

# Submission to the Infrastructure Commission, July 5, 2021

## He Tūāpapa ki te ora - Infrastructure for a Better Future

Kia ora koutou,

thank you for this opportunity to make a submission on these vital issues. Thank you for extending the deadline until tomorrow, July 6 and apologies that my submission is less full than I would have liked due to time constraints. I start with my main point and then work quickly through the rest of the document.

1. We need coordinated design and management of our national transport network, over all sectors. Currently we have Te Waka Kotahi/NZTA - but no similar coordination of ports or airports.

This is problematic, as the result is a lack of strategic thinking about and planning for our air and sea travel networks and how these might be coordinated for greater efficiency, climate change mitigation and community/environmental/economic well-being when looking at the overall transport equation.

The most clear-cut case of this problem is that of Central Otago airports - where competing local authorities are vying for this most profitable of routes, with the very real prospect that we will end up with three international airports within 50 km of each other, each one hosted by a hostile community, if the current governance structure remains.

Very quick summary of this – Christchurch International Airport Ltd has its Tarras International Airport proposal versus Queenstown Lakes District Council with its recently overturned illegal lease of the Wanaka Airport to Queenstown Airport Corporation and its plans to expand Queenstown Airport's air noise boundaries despite consistent and strong (over 90% of more than 1500 submissions in 2018 and equally strong response in the council commissioned MartinJenkins socio-economic report, 2020). Both airport companies are run as CCTO's. Both have minority external shareholders (the government in CIAL case and Auckland International Airport Ltd in QAC).

The resultant decision-making process achieves neither purpose of the LGA (enabling democracy and promoting the four community wellbeings), and nor does it achieve the best transport network structure for the country in terms of efficiency, dispersal of tourists, climate change mitigation et cetera.

Nor does it adequately address the huge question of what would be the best use of limited and valuable land resource in this area? ZQN's runway cannot be expanded, so its long-term capacity is physically constrained. It is the most dangerous airport in New Zealand. It is slap bang in the middle of New Zealand's most valuable resort land - impacting negatively on a community that was growing increasingly hostile to tourists with pre-Covid over-tourism. It is expected to return to this level by 2024. And it locks up land way beyond its geographic bounds, in an area seriously afflicted by housing unaffordability.

The ZQN land is the most tectonically stable, flattest, sunniest, most developable land parcel in the Wakatipu - and it already has the roading, civic, sporting, retail, educational, community resources and three waters infrastructure required for it to be intensively developed. Instead, council's leadership team and QAC want to expand the air noise boundary (i.e. allow more planes to use it, creating more noise and all the other downstream ramifications like over tourism...) so it can continue until it finally hits its maximum usage.

This political direction meant that discussion of alternative use of this land was not allowed in either spatial plan or Frankton masterplan workshops. Nor was it allowed in the supposedly independent MartinJenkins socio-economic report of alternative airport scenarios. The ban on blue sky thinking was dictated by a council led by a mayor who is also chair of the South Island's largest tourism company, Wayfare Group, despite calls for such discussion in each forum. And despite the fact that these three documents are meant to give the strategic and community input to the airport's long-term planning.

The mooted expansion of the air noise boundary alone would mean loss of amenity and development rights for 4000 more properties within the boundaries' net. So not only do we lose potential alternative uses of this most valuable land - we also lose the use and enjoyment of huge swathes of land owned by others suffering its increasing noise impact. With no recompense except for those within the uninhabitable dB zone.

It is notable that in 2018, in a submission to QAC's air noise boundary expansion proposal, Air New Zealand's then CEO Chris Luxon advocated for a new regional Central Otago international airport in recognition of some of the above factors at ZQN.

My recommendation to the Infrastructure Commission is that there be reform to enable coordination and development of nationally significant transport infrastructure at a central level and that such decision-making be taken away from the small and siloed thinking of local authorities.

2. I don't believe the term "zero carbon 2050" is adequately described. We do not want to end up with band aid solutions of buying overseas carbon credits and creating a monoculture of pine forests. We need to move on from 20<sup>th</sup>-century thinking of constant growth and swelling swathes of tarmac. Switching from petrol/diesel cars to electric cars won't in itself solve the problem. This requires a huge shift in mindset, from both our infrastructure planners and the community. But the lead must be from the infrastructure planners. The planners who believed in the priority place of vehicles and ever-expanding highways have got us to this point. It is time for them to move over and give the next generation of infrastructure planners the chance to make the changes we now need. We also will then need people skilled in change-making to help those wedded to the current economic and transport models move on. Before much worse is foisted on us by failure to act in time.
3. We need more emphasis on provision of investment in active and public transport. Including public water transport. On page 35, for example, there is not even mention of the need for public transport to reduce private vehicle use. How come? But modal

shift will only occur if we simultaneously disincentivise private vehicle use - most people won't get off their butts and onto buses or bikes unless it hits their wallet and/or time budget.

4. From my perspective of relative ignorance (apologies), the Auckland harbour cycle bridge would seem an example of how not to go about such planning. Acknowledging this is a Southerner's perspective taken from news media reports, it would seem that grassroots level input has been ignored with the result that a gold-plated proposed solution is meeting huge public pushback - when a cheap and relatively easy to apply option (trial of the use of one of the existing harbour bridge lanes) could instead be trialled first. If it works as planners and proponents forecast, then it will achieve enough modal shift to have a positive rather than negative effect on car commuters' experience. This would in turn create support for, rather than antagonism against, provision of active transport networks. This is perhaps an example of where a change in fundamental approach of those leading the infrastructural shift is needed. Work with and through your community.
5. The need for a just transition - where costs are not loaded disproportionately on the poorest people - needs greater focus and a mitigation plan.
6. Infrastructural needs should be framed within the need for a change in fundamental consumption and energy use. The Climate Commission and IPCC reports clearly show we can't carry on as we have been. Infrastructural networks are by nature long-term investments - so whatever we create is baked into our physical, economic and mental landscape for generations. Once again, we want to make sure the infrastructure network we create is fit for purpose for the future, not for the past. How do we support low carbon lifestyles and what shifts in in our thinking, infrastructure and economy will this require?
7. Discussion question five: this seems to put a big responsibility on local councils that currently seems unlikely to be achieved. Local government reform will hopefully help, as they need some new tools to give teeth to good intentions such as up-zoning and increasing public transport and a better range of skilled staff and councillors. Otherwise, developers' deep pockets will keep winning the greenfields versus brownfields debate, so that the resultant developments' infrastructure web continues to thinly (and inefficiently) disperse across the landscape. Council might also need government support to ensure that public transport networks can be developed, even when not yet economic, to become affordable, regular and accessible.
8. Discussion questions 25 to 27: Leaky buildings and rivers and lakes we can no longer swim in show the results of over-permissive regulation/deregulation of some sectors. Without a healthy environment - for both natural ecosystems and our communities - the quest for economic well-being is ephemeral. We need to have real engagement, at a national level, on the issues involved.

Again, many thanks for this opportunity to submit and your work on these issues.

Ngā mihi nui, [REDACTED]