



Priority One Feedback on the Urban Form and Transport Initiative (UFTI) Interim Report

BACKGROUND

Priority One is the economic development enabler for Tauranga and the Western Bay of Plenty. The organisation reflects a partnership between the business community and local authorities, with substantial funding and support provided by businesses and individuals committed to seeing positive change through increased economic prosperity across our community. Priority One is also contracted to deliver economic outcomes by Tauranga City Council and Western Bay of Plenty District Council.

Priority One's core role is to build the sub-region's economic depth beyond an historic reliance on population growth as our key economic driver. It works to bring more diversity to an economy that is highly reliant on horticulture, retail and construction. Priority One uses the partnership it has built between the business community and Smart Growth partners, including local authorities, to progress initiatives that build real and defensible competitive advantages.

It is in the context of collaborating to build a sub-region and wider region that is nationally and internationally competitive and that attracts and retains highly productive businesses and people that Priority One submits feedback on the UFTI interim report.

SUPPORT

Priority One commends and strongly supports the Urban Form and Development Initiative (UFTI) approach to developing a long-term, collaborative vision for the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region's future urban form and transport needs. Our sub-region is one of the fastest growing regions in New Zealand and we expect the underlying fundamentals that have driven growth over the past two decades to continue well into the future.

We strongly support UFTI's investment objectives, particularly the recognition given to the importance of inclusivity if the sub-region is to develop sustainably, deliver opportunity to all, and raise community prosperity over the longer term. We are encouraged to see that the three shortlisted options in the interim report all focus on more sustainable, equitable and healthier outcomes than the status quo. Similarly, and closely linked to inclusive access, we commend UFTI's focus on improving housing affordability which is currently a significant impediment to community equity and poses significant future risk in terms of the sub-regions ability to retain and attract a skilled workforce.

Overall, we support the strategic intent of the UFTI interim report's short-listed scenarios which prioritise urban intensification around key transport and employment hubs and protect local and inter-regional freight corridors.

We view the presentation of scenarios as constrictive, our feedback will focus more on underlying issues rather than the scenario they are attached to.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We urge the UFTI partners to carefully consider appropriate governance and operational arrangements post UFTI to ensure sufficient capability *and resource* is provided to implementation of the preferred future state. Given the scale of future challenges and the long-term outlook of the plan, aspirational investment objectives, effective apolitical leadership and sufficient implementation resource will be required to deliver on the long-term vision and provide investment certainty to business and residential ratepayers. Strategy is good, ability to deliver is critical.
2. We recommend that improving equity should be the key objective of UFTI's envisaged future state for the sub-region and strongly support UFTI scenarios that focus on increasing urban density and public amenity around key transport hubs. For the sub-region to develop sustainably (socially, culturally and economically) over the longer term we will need to demonstrate we can provide for the most vulnerable members of our community.
3. From a business continuity, growth and development perspective, liveability of our city and region is key. Our ability to retain and attract skilled labour relies on our relative attractiveness as a destination for skilled and talented people. Housing affordability is critical to this, and we support all attempts to provide greater housing choice and particularly intensification around key transport infrastructure and employment hubs.
4. We are concerned at the lack of focus given to future industrial land in the interim report. We believe the demand for industrial land will continue to grow over the long term and would like to see greater thought given to future industrial growth in the final report. We are concerned that the base assumption of 10 hectares per year needed for industrial/commercial land is underestimated because it is based on existing constraints. We note that one company took 13ha in a single parcel recently.
5. We note that rapid population growth in the sub-region has been consistently under estimated by local and central government and recommend UFTI retains enough flexibility to be able to deliver it's recommended urban form and transport outcomes faster than anticipated, should it be necessary. Our modelling, based on the last 20 years growth rate, would show that a 400k population for the WBOP will be achieved in approximately 30 years. A scenario closer to our current growth rate would see 400k reached in 20 years.
6. We would like to see more emphasis given to the sub-region's connections with Auckland and Hamilton in the final report, particularly from a freight prioritisation perspective.
7. We urge the prioritisation of key bottleneck or problem areas that appear to have few solutions. In most cases (Hewletts Rd as an example), there are relatively few solutions, the obvious ones should be prioritised and implemented.
8. We favour and encourage outcomes that focus on rapid public transit, we believe the concept should be placed ahead of the specific mode.
9. In general, we support planning that places residential housing and urban development alongside major transport routes.

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10. We urge due consideration to the practicalities and relatively obvious patterns of where people will work in the future. Specifically, the amount of people that will work in the CBD does not appear to be well articulated or much of a consideration. This is obviously a key determinant of the viability of some transport modes, such as rail.
 11. In our view, consideration of the Te Papa peninsular as a key building block of our urban space is under-represented. We urge that intensification of housing and development of rapid transit, along this peninsular is highlighted as core to our future urban development.
 12. We note that the interim report appears to ignore the obvious contention between the need for residential / commercial land and high value horticulture land.