

## DRAFT FEEDBACK

**On:** The Urban Form and Transport Initiative (UFTI) Interim Report

**By:** SmartGrowth Environmental and Sustainability Forum (E&S)

**Date:** 27 March 2020

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### General Observations

*‘Sustainability is no longer something that we as individuals or corporate institutes should feel is nice to do. It is a must do. New Zealand must preserve its natural capital if it has a hope of surviving economically and that means all sectors, public and private, rural and urban have to all pull together under the banner of sustainability’. Sir Rob Fenwick.*

The **sustainable context** for this Interim Report that envisages a just environmental and social future is missing and we find that very concerning. There is no environmental or social overview informing the UFTI project, so we struggle to make good long-term decisions about the four options presented.

Whilst UFTI has a long-term planning focus, how we think and act right now will lay the foundation for the sustainable future we all want.

This is not a new conversation from the Forums. We have said it many times before. Whilst a scenario planning exercise has been undertaken, within a very short time frame, it seems that today’s thinking parameters have been applied to the challenges and investment objectives, rather than the future transformative thinking required to attain a sustainable future for our planet.

Thus, tackling climate change, healing our land, rivers and ocean, and restoring biodiversity within the sub-region (and in our towns and cities in particular) are integral to, and interconnected with, the language we use about the future. This also applies to the social context within which this project needs to be perceived.

We know the effects of climate change, we know the effects of poverty, inequity, lack of connectivity, poor place making, and the way we use the Moana. Environmental quality is deeply connected to social equity. Thus, all this needs to be incorporated into the language of UFTI, so that the project fits readily into an overall spatial plan that is not just about urban form and transport, but rather encompasses the four well beings working together to achieve prosperity for all within a thriving natural environment.

The E&S Forum has not endorsed any programme as the approach to, and information about each option is not focussed broadly enough to make a judgement about any long-term sustainable

outcomes. We however, make the following comments to be read in the context of our previous remarks.

### **Draft Interim Report Comments**

In order to achieve a wider context, the investment objectives should refer to and incorporate key elements of the draft TCC and WBOPDC Environment Strategies. This should be done within the context of 10, 30 and 50 year timeframes and ideally be integrated in a way to create a living document, able to be reviewed and audited on a regular basis.

We believe the planning horizons in the Interim Report need to be more explicitly defined. To improve comprehensibility, and in order to assess the relative merits of the programmes outlined in the Interim Report, the programmes need to be integrated with the spatial plans and then split into 0 to 10-year, 10 to 30-year, and 30 to 50/80-year horizons.

The time frames for transport and other initiatives under each programme should be identified. For example, cycleways to enable cycling as transport in Tauranga, and housing in Paengaroa are both needed now (not in 40 years). Likewise, there is no indication of when initiatives are timed for rail. Will passenger rail be running in 10 years or 50 years' time?

### **Challenges/benefits/investment objectives**

- We consider the challenges and investment objectives too narrow. This has resulted in a funnelled view that does not provide obvious tangible outcomes of an environment that will sustain nature and people into the future.
- The use of the term "Economic Prosperity" should be changed or expanded beyond solely economic prosperity to encompass all four well-beings. We suggest the heading could be "Prosperity" and should include reference to economic, social, environmental and cultural prosperities.
- Under Investment Objectives, replace "*The efficiency and effectiveness of the core freight network in the WBOP is improving*". Our suggestion is to replace this with a statement based around the 'four well-beings' referencing the movement and connection of people as well as goods.
- The Investment Objective under Environmental Sustainability is flawed. Its sole focus on reducing emissions is too narrow. The status of the environment needs to be reflected comprehensively, including qualitative assessments of waterways, biodiversity, green space, waste management practices, air quality and noise protection, together with versatile soil preservation including a regenerative focus on its continuing use.
- The "Inclusive Access" objective is related solely to transport, whereas it should be based on a wider understanding of accessibility from a social and environmental perspective.
- The housing affordability measure should refer to median and not just average income, house prices and rents. A broader view of housing is required instead of just using an extrapolation of the current housing typologies. This includes an understanding of reducing by design the ongoing running and maintenance costs, as well as the build and purchase price. Also, a specific direction should be considered that allows for genuinely affordable and innovative ownership models, as well as social housing in new developments.

