

Workshop for RTC objective and cultural representatives 31 March 2009

This event was held on 31 March in Wellington and was jointly organised by the Ministry of Transport (MoT), the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), in close association with Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ).

The main purpose of the day was to provide information for the objective and cultural representatives, to clarify their roles and responsibilities and to increase their understanding of transport, the relevant legislation and emerging government policies.

Almost 100 people attended (including 58 regional transport committee members, 14 chairs of RTCs as well as others from the organising entities).

Minister Joyce addressed the event and presentations were also given by Wayne Donnelly (MoT), Rosemary Barrington (MoT), Nick Brown (MoT) and Mark Yaxley (NZTA).

The programme began with Martin Matthews, the Secretary of Transport, welcoming the attendees and thanking them for their attendance.

This was immediately followed by group discussions (**Agenda item 2**) for the representatives and the chairs to identify the key issues for them and their priorities for the day.

Wayne Donnelly (**Agenda item 8**) identified the groups' key issues as being grouped under two headings: the role of the representatives and their involvement in the planning process as well as the impact of the changed GPS.

- The key questions raised by the objective representatives related to the expectations for their role and how could they contribute to the work of the committee.
- He encouraged the representatives to actively seek information and the views of groups that have an interest in their objective and to work with all the other members of the committee.
- He acknowledged that achieving a balance between the objectives was something that would have to be worked through in the months ahead. He reminded the audience of the Minister's priority statements around facilitating recovery from the current economic recession.

Agenda item 3 - Nick Brown's presentation focused on Transport in NZ and its key characteristics. He provided an overview of road, rail, public transport, walking and cycling, freight, the planning and funding process, regional land transport strategies and regional land transport programmes as well as the role of RTCs.

Agenda item 4 - Wayne Donnelly's presentation followed with a more detailed examination of the role of the representatives and how they can influence regional land transport strategies as well as an overview of LTMA objectives for land transport. He emphasised that while programming and funding played a major part, other national and regional policy settings could have a major influence on achieving the objectives.

Agenda item 5 - Mark Yaxley (NZTA Regional Director for Canterbury and West Coast) gave a presentation on the NZTA Planning and Funding System. He covered

such topics as the NLTP and RTPs, funding sources, the prioritisation process, and NZTA strategic priorities for the next three years.

Agenda item 6 - Rosemary Barrington's presentation focused on representing an objective and the relationship with committee processes.

- The representatives have a region-wide responsibility.
- Their liaison with groups associated with their particular objective will enable them to draw on the knowledge and experience of these groups when representing the objective on the committee.
- She emphasised that the work on regional land transport strategies that is ahead of the RTCs is very important and that the representatives' special knowledge about their objectives will be a vital contribution to the strategies.
- She encouraged them to have a long-term focus as the regional land transport strategies have a 30 year vision.
- She also noted that the five objectives are not discrete boxes and there is a need for a balanced approach.

Agenda item 7 - Minister Joyce addressed the audience.

- He expressed his appreciation for their attendance and for their involvement in RTCs. He also acknowledged that the change of government and its changed priorities was having an impact on local government's role in transport.
- He discussed the government's goals and the actions government wishes to take. This included the deficit in infrastructure investment, streamlining and simplifying the regulatory environment (for example changes to the RMA are about quicker decision making - not necessarily changing decisions), the importance of immediate fiscal stimulus (as announced in February), the proposed changes to the GPS and the roads of national significance. The primary goal for the government is economic growth.
- He also acknowledged that local government has to deal with the natural tensions that develop from conflicting perspectives on transport and he urged the RTCs to resolve them through the work that they do alongside the NZTA.
- He also spoke of a slower trajectory of spending on public transport and emphasised that investment in modes must be matched to what is realistically achievable and that unless there was a major initiative that was transformational that would continue to be the case in the short-term.

