

Submission Guidance

Parliamentary inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand

12/08/2022



Making a Submission

The Transport and Infrastructure Committee has opened an inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand. The aim of the inquiry is to find out what the future could hold for inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand. This is your chance to have your say on the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand.

Submissions Close: Thursday, 6 October, 2022

Submission Link: [Submissions must be made using this online form](#)

You need to state if your submission is from an individual or an organisation. You'll also need to state whether you wish to present an oral submission to the committee. Oral submissions tend to hold more weight, particularly if you are a subject expert or have a story to tell.

There are general guides available on writing submissions:

- [Quick Guide: Making a Submission to Select Committees \(with NZSL translation\)](#)
- [How to Make a Submission \(Detailed\)](#)
- [How to Make a Submission to a Select Committee \(Easy Read\)](#)

Ideally you should write your own comments. Select Committee inquiries are a way for Parliament to hear directly from people on an issue. Expressing your views, and telling your own story, will have more impact than completing a template response. Just remember that your submission should relate to some, or all, or the [Terms of Reference](#) for the Inquiry.

The Committee Inquiry process is how parliament hears from the public on important issues. You don't need to be an expert; you just need to have an opinion or experience to share. The process is far less scary than it may appear, so go ahead...have your say!

Over the following pages, we will explore some of the key issues that you might like to discuss in your submission.

The folks at Greater Auckland have put together some thoughts on what their submission may include. Take a look at that for inspiration! <https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2022/08/15/inter-regional-rail-inquiry/>

#TheFutureIsRail

Notes for Guidance

Save Our Trains has been developing some commentary on each of the terms of reference (TOR). We've also included links to other articles and online resources. An excellent resource is the book: [Can't Get There From Here](#) by André Brett & Sam van der Weerden. It offers a summary of what we've lost, as well as a vision for what could be.

TOR#1

Investigating possibilities and viability of passenger rail in underserved communities, those with prior rail links that have been disestablished, and those currently advocating for improved rail links.

- There are many communities underserved by rail.
 - Many of New Zealand's towns and cities were constructed along rail tracks. Most of our population lives in communities with rail access, yet very few communities have active rail services. There are many examples, but some examples of cities and towns with rail tracks but no trains include: Bay of Islands, Whangarei, Tauranga, Te Awamutu, Te Kuiti, Taumarunui, Napier, Hastings, New Plymouth, Stratford, Hawera, Whanganui, Marton, Feilding, Dannevirke, Ashburton, Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin, Balclutha, Invercargill.
 - Growing towns also have underutilised rail access. Pōkeno, Ōmokoroa, and Rolleston are good examples.
 - Save Our Trains estimates that around 85% of New Zealand's population lives in cities and districts that are easily accessible to rail. We are a long thin country with most towns and cities having a rail one running past them.
 - Communities aren't just geographic. Other communities such as Māori, Pacific, elderly, non drivers, and differently abled are also underserved.
 - The TOR talks about areas "currently advocating for improved rail links." If you have a personal connection to these communities, be sure to mention it!
 - Communities with active campaigns asking for rail services include Tauranga, Pōkeno, Tuakau, Huapai, Te Kauwhata, Te Kuiti, Taumarunui, Whanganui, Napier, Hastings, and Dunedin.
 - Communities with rail that are asking for improved services include: Hamilton (frequency), Ōtorohanga (frequency and affordability), Ohakune (frequency and affordability), Palmerston North (new rolling stock & frequency), Levin (new rolling stock & frequency), Ōtaki (new rolling stock & frequency), Blenheim (frequency and affordability), and Canterbury (frequency, affordability, and regional commuter rail).

Further resources:

[Heritage Talks: New Zealand's shrinking passenger railway network](#)

[The Future of Regional and Long Distance Passenger Rail in New Zealand](#)

TOR #2

Gaining insights into the viability of passenger rail sitting alongside KiwiRail's freight network.