## **Our proposed revised UFTI investment objectives are:**

### *Inclusive access*

- Proportion of population living within travel thresholds (15, 30, or 45 minutes) of key social and economic opportunities (including education, health care, supermarkets) by different modes (walking, cycling, public transport, private motor vehicle) as benchmarked against the main NZ cities
- Affordable access to a safe, continuous and direct, multimodal transport network

### *Prosperity*

- The efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network in the WBOP is improving for freight, tradespeople, business commuters and all other transport users
- Housing affordability (as measured by the ratio of average/median income to average/median dwelling purchase price/rent) and access to housing (measured by numbers of homeless and numbers unable to obtain housing) in the WBOP is improving
- Needs to include specific reference to Maori aspirations from a four well beings perspective

### *Environmental sustainability*

- Biodiversity and water quality are improving in the WBOP and species loss has ceased
- Transport emissions in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region have reduced by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 and 100% below 2005 **net** emissions levels by 2050
- High quality productive soils are protected and there is sustainable use of available water resources
- Access to nature for everyone is incorporated into urban design and placemaking
- Strong respectful development of our mutual roles as kaitiaki /guardians of our environment using a Maturanga Maori framework

## **The four programmes**

- Our comments are based on the understanding from the UFTI team that:  
Programme 1 (Rail Enabled Growth) correlates to Spatial Plan Scenario 5  
Programme 2 (Connected Urban Villages) correlates to Spatial Plan Scenario 2  
Programme 3 (Two Urban Centres) correlates to Spatial Plan Scenario 3  
Programme 4 (Dispersed Growth) correlates to Spatial Plan Scenario 1.
- As a general note, intensification and brownfield development should be favoured above greenfield development. Intensification must be incorporated in and around all centres, not just downtown Tauranga and the Te Papa peninsula. In a similar vein, a more dispersed economic strategy would ensure that not everyone has to come into the centre. From a public transport perspective, best use should be made of the gravity model where activities/jobs/retail are concentrated around central points- so having a number of small centres able to grow makes sense. We need more flexible designs with dwellings, for instance being able to turn a 3 bedroom dwelling into a 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings at a later

date without new consent processes. Compact housing should be a normal or preferred choice in all development areas including greenfield sites.

- The Dispersed Growth (Base Case) programme is not considered a viable option, as it is merely a continuation of the status quo.
- The best solution may be a combination of all three remaining programmes, with the exact combination reflecting the decision whether or not to develop the Northern corridor, Western corridor, or both, along with the Eastern Corridor and existing Tauranga City. This decision should consider a wide range of factors, including the use of versatile land, the difficulty and cost of developing the infrastructure and the risk of landslide and sea level rise.
- We question expanding fully into both the Northern and Western corridors. We believe the Eastern corridor lends itself to further development, based around Rangiora Business Park and horticultural development in the east. If both Northern and Western corridors are also developed over the next 50 years, it will result in significant additional costs to Councils
- We also suggest taking a broader approach to these options, with a view to considering the further development of existing Bay of Plenty regional centres e.g. Kawerau, Whakatāne, Opoitiki, Rotorua and possibly Katikati. We support the initiative floated by Kawerau District Council for electrification of the railway line between Kawerau and Tauranga (or hydrogen powered trains) and development of passenger rail at the appropriate time. We do understand that this approach doesn't align with the NPSUD but a broader and possibly more sustainable view could be taken and explored in the interests of our region and the future.
- Whichever programme is ultimately selected, the retention of the existing rail corridor and potential future rail and rapid transit corridors should be a priority. Protect all rail corridors for the purpose of freight and public transport, as well ensuring wherever possible that sufficient land on either side of the railway lines is set aside in public ownership for future transport use and/or intensive development along the rail corridor.
- Public transport should be linked to the costs of private transportation to incentivise its use. If a rail option is considered for regular commuters to school and work in Tauranga there will also need to be park and ride hubs.
- We note the development of Te Puke and surrounding areas should not include the extensive use of valuable productive land. A map showing land that is **not** of highly productive value would be useful.

