Narrator: Every year we spend billions of dollars on the transport system in New Zealand because investments we make and transport can be around for fifty to a hundred years we need to think very carefully before we invest.

Traditionally we have analysed the trends of past years and then forecast that car travel will continue to see the same sort of growth over future years. However, since 2004 the steady and predictable increase in car travel began to plateau and in some countries even decline. There is no professional consensus on the amount of car travel in the future. Will it return to steady growth? Stay flat? Or decline?

This new trend means we need to rethink our future investments for transport. We can no longer solely rely on the past to tell us what will happen in the future. We need to take a different approach. We cannot predict the future but we can explore the possibilities for how New Zealand could develop in the years ahead. We can highlight the range of ways our country could develop over time by considering different but equally possible future scenarios.

There are multitudes of factors involved with future transport demand, but two that we can use to focus our thinking are: the cost of fuel and how New Zealanders embrace digital technology. What could happen to the way you do things a fuel prices rose dramatically or fell sharply and what if we embrace digital technologies that allow us to work shop and play from the comfort of our homes.

These factors can be explored in four scenarios of what New Zealand may look like in the future.

In the travellers paradise future scenario New Zealand is awash with cheap energy which is powering rapid growth. We prefer to connect with one another face-to-face as digital life feels less authentic. Cities have grown rapidly and despite our desire to move congestion is the bane of our existence with a projected increase in traffic of 35 percent.

In the cooperative and close future high energy costs of forcing people to choose their home and workplace carefully. We want to be physically close to friends, family, shopping and work, then we are prepared to share a lot more to achieve this. Traffic in this scenario decreases by three percent.

As global locals, high energy prices drive changes in how we do things and we have adapted to not moving as far from home. Early investment and energy efficient and virtual technologies has paid off and we now access the world and a lot of what we need from our home computer, dramatically decreasing our traffic by 53%.

Finally the digital decadence future sees us embracing virtual technologies gadgets are embedded in everything we do. Digital connectivity is now a basic human right and we can connect anywhere and anytime. Projecting a future with 24% less traffic than today.

As we can see the future could turn out in a variety of ways. There could be a dramatic difference in how communities travel from a significant increase of 35% more traffic to a 53% decrease on our roads. We don't know which way it will be but we can do things today to help shape a transport system that supports New Zealand's prosperity.

We need to take a different approach to thinking about our transport system to make it flexible and to ensure we have access to the opportunities we want. This flexibility will help ensure we don't waste money on something we don't need or fail to build something that we do.

Together as a country we can decide the type of New Zealand we want, in the transport system we want. We can then help to shape and support that system. In this way we can ensure New Zealand has a transport system that needs to thrive.