

## **Submission on the draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2018 (GPS)**

To the Ministry of Transport  
[gps2018@transport.govt.nz](mailto:gps2018@transport.govt.nz)  
Attn: GPS Policy Team  
Ministry of Transport  
PO Box 3175  
WELLINGTON 6140

This submission is from Bay of Plenty District Health Board

Details: Name and designation:	Sally Webb, Chair, Bay of Plenty DHB Board
Company organisation name and address:	Bay of Plenty District Health Board, Private Bag 12024, Tauranga 3140
Contact phone number and email address:	Brian Pointon, Planning and Funding team <a href="mailto:brian.pointon@bopdhb.govt.nz">brian.pointon@bopdhb.govt.nz</a> Phone (07) 579 8791

### **Introduction**

The Bay of Plenty District Health Board (BOPDHB) is established under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000. Its primary role is the planning, funding, purchasing and delivery of health and disability services to the BOPDHB district's population. Among its functions are:

“to actively investigate, facilitate, sponsor and develop cooperative and collaborative arrangements with persons in the health and disability sector or in any other sector to improve, promote and protect the health of people, and to promote the inclusion and participation in society and independence of people with disabilities.” [Section 23 1 (b)] and  
“to promote the reduction of social and environmental effects on the health of people and communities.” [Section 23 1 (h)]

The BOPDHB is committed to “*Healthy thriving communities*” as its vision. The BOPDHB serves a population of about 230,000 people living in Western Bay of Plenty district, Tauranga City, Whakatane district, Kawerau district and Opotiki district. It has an interest in road safety as it provides emergency department and full hospital services in Tauranga and Whakatane to address road trauma, supported by a wide range of health and disability services to provide ongoing and rehabilitative care for those people with long term consequences arising from motor vehicle crashes. As referenced above, health legislation also requires the DHB to improve, promote and protect the health of the population.

Public health approaches wellbeing and health in terms of the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political context and from a “determinants of health” perspective. Many of the crucial underlying factors that contribute to population health and wellbeing are directly influenced by the decisions and activities of local, regional and central government agencies.

Transport is one of the “determinants of health” that has a significant effect on the public health. In keeping with this intent, the DHB seeks to ensure that public health considerations are adequately provided for in policy development.

The BOPDHB appreciates this opportunity to submit on the Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS 2018).

### **Summary of Key Messages**

The BOPDHB generally supports the GPS 2018, in particular:

- the New Zealand Health Strategy being a key reference document,
- undertaking a Health Impact Assessment (including a complete analysis of all costs and benefits) of any future strategic plan or major project,
- investing to improve resilience on routes where disruptions pose high economic and social costs, and the continuing investment in public transport, including modal integration where appropriate and enhancements for total mobility and accessibility.

The BOPDHB is concerned about the level and continued emphasis on private vehicle dependency. Vehicle dependency makes the country vulnerable to international oil pricing. It leads to further congestion, and increases transport costs (in dollar, time, and health terms) for families. More vehicle kilometres travelled means more emissions, increasing inequalities, and a worsening of existing obesogenic environments. Car dependency, often with sole occupancy, also discourages social connection. The recommendations below offer alternatives to help change this dependency.

The BOPDHB is willing to play its role alongside other agencies and wishes to strengthen ties with the Transport sector. The DHB welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the policy and planning of behaviour change initiatives.

The following points are raised under the most relevant section in the GPS 2018, but may also apply in other sections.

### **Section 1. Land transport Context**

**25:** The BOPDHB recommends that a higher proportion of freight be carried by rail. This is a significant issue for the Bay of Plenty population as the volume of freight through the Port of Tauranga continues to increase. From a health perspective rail freight is more environmentally sustainable, decreases road congestion and contributes to improving road safety. Increased rail freight also reduces the requirement for expensive roading infrastructure and maintenance, reducing associated travel disruption and environmental pollution, and thus helps New Zealand achieve its climate change-related targets.

**29:** The list of Government policies relevant to the GPS 2018 on page 6 should include the New Zealand Health Strategy. The BOPDHB recommends that the New Zealand Health Strategy becomes a key reference document for the GPS 2018. For instance one of the major themes of the New Zealand Health Strategy is that services should be delivered ‘closer to home’. That requires an effective transport system so that either health services can be taken out into communities (and in emergency situations at speed), or that people in more isolated areas, or who have no access to a private motor vehicle, can attend services in a more central location.