### ***Programme 1: Rail enabled growth***

- This may be a good long-term plan but we're unsure it meets the short/medium-term needs and are unable to assess this without some firm planning timelines
- We support the logic of rail transportation from Te Puke to Tauranga and onwards to Otumoetai-Bethlehem and Omokoroa. However, we are unsure if rail patronage in the Northern corridor to Apata (or beyond towards Katikati) would be economically viable in the short term with multiple road and cycleway options soon to be available. The business case for rail and other rapid transit will be more favourable, especially on the northern corridor, **if**

**road pricing or congestion charging** is introduced for major arterials and/or crucial access points, especially at peak times.

- Passenger rail between Kawerau and Tauranga and between Whakatane/Taneatua and Tauranga should be part of the scope of this 50 year plan, as it will impact on urban development in Tauranga and the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

### ***Programme 2: Connected urban villages***

- Although this programme includes rapid transit, whatever the mode that is chosen, the rail corridor needs to be protected for long term passenger transport options - not just for freight.
- The protection of highly versatile land should be a high priority. A decision between the development of the Northern corridor (especially between Omokoroa and Te Puna), or the Western corridor, or both needs to be taken.
- This programme should also include Paengaroa as a hub / urban village.

### ***Programme 3: Two urban centres***

- There is a better intensification ratio in this programme than other options, and it doesn't encroach as much into rural land.
- It could have the advantage of reduced infrastructure costs, as it does not further develop either the Northern or Western corridors over the next 80 years. Both those corridors are likely to have challenging aspects from an infrastructure perspective relating to the topography and soil types (low lying land in Northern, hills in Western).
- The proposed rapid transit connections will be crucial. In order to ensure that intensification in the existing city and Eastern corridor creates liveable communities, there needs to be appropriate residential development and safe, accessible transport systems inside and between the two main centres.
- We support the incorporation of rail into this option. It seems logical to connect the two proposed centres by utilising existing rail infrastructure and extending that as needed.
- A key risk, if choosing this option, is that Tauriko could be further expanded, as a form of "scope creep". The Interim Report already highlights some genuine problems with existing plans for Tauriko.

### **Final comments**

We note that the Compact Cities option is not favoured and do not necessarily agree with this. A broader approach to compact housing across the whole of Tauranga City and Western Bay could make this a more realistic option. Compact Cities needs to be discussed community by community, with an environmental, social and local placemaking approach, including greater community self-sufficiency in energy and water usage.

There is a high level Spatial Plan that supports the Draft Interim Report, but this is focused on land use only, although the written text is broader. This needs to be completed with a socio-spatial plan

about people, and an enviro-spatial plan that has climate change as its chief focus, and what that means for this region over the next 50 years.

Is it intended to finalise the UFTI Report and support it with the high level spatial plan as its currently presented, and then for both those documents to become the new SmartGrowth plan? **If that is so, the Environment and Sustainability Forum would be bitterly disappointed.**

We would be dismayed if the work across the four well beings that has been done since 2004 was abandoned in favour of a future that is only about urban form and transport. The future we envision includes an environment rich in biodiversity, with healthy waterways, an abundant ocean and communities of people that are living great lives within, and as part of that environment. A future where we have met our climate change obligations, where we have co-created our future with Iwi Maori, and where we have all adopted our role as kaitiaki of this region for us and for future generations.

Such a vision aligns with central government's transformative aspirations and should not be abandoned for short term funding access and expediency.