Agenda item 9 was a two hour session for separate workshops for the six objectives as well as a separate session for the RTC chairs. Key objectives for this session included offering the opportunity for representatives to be able to clarify issues that have arisen as a result of their positions on RTCs and to exchange ideas and discuss issues with other representatives.

Agenda item 10 -The final session of the day saw the audience reconvene for a report back from all the groups on the key issues that had arisen during the two hour session.

Access and mobility

Interpreting the objective

- The definition of access and mobility needs further clarification - it is a very broad objective that relates to all the others.
- Need better indicators related to the objective - eg more data related to crashes involving the disabled, cyclists and pedestrians.

Undertaking their role

- Stressed the importance of knowing their regions well.
- Identified a need to work more closely with other committee members and increase networking with other groups in the region.
- There was general support for having alternates.

Future and follow up

- Appreciated the day's workshop - found it useful to meet with others and to learn of the varying experiences on RTCs.
- Interested in maintaining the contact - perhaps via a website (which could contain links to research), or an email group.

Economic development

Interpreting the objective

- "Transport is an enabler of activity, prosperity and community resilience."
- It is important to maintain a broad context and a long-term horizon even if the central government focus may be on short-term response to recession. Does this mean an absolute focus on cities and towns at the cost of regions? Important to be attuned to local context - keep eyes on big, long-term challenges and assess economic benefits of local decisions.
- Need to stick to long-term strategy (30 -50 years) and not be diverted by political change.
- Is there a need to think about transport less from a legislative framework and more from a strategic and overarching regional development strategy point of view?
- Use regional land transport strategies as a framework and for decision-making with scope for flexible responses.
- Would be helpful to have a greater awareness of other related regional strategies.
- Transport should be responding to projected economic needs, rather than vice versa.
- The priority is efficiency and productivity in transport and it is important to understand what is needed but also important is an increased focus on better use of existing assets.
- It is important for economic recovery to be linked to better land use and urban form.

Future and follow up

- The challenge is in getting the economic voice heard by the RTCs.

Environmental sustainability

- Because of the overlapping issues, both public health and environmental sustainability representatives met in one group for the first ten minutes of the session.

Interpreting the objective

- The overlapping of objectives was felt keenly by many, with a frustration that each objective is given a prescriptive set of narrow, compartmentalised functions.

Undertaking their role

- Most of the representatives are volunteers and not attached to an organisation and this raises issues of capacity, access to information from the wider community and effectiveness in influencing the committee.
- Many representatives feel they are often unable to be effective in their roles as they lack the resources and support received by the other members of the Committee.
- It was also apparent that relationships within the committees, between non-elected and elected members, and with the Chair, often need to be improved to enable the committees to perform their role in reaching balanced decisions.
- Noted that often other committee members are not as informed on issues around the objectives and that as a result the objective reps are often expected to provide information, data and reports to back their statements but the reps do not have the time or the capacity to do so. They need the support from central agencies like MoT, NZTA, MfE, and Ministry of Health (MoH).
- Noted that the transport officers are often over-stretched and under-resourced themselves and often do not have a public health and environmental skill set.
- Have the perception that their interests often either do not make it onto the committee agenda, or are 'dropped off' in the decision-making process - do not want to be a rubber stamp for decision making done at the TAG level.
- Non-representation of objectives on the technical advisory groups that provide advice to the Transport Committees is seen as an issue, which if addressed could strengthen their roles.
- Both groups expressed disappointment that useful tools such as Health Impacts are not being incorporated into transport planning.
- Noted that across the country there was a range of issues and differing focus for the representatives on their RTCs.
- A disconnect seems to exist between strategies and programmes.

Future and follow up

- Appreciated the Workshop and hoped that the contact would continue.

Public health

Interpreting the objective

- The focus is too narrow - the objective is broader than just the issues of noise and emissions - the World Health Organisation sees transport as one of the determinants of health and this includes social and mental health (eg isolation and restricted access to transport options).

Undertaking their role

- Issues of capacity and resourcing - many of the representatives are voluntary whereas others are on the committee as part of their job and have the resources of their organisation available to them. This creates inequities.
- The expectation that the representatives interact more with groups in their regions who have an interest in the objective was potentially onerous for the representatives who are voluntary.
- See a responsibility to provide more knowledge on the objective to the whole committee and work more closely with the whole committee because they are aware that social and health issues are not always understood in an environment that seems often too focused on where to put roads.

Future and follow up

- Matt Soeberg, (MoH) is keen to support the public health representatives by looking at what information the reps would find useful from a central government

level including how to distribute best practice guidance about HIA in transport planning decisions. He is also willing to help co-ordinate and support an e-mail group of public health objective representatives.

Safety and personal security

Undertaking their role

- Safety was not a standing agenda item at all RTC meetings.
- Representatives acknowledged that they could play a greater role in developing a broader understanding of safety and ensuring that they were correctly representing the important safety issues of the region.
- There was good discussion on how local government could make a difference e.g. speed limit setting, safety standards on roads etc.
- Many of the representatives are serving police officers and they acknowledged that this means they have access to the support of the NZ Police and personnel such as RPP managers.

Cultural

The cultural representatives had a broad and valuable korero about:

- The role of the Cultural representatives, as described in the Land Transport Management Act, and the practicalities of working in their respective regions.
- The Crown's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi, the need to ensure Māori participation in the land transport decision-making process (set out in the LTMA) and the importance of Māori processes and values within this.
- The opportunities and challenges for Māori within both the regional land transport planning process and broader economic and government policy developments.
- Seeing the role as monitoring the RTC processes to ensure they fulfill the cultural component. Cultural appropriateness is something the whole RTC should be responsible for, not just the Cultural appointee. Our task should be to hold RTC accountable by monitoring their plans and processes and asking "***Where is the cultural component of this plan or process?***" It is then up to them to demonstrate where this is and how it fits.

Future and follow up

- Those in attendance were appreciative of the opportunity to make contact with each other face-to-face in this hui. It was agreed that further discussions were needed and it would be good for the Cultural representatives to continue networking by e-mail. They would also welcome the opportunity to meet again like this on a regular basis.

Agenda item 11- RTC Chairs

- The Chairs value the input of the representatives but to increase their influence the objective representatives need to develop relationships with the other representatives, their Chairs and other members of the RTCs. They should approach their Chair when they have issues.
- The Chairs recognise the challenging nature of the role of the representatives in providing regional coverage for their respective objectives. There are a range of ways that the Chairs and committee can assist and support the objective representatives in that task, including workshops and forums.
- The Chairs understand the perception that as a result of the recent emphasis on planning and programmes that some objective representatives have been feeling unengaged but that as the focus moves to RLTS they will have a key role,

including the ability to vote in the development of the RLTS. (Note that all RLTSs will be reviewed in the next two years.)

- Although some RTCs are currently meeting almost monthly, this is related to the RLTP development process. The ongoing requirements will be significantly less in the future which decreases the likelihood of alternates being needed. However, if alternates are used they must be briefed and have sufficient knowledge of the objective area to ensure continuity for the committee. Appointment of alternates will be subject to regional councils' standing orders.

Agenda item 12 - Feedback

Evaluation sheets were filled out by nearly 60% of participants and the overall response was very positive.

Attendees acknowledged the challenges of the venue - too small for the numbers involved - but most appreciated the suitability of the location at Airport rather than in the city and the savings in time and cost.

There was a general appreciation of the workshop being organised and feedback indicated that it had helped representatives to increase their understanding of both their role on the RTC and the government's emerging transport policies. Also many representatives commented that they had found it valuable to meet other representatives and to be able to discuss issues and concerns of common interest. The hope was expressed that there would be further opportunities to meet.

The Minister's attendance was appreciated.

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