- Freight and passenger rail should not be a binary decision. It isn't a choice between one or the other. Getting freight off trucks and on to trains helps improve road safety, reduce emissions, and reduce traffic on our roads. Passenger rail achieves the same goals. We should be looking at both.
- In some parts of the country, there would need to be infrastructure upgrades to allow passenger services to sit alongside freight services. Examples include [sidings](#) in the upper North Island and track improvements in the lower South Island and northern Wairarapa.
- Increased passenger rail traffic would require better planning. Central government could take a greater role in guiding our rail network.
- Ultimately, the viability of passenger and freight trains sharing the tracks is about infrastructure. It's not about whether it's possible or not, it's about whether we want to spend the money to make it happen.
- Overseas, there are now examples of passenger trains being part of a freight network, especially for the fast delivery of smaller time sensitive items.

TOR #3

Evaluating existing inter-regional passenger rail, such as the Capital Connection, and how these services work between local and regional councils and central government.

- The [Capital Connection](#) is one of the best examples of the pitiful state of our regional rail network. Consistently under threat of being axed, this Wellington to Palmerston North service has been left to rust, while proposals to reinvigorate the service have been shelved. [Old rolling stock frequently breaks down leading to bus replacement services](#), or no replacements for some stops. New trains and better frequency would positively impact use of the service. The Greater Wellington Regional Council, with support from Horizons Regional Council developed a strong business case that proposed upgrades to rolling stock, station facilities, and track infrastructure which would increase service reliability and frequency for passengers in Kapiti, Horowhenua, Manawatu, and Wairarapa. The request for new hybrid diesel electric trains was not included in the 2022 Budget.
- New Zealand's legislation, regulations, policies, and structure of government agencies all present barriers to the development of inter-regional rail services. Regional Councils are responsible for public transport, but as soon as a service crosses a regional boundary, funding and organisational issues occur. While this clearly impacts the development and maintenance of long distance and inter-regional transport, it also impacts people that live in the often-neglected borderlands, like Pōkeno and Ōtaki.
- New inter-regional rail services need the support of both local government, central government, and an operator. [You can find out more about the process on the KiwiRail website](#).
- Central government could play a greater role in coordinating inter regional rail services. Ultimately, these services are about national connections, and it makes good sense for the central government to play an active role in coordinating and balancing priorities.
- The [New Zealand Rail Plan](#) set priorities for government investment. The current rail plan focuses on urban commuter services and scenic tourist-focused rail and ignores inter-regional passenger rail entirely. This is an obvious gap and the rail plan should be revised to include inter-regional passenger rail.

TOR #4

Gaining insights into the integration of regional rail into existing local public transport networks.

- Trains aren't much use to the travelling public if you can't get to the railway station. Passenger rail needs to be part of an integrated public and active transport system that connects trains, local buses, cyclists, pedestrians, long distance coaches, and on-demand transport. This means looking at things like:
 - Transport connections
 - Frequency and timetables
 - Station facilities
 - Ticketing
 - Use of technology
- There are plenty of examples of poor public transport integration in New Zealand, but here are a few:
 - Palmerston North Railway Station is an excellent example of the lack of public and active transport integration. Not only is the station poorly maintained, but it is in an industrial area far from the city centre. It's not adequately connected to the local bus network, nor does it have suitable facilities for bicycles.
 - Frankton Station in Hamilton is another example of our disconnected public transport system. A business traveller arriving from Auckland would be hard-pressed to find a bus service timed to Te Huia to get them to the CBD.
 - Shannon is one of the few small towns in regional New Zealand that still has a scheduled rail service. The much larger settlement of Foxton lies only 16km from Shannon, but there are no public transport options between these towns meaning that rail services are not accessible to Foxton residents unless they drive.
- Cyclists deserve specific mention. Trains provide an excellent opportunity for cyclists to bike to their local station and put their bike on the train to travel long distances.
- Another issue is accessibility. For example, passengers using wheelchairs should be able to seamlessly connect between rail and bus services.
- It's also important that we have a national ticketing system to creating a more seamless and user-friendly system. It's been discussed often, money has been set aside for it, but nothing much has happened yet.

