a community where the peak traffic volumes are from non-residents and ratepayers. Council is supportive of any initiatives that ease the local ratepayer burden for future infrastructure upgrades, especially when the congestion is largely driven by domestic and international tourists.

Council recommend that this Bill does not preclude the ability of local authorities such as Waikato District Council to propose smaller-scale or reasonable charging schemes that would help to spread traffic loading as well as facilitating funding contributions for suitable future infrastructure upgrades.

Further information

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact Megan May – General Manager Service Delivery by email megan.may@waidc.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi,



Jacqui Church
Mayor