

Regional Transport Committee meeting - 3rd August 2011

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The meeting today got away promptly at 1000hrs.

Chairman John Bain welcomed all for their effort attending.

Apologies (Item No 1) were received for 2 persons; Mr Tony Norman (Public Health representative) and Mr Steve Westgate (Environmental Sustainability representative)

Mr Bain also explained the emergency exits and restroom facilities that were available.

Item No 2. Conflicts of Interest and the chair stated that any 'Conflicts of Interest' were to be advised item by item as they progressed through the agenda and any appropriate action to be taken.

Time now 1001hrs and Item No. 3 Presentation - Kamo Bypass - Whangarei District Council. Mr Jeff Devine, WDC Rooding Manager, had not been able to attend the meeting for some unknown reason, as even Greg Martin was surprised he wasn't there. Mr Greg Martin had concerns about the damage to Kamo Road and had numerous phone calls 'from people having issues crossing the road to the Lotto shop'.

Cr John Bain commented that he too had monitored the situation after phone calls had been made to him. He believed, when he had checked it out, that the phasing of the traffic lights were an issue and changes would need to be made. Sadly the holdup had been weather dependant.

Mr Stephen Town, from NZ Transport Agency, explained that the project had initially been programmed to end early December. The project because of working 24 hours daily on it had hastened its progress but weather had more recently caused delays.

They would certainly look at making changes to the traffic light phases in the interim.

Cr John Bain claimed he had looked at some of the work, when he was down looking for golf balls. *Probably on the 14th hole a par 4, if they are white and dimpled John, they are possibly mine. Had heard you sold night vision goggles, but golf balls also?*

He continued that we have got to be patient, but we could make it better.

Cr Joe Carr claimed that the roundabout at Pipiwai Road was working well.

Cr John Bain, sideswiping about bringing up old chestnuts, commented that a roundabout at Maunu/ Western Hills would be better.

Mr Greg Martin, *having to get in a little dig*, said with all the problems with traffic from Kamo, Tikipunga etc it's obvious we needed the by-pass.

Item No.4 at 1012hrs, Confirmation of Minutes of Regional Transport Committee Meeting 8 June 2011 - and page by page there were opportunities to receive comments from members present. Being no issues, it was on to the next item.

On to the Information Reports at 1013hrs Item No 5.1 Facilities for the Disposal of Stock Effluent from Trucks – Progress Report

Chris Powell, Transport Operations Senior Programme Manager, gave a brief on the update on the facilities for Stock Effluent.

Cr Joe Carr claimed that these facilities needed to have a slope on them to allow Stock trucks to drain properly or it was a waste of money building them level as he had found. Mr Tom Baker asked why such valid comments were not made in the earlier planning stages.

Joe Carr insisted they were made.

Mr Greg Martin's, *words of wisdom*, "Might need a farmer on that committee." *Greg there are a number of farmers on the committee 'next door' and some of their ideas they have come up with on a number of projects aren't all that smart at times. They certainly like to spend plenty though, so are they the right farmers on that committee?.*

Item No. 5.2 (1018hrs) Regional Road Safety Update

Mr Howeth Mountain, Access and Mobility representative, gave a brief but informative report on the road safety update. An interesting informative update - (read it on the agenda pages 11-31) about the good work this group is doing. *Why didn't you explain how one of your road safety stalwarts, Mr Williamson (WDC Councillor) who is an avid road safety campaigner, doesn't know what broken yellow lines are for? The law expects 16 year olds going for their drivers licence to know that broken yellow lines mean no stopping, no parking, no off loading etc; but JW doesn't?*

It's now 1023hrs Item No 5.3. Northland Regional Land Transport Programme 2009-2012 Funding Uptake

Chris Powell gave a brief explaining that this was a progress report from each council.

Cr John Bain made comments about an article published regarding a helicopter flight 'single engine I might add' (*yes John but it may be Category 1*) of politicians to inspect projects like Bulls Gorge realignment. *Strange didn't local politicians fly around Whangarei recently looking at projects (Port, Refinery, Roading projects etc) recently in one of his taxis?*

Mr Tom Baker of Far North District Council felt some comments were unjust.

Cr John Bain retaliated promptly claiming Far North District Council was involved with early discussion.

Cr Joe Carr had concerns that when they were discussing different region figures; when we scream out for funding we must ensure the funding is spent. He finished with a question; 'had the Lower Hatea bridge reached its' benefit cost ratio?' *A quick glance over to our left and we had Greg Martin (WDC) looking a little sheepish.*

Item No 5.4 (1030hrs) Bay of Islands Airport Review

Cr Joe Carr revealed some history that they had suggested a 'departure tax' but FNDC had not appeared to have actioned that.

Mr Tom Baker advised that FNDC was going through the enforcement stages; bylaws etc and LGNZ (Local Government New Zealand) were helping them with that.

Mr Ken Rintoul, Economic Development representative, being ex board member of Far North Holdings (business arm of FNDC) and FNH being airport operator he had an insight into operations. In the past they had tried to implement changes, departure tax initiative etc and it had been squashed with Air New Zealand going to parliament to stop the changes. It was believed that particular route is profitable to Air NZ and they were protecting it.

Cr John Bain informed that he had attended a meeting about a larger airstrip at Kaikohe to bring flights from Australia for a Bay of Islands destination. There is an old US military airfield but \$35million was needed and the question of funding was an issue.

Mr Ken Rintoul gave enforcement that they used to land bombers in Kaikohe.

Cr Joe Carr suggested that it was most important to protect the opportunity for the future; no District Plan has this area designated. He added that there should be no tall buildings in close proximity and reverse sensitivity issues addressed to protect it.

Mr Tom Baker advised that the airfield was classified by CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) as recreational etc.

Item No 5.5 1040hrs and Vaughan Cooper Review of Rail in Northland – Progress Report

Vaughan Cooper, Growth and Infrastructure Manager, gave an in-depth update on what stage they were at. He suggested Kiwi Rail join the working group.

Mr Ken Rintoul asked if they will have the reports available in September.

Vaughan Cooper continued that there was a 'Health Impact assessment' being done. It was on the agenda this month for the Auckland Transport Committee. We must develop a plan for the future of rail, we must engage with the freight movers (Fonterra, Golden Bay and forestry). Forestry plants need to be near rail lines. Building new clients is the key to the future of rail. *In my opinion rail was great in the earlier years but failed through pilfering and bad management. Here is a great opportunity for rail to prosper into our future. People attempting to close it down appear to have interests in the trucking and freight industries. Is there more money for them by using their businesses rather than promoting an efficient rail transport system? Hint....Check 'Companies Office' for conflicts of interest. Some use their 'nick names' for some businesses and full name for Co office details.*

Cr John Bain advised the objective was to double the freight.

Cr Craig Brown queried 'what effort is Kiwi Rail doing to increase rail use?' as he had not seen an advertising campaign.

Vaughan Cooper also queried 'where is their marketing arm in Northland'.

Craig Brown added that with the proposed developments in Bream Bay of the universities etc and land use being changed it was a pity to 'write off rail'.

Ken Rintoul commended Vaughan on what he was doing. He would also like to see the working groups appoint a 'fearless leader' to liaise with Vaughan rather than everyone annoying him. *I have to agree with Ken, Vaughan does seem to be very proactive in his projects he is tasked to do.*

Craig Brown in support commented that it was imperative to nominate someone that had a desire for rail; not someone with a desire to kill it.

Cr John Bain insisted that they must involve the new CEO for NRC (soon to be appointed) as had previously occurred.

Greg Martin advised that they need people with vision on the committee; communication is crucial with all information.

On to the Decision Reports at 1052hrs Item No 6.1 Draft Northland Regional Land Transport Programme 2012-2015. (This agenda item is worth a read; pages 43-52) Mr Chris Powell gave an update on this to the committee. *Chris always gives a professional perspective to the projects he is involved with....or is it the accent that gives this reassurance.*

Craig Brown confirmed that this was a 'tried and true' process and insisted that all (districts, councilors & staff) should be well advised of the process.

Mr Ken Rintoul asked that some compassion be shown to the FNDC as their roads are 5 years behind those of Whangarei.

It's now 1107hrs and onto Item No 6.2 Preparation of a Regional Public Transport Plan – Progress Report

Mr Chris Powell was again asked to speak to this giving an update of detail of the June meeting.

Cr John Bain asked Chris to elaborate on the Cebec /Kaitaia Bus issue.

Chris Powell did this commenting that rural operators had a struggle and NRC has supported an application to NZTA (New Zealand Transport Agency) for assistance for their assistance to Cebec.

Item No 6.3 (1114hrs) New Zealand Transport Agency Proposed Changes to Financial Assistance Rates

Mr Chris Powell gave a brief on this item.

Mr Stephen Town (NZTA) responding to a question said a paper was coming up on Friday to discuss so he was unable to comment.

Chris Powell advised the meeting that volunteers do so much at the rest stops over the holiday periods is important that funding continues for these initiatives.

It's now 1120hrs and on to Item 6.4 Proposed Changes to the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

Vaughan Cooper informed that this was about streamlining the decision making criteria, resulting in effective, efficient and safe policies. This results in significant changes to regional planning.

Mr Tom Baker confirmed it was for the benefit of the region; the Regional Transport Committee was to provide unity of the regions.

The meeting finished at 1130hrs and there was time for a bit of casual discussion of General Business. *I must say John, a good way to round the meeting off. Pleased to see it as sometimes there are issues that members present wish to openly discuss and possibly don't get discussed as some may think they don't warrant the formalities of a motion.*

Cr John Bain had a few issues he wanted to air, one being having a politically appropriate "transport system". *I thought we had that in the form of BMW's for those who frequent Wellington and are unable to drive themselves around.*

Here ended the meeting at 1145hrs so it is now off for lunch.