### **Section 2. Strategic Direction**

**47:** The BOPDHB Liveable Environments Position Statement states *2.4. Healthy living environments can be promoted through good urban planning, leading to increased uptake of physical activity, greater social connectedness, and improved access to services for people who have disabilities or do not have access to private motor vehicle.* BOPDHB strongly recommends that in addressing the listed four key transport challenges of the next decade, new greenfield growth area developments incorporate the full health, environmental, public infrastructure, and transportation costs of urban sprawl. Sprawl is associated with at least

four major categories of population health risks, including physical inactivity, reduced air quality, increased motor vehicle collisions because of widespread automobile travel, and mental health issues<sup>1</sup>. Transport systems intentionally and unintentionally influence access across all ages and abilities for all communities. There is considerable international and national evidence confirming that poor urban design which creates urban sprawl contributes to poor health outcomes. Cities that have higher levels of inner city living, cycle-friendly transport corridors, accessible public transport networks and linked walkways encourage greater levels of physical activity as part of daily living. Lower use of motor vehicles also helps to reduce air pollution and therefore respiratory and other chronic diseases.

**60:** In assessing value for money it is important to recognise that transport design and investment effects on public health may be direct or indirect, positive or negative, intended or unintended, and immediate or long term. International reviews and evaluations suggest Health Impact Assessment can help to improve transport planning for current and future generations by encouraging a longer-term focus, identifying unintended impacts and inequalities, fostering interagency collaboration, and facilitating a more inclusive process that involves affected communities in the decision making<sup>2</sup>. The BOPDHB recommends that a Health Impact Assessment (including a complete analysis of all costs and benefits) is undertaken as part of any future strategic planning and major projects as part of the evidence for value for money investment decisions.

**88-94:** The BOPDHB supports the investment to improve resilience on routes to which disruptions pose the highest economic and social costs. The eastern Bay of Plenty is particularly at risk from being cut off through severe weather events or other emergencies as Kaikoura has experienced. Previous long term road closures east of Opotiki have had significant impact on the ability of health providers to deliver essential services to individuals and communities that have been cut-off. Achieving transport system resilience is important to the maintenance of health services.

**95:** The BOPDHB recommends that air pollution as a result of land transport be considered in the list of activities for the '*A land transport system that is a Safe System increasingly free of death and serious injury*' objective. Greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector make up approximately 20 percent of New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions each year<sup>3</sup>. Premature mortality from vehicle exhaust fumes has been called the 'hidden road toll'. Conservative estimates indicate that about 400 New Zealanders die every year, and thousands more have compromised quality of life, due to the health effects of vehicle emissions. Although vehicles are becoming 'cleaner', this gain is offset by population growth and more vehicle-kilometres travelled<sup>4</sup>. From a health perspective the BOPDHB recommends that the GPS 2018 include actions which will reduce this impact including; the use of bio fuels and electric cars in the medium to longer term, high occupancy vehicle initiatives, increased proportion of freight transported by rail, increased public transport options and active transport options.

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<sup>1</sup> [Alberta Health Services.\(2009\). Retrieved from http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/poph/hi-poph-hpp-info-urban-sprawl.pdf](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/poph/hi-poph-hpp-info-urban-sprawl.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, J., Boniface, S., & Watkins, S. (2014) Health implications of transport planning, development and operations. *Journal of Transport and Health*, (1), 63–72.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Transport. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.transport.govt.nz/ourwork/climatechange/>

<sup>4</sup> Public Health Association of NZ. (2015). Retrieved from <https://app.box.com/s/63kl72ldzr80qeo9c9255jskhh96x3kt>

**115:** BOPDHB supports the continuing investment in public transport, including modal integration where appropriate. For instance, the DHB recommends that public transport options link effectively with active transport and are supported by the appropriate infrastructure e.g. user-friendly fares, bike racks on buses, park and ride facilities and accessible bike storage areas. Effective public transport provision for rural areas also needs to be prioritised to ensure those who cannot drive or do not have access to a vehicle still have access to services. In particular the BOPDHB supports the improvement of public transport services to health facilities.

**119-130:** The BOPDHB recognises that modern dependence on the private motor vehicle has contributed to the current lack of physical activity and high rates of obesity, and therefore supports and encourages the use of public and active transport options. When new roads are constructed, separated cycleways and pedestrian paths which are safe and attractive, need to be incorporated into the design plan. When an existing road is upgraded the opportunity should be taken to improve cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (including access across the roadway) at the same time as the upgrade. Traffic congestion is a product of both supply and demand factors. Addressing the demand-side is essential for effectively managing it. Demand-side management initiatives normally aim to reduce the demand for road use during peak periods, either by encouraging motorists to use their cars at off-peak times or to use other more sustainable modes of travel<sup>5</sup>. The BOPDHB supports the construction of separate walking and cycling infrastructure as this increases daily physical activity and offers options for healthy transport modes. Physical activity is important for chronic disease prevention and management. Walking and cycling as everyday transport, also represents one of the most accessible and effective ways of meeting daily physical activity guidelines. The substantial health-enhancing potential of physical activity can be best realised on a population level if people can incorporate physical activity into their daily routine. Active transport options also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, road congestion and the likelihood of car crashes, and therefore reduce pressure on the health system. Wherever possible there should be a physical barrier between cycle paths and car lanes. Barriers can be as minimal as a 150mm curb, intermittent bollards or plants, or the cycleway being 150mm higher than the adjacent roadway.

The BOPDHB supports the enhancements to public transport to support the Disability Action Plan's intention to increase the accessibility of transport, as well as the continued investment in specialised services such as 'Total Mobility'. The transport system's positive and negative impacts on health are distributed unequally through society. Car dependency exacerbates social inequalities by creating a society in which spatial layout and access to necessities assumes car ownership and in which any public transport network becomes less viable<sup>6</sup>. Increasing accessibility options for everyone will reduce inequality and have a positive impact on the health of the population.

Within the BOPDHB area approximately 45,000 people are aged 65 years and over. Following the national trend of an ageing population this is expected to increase to 61,000 by 2027. An ageing population means that there will be an increased demand for off peak travel, for Total Mobility and for public transport services. The BOPDHB advocates that the needs of our ageing population be a foundation consideration when planning the transport network. The 8-80 Cities concept is a useful model. It proposes that if city planning meets the needs of eight year old children and eighty year old adults that it will meet everyone's

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<sup>5</sup> Oja P., Vuori I., & Paronen O. (1998) Daily walking and cycling to work: their utility as health-enhancing physical activity. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 33(1), S87–S94

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, J., Boniface, S., & Watkins, S. (2014) Health implications of transport planning, development and operations. *Journal of Transport and Health*, (1), 63–72.

needs. It encourages sustainable and healthy lifestyles for everyone regardless of age, gender, physical ability, ethnicity or economic background by focusing on accessibility. This focus facilitates the population's need to be physically active through the provision of safe, accessible and enjoyable places. Walking, cycling and being active become a part of daily routine, and social equality is reflected within the public realm<sup>7</sup>.

The BOPDHB supports the removal of minimum parking requirements for developments in district plans to allow for more efficient land use in urban centres, encourage increased development density, and improve the viability of public transport services. The 2013 New Zealand Transport Agency study, *Reallocation of Road Space*, showed that shoppers value high-quality pedestrian and urban design features in shopping areas more than they value parking. The study indicated that active transport users and cyclists are important to the economic viability of local shopping areas and accounts for 40% of the total spend in shopping areas.

The BOPDHB supports the promotion and marketing of travel options, as this has shown to be a key factor in enabling positive behaviour change from private motor vehicle car dependency to public transport and active transport options. The BOPDHB advocates for the promotion of transport mode behaviour change initiatives through the implementation of a Transport Behaviour Change Strategy. Having the appropriate infrastructure provides an environment which supports and encourages active transport, but behaviour change initiatives will also be required. Transport behaviours are complex and dependent on a number of interrelated factors. Education, information and promotional activities have been shown to change travel behaviour where the appropriate facilities and infrastructure are in place to support walking, cycling and public transport use. The best results are achieved when planning and infrastructure investments are supported by education and promotional activities<sup>8</sup>. The BOPDHB welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the development of behaviour change initiatives.

**135:** Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. The transport system has a multi-dimensional relationship with climate change as it both contributes to it (e.g. carbon emissions) and is affected by its consequences (e.g. weather impacts on roads and rail). The BOPDHB strongly supports the GPS 2018 recognition of effects of land transport on the environment. The BOPDHB recommends the GPS 2018 also incorporates and supports the Government's Electric Vehicles Programme by including targets and incentives for increasing the uptake of electric vehicles and the supporting infrastructure. International reviews and evaluations suggest Health Impact Assessment can help to improve transport planning for current and future generations by encouraging a longer-term focus, bringing attention to unintended impacts and inequalities, fostering interagency collaboration, and facilitating a more inclusive process that involves affected communities in the decision making. The BOPDHB recommends that a Health Impact Assessment

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<sup>7</sup> 8-80Cities. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.8-80cities.org/who-we-are>

<sup>8</sup> Auditor-General of Victoria. (2013). *Managing Traffic Congestion*. Retrieved from [www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20130417-Managing-Traffic-Congestion/20130417\\_Managing\\_Traffic\\_Congestion.pdf](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20130417-Managing-Traffic-Congestion/20130