Further reading:

[Connecting Communities 2030: A Vision for Integrated Public Transport](#)



#TheFutureIsRail

TOR #5

Investigating the climate and emissions reductions possibilities of passenger rail, and how this links to VKT (vehicle kilometres travelled) reduction targets in the Emissions Reduction Plan, and including electrification between regions.

- Transport is our second largest source of carbon emissions, and our fastest growing. Passenger rail can help reduce carbon emissions:
 - More people on trains means less cars on the roads. A New Zealand train can currently carry around 150 to 300 passengers on each service. Assuming an [occupancy rate](#) of 1.5 people per car, a single train service could take between 100 to 200 cars off the road.
 - More inter-regional trains mean less reliance on flights. We have an overreliance on air travel, but this is partly due to a lack of other options. Fast, frequent, and affordable inter-regional train services could ease the need to fly between large centres like Auckland and Tauranga, Wellington and Napier, or Christchurch to Dunedin. Also, many people live in small towns that are far from airports, they currently need to drive to the closest airport, then fly to their destination. For example, a person going from Waipawa to Wellington. For these people, catching a train from their town saves time as well as emissions.
- Electrification of our railway network means inter-regional trains could have an even bigger impact on carbon emissions. Currently long-distance trains are hauled by diesel locomotives. Electrification of rail would mean that trains wouldn't only reduce the need for driving and flying, in addition, they could also provide a low carbon method of transport around New Zealand.
- Decarbonising aviation is a challenging task and will not happen any time soon. But even if sustainable aviation fuels can be produced, they will involve a significant and ongoing use of valuable renewable energy. While there are clearly large capital investments needed to revive passenger rail, the on-going energy requirements to run them are extremely low.

Further Reading:

[Local Trains, Regional Trains and Long-Distance Trains – Low Emission Travel \(lowcarbonkapiti.org.nz\)](#)

[Can New Zealand create a low emissions public transport network? \(VUW\)](#)

[Regional Trains and Electrification - Greater Auckland](#)



TOR #6

Investigating potential rail expansions and investments in specific areas, such as Tauranga ([following a recent report on the re-introduction of passenger rail](#)) and the Lower North Island ([following a business case funded at Budget 2021](#)).

- Tauranga is part of the 'Golden Triangle', an area of considerable demographic and economic growth including Auckland and had a rail service as recently as 2001. The city has experienced remarkable population growth since that time and now boasts a population of nearly 160,000 people. Much of this growth has occurred in dormitory suburbs built alongside rail infrastructure, such as Ōmokoroa and Papamoa. A rail service between Auckland and Tauranga would also connect Tauranga with Hamilton and increase the frequency of services between Hamilton and Auckland. A Tauranga rail service requires considerable investment in rolling stock, and track and station infrastructure.
- The Lower North Island has rail lines connecting Wellington with some of New Zealand's largest towns and cities including: Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, New Plymouth, Whanganui, Palmerston North, Masterton, Feilding, Hawera, and Levin. There are plans to invest in infrastructure to increase the reliability and frequency of services to Manawatu and Wairarapa. Sensible procurement of new rolling stock could lead to the extension of services to places like Whanganui, Feilding and further afield.
- Investment and rail expansion in the Lower North Island and the Golden Triangle could provide economies of scale that enable the development of an interconnected national rail network.
- This bullet includes the phrase 'such as', so we don't need to limit our discussion to Tauranga and the Lower North Island. For example, other potential rail expansion and investment could include:
 - Fast, frequent and affordable Auckland – Wellington and Picton - Christchurch services
 - Night trains in both islands
 - Canterbury and Dunedin regional commuter rail services
 - A Bay of Islands to Rotorua service connecting major tourist centres
 - Other new regional services
 - Building of new tracks to connect unserved areas

Further Reading:

[Introducing Regional Rapid Rail - Greater Auckland](#)

[Night Train Could Help Break Public Sector's Addiction to Air Travel | Newsroom](#)