

# AKBIDS

## **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS OF AUCKLAND**

11 May 2018

Auckland Regional Transport Committee  
C/O Auckland Council  
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### **Submission to Proposed Regional Fuel Tax and Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28**

#### **Introduction**

AKBIDS – the Business Improvement Districts of Auckland - is a collective of BIDs that come together to give feedback when required as ‘one voice’ at an Auckland regional level.

There are currently 48 BIDs in Auckland, representing over 25,000 businesses with a combined capital value estimated at \$24 billion. Through the BID programme, Auckland’s BIDs work with the Auckland Council to improve the local business environment and grow the regional economy.

The Auckland Regional Transport Committee is seeking feedback on the Proposed Regional Fuel Tax and Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28. Your on-line form sets out four key questions.<sup>1</sup>

Given the short timeframe for this consultation for a plan of such pivotal importance to Auckland, AKBIDS hasn’t been able to reach consensus on the funding mechanism for the RLTP in its entirety, however, our feedback on these questions is set out below.

In summary:

- we agree that rapid population growth in Auckland has brought with it significant transport challenges and we support the focus in your proposals on public and active transport, which will free up road capacity;
- our preference is that demand management of our existing transport network be a key solution (following ‘user pays’ approaches, such as congestion charging);
- although AKBIDS initially supported the proposed RFT; the government’s proposed fuel excise duty increase and equivalent road user charge increases, has caused additional concerns. Individual BIDs will make their own submissions on the RFT.
- we are concerned that the significant works planned (such as cycleways and light rail), will result in disruption detrimental to businesses and we ask that any disruption be properly mitigated (and transparently funded through a development response budget)

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://at.govt.nz/about-us/transport-plans-strategies/regional-land-transport-plan/>

- road corridor improvements together with enhancing network capacity are a priority for us to make better use of the existing transport network and decrease travel times through key routes and corridors.

### **Question (1) – Draft Regional Fuel Tax Proposal**

*Your on-line consultation says that without a Regional Fuel Tax (RFT), the funding available will only cover renewing our existing transport network and the projects we have already committed to, eg the City Rail Link. You say that to enable you to deliver projects that improve congestion, public transport and road safety, you recommend an RFT of 10 cents per litre plus GST (11.5 cents). You have asked for our opinion on this proposal, and especially if we support it, are neutral or oppose this proposal.*

We agree with your assessment that rapid population growth has brought challenges, including increased congestion, reduced accessibility, increased deaths and serious injuries on the road network, and increasing negative impacts on the environment.<sup>2</sup> We also accept that we are not going to address this problem simply by building more roads. Demand management of our existing network has to be a key solution, especially creating priority for freight and delivery movements.

We do recognise the need to raise more funding for transport projects and services.

Our preference is to introduce initiatives that both manage demand and raise funding equitably as soon as possible (such as congestion charging), balanced with investment into affordable and more frequent public transport in order to effect sustainable behavioural change.<sup>3</sup> This is important to support business and employment growth in line with population growth.

In the interim, while we initially supported a regional fuel tax of 10 cents per litre (plus GST), the previously unannounced additional 9-12 cent per litre national fuel tax (to be brought in over the next three years) will place a further unexpected financial burden on business. This is likely to cause a supply chain knock-on effect that may deliver unintended consequences such as price rises on consumer goods and services.

AKBIDS have not been able to reach a consensus on the RFT and will make their own submissions on this.

### **Question (2) –Regional Fuel Tax Projects**

*Your on-line consultation says that you are proposing to spend the Regional Fuel Tax (RFT) on various programmes and projects, including: (1) Bus priority improvements; (2) City centre bus infrastructure (facilities); (3) Improving airport access; (4) AMETI Eastern Busway; (5) Park and rides; (6) Electric trains and stabling (storage facilities); (7) Downtown ferry redevelopment; (8) Road safety; (9) Active transport (walking and cycling); (10) Penlink; (11) Mill Road Corridor; (12) Road corridor improvements; (13) Network capacity and performance improvements; and (14) Growth related transport infrastructure (transport services and facilities for new housing developments). You have asked how important these projects are for us.*

While individual BIDs will comment on specific projects, collectively we support the shift of focus to public and active transport. Our support is based on modelling and business case evidence supplied by Auckland Council and their agencies, which indicates investment across public and active transport modes will free up road capacity, especially for freight and business traffic.

However, our learnings from recent examples mean that we hold major concerns with the significant works planned (such as light rail) and some of those already underway (such as cycleways) that there will be harmful disruption to businesses during construction and over the longer term. In the interests of the Auckland economy, it is of utmost importance to us that a

<sup>2</sup> See *Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28*, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> One concern we have with a regional fuel tax is that some people who will use the Auckland motorway system (e.g. driving into Auckland from the regions or driving through Auckland), will purchase fuel outside Auckland and avoid the tax.

comprehensive strategic development plan be implemented so that any business disruption be identified, minimised and avoided where possible through careful project management and adequately funded initiatives be designed and actioned to remedy and mitigate any disruption that is unavoidable.

While each BID will be responding as they believe necessary to their own individual priorities, overall, we have identified (Item No. 12) Road corridor improvements as well as (Item No. 13) Network capacity and performance improvements, as being very important to all BIDs.

With regard to road corridor improvements, we agree that congestion on the arterial network is a significant concern, especially congestion on the freight network. While we agree that corridor improvement is important, we ask that the emphasis be first on improving connections to existing urban areas, the efficiency of existing urban corridors and improving access to the Ports of Auckland port and Auckland Airport.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to network capacity and performance improvements, we agree that Auckland needs to make better use of its existing transport system to increase the number of people who can travel through key routes and corridors. We also support Auckland ensuring that the operation of existing transport infrastructure and services are optimised. The efficiency and coordination of traffic signals must be improved to enhance throughput and reduce delays. More dynamic traffic lanes must be introduced to improve peak traffic flows, and give priority to freight movements on key freight connections.<sup>5</sup>

### **Question (3) – Regional Land Transport Plan**

*Your on-line consultation says that Auckland's recent significant population growth has increased demand on the transport system and caused challenges that need to be addressed over the 10 years of the plan. These issues include safety, congestion, decreases in accessibility, impact on the environment, support growth in the region. You have asked whether we think you have correctly identified the most important transport challenges facing Auckland.*

While we agree overall with the challenges you have identified (safety, congestion, decreases in accessibility, impact on the environment and supporting growth), as you also note, improving network capacity and performance by making the most of the existing transport system is key.

You have properly said that this must focus on optimising the transport network through targeted changes, such as improving the coordination of traffic lights, the use of dynamic lanes at peak times, and removing bottlenecks to mitigate congestion. Maximising the benefits from new technology and taking opportunities to influence travel demand are also important, as well as introducing pricing to address congestion as soon as possible.<sup>6</sup>

Collectively, improving network capacity and performance has been identified as the highest priority transport challenge in this joint submission, followed closely by the other factors outlined in the Plan.

### **Question (4) – Funding Activities**

*Your on-line consultation asks us to indicate how important the following areas are to us: (1) Safety; (2) Public transport; (3) Walking and cycling; (4) Supporting growth areas; (5) Environment; (6) Network capacity and performance; and (7) Corridor and roading improvements. You have also asked if there are any other projects or activities we think should be included.*

Again, as noted above, overall we believe network capacity and performance as well as road corridor improvements are very important, with the remaining areas also being important to us

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<sup>4</sup> See Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28, page 45.

<sup>5</sup> See Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28, page 40.

<sup>6</sup> See Draft Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan 2018-28, page 40.

## **Conclusions**

While we welcome the release of the Regional Land Transport Plan as well as the Auckland Transport Alignment Project Report and the greater clarity this now brings to funding requirements, expenditure and broad delivery timeframes for transport projects across Auckland, we also need more detail on the precise timing and the relative priorities for both the funded and unfunded projects set out in the Plan.

It is also of utmost importance to us that early and clear channels of collaborative communication are established between the delivery agencies (such as Auckland Transport) and individual BIDs as well as key stakeholders in those areas affected by the planned works in order to facilitate a smoother transition and a more efficient outcome for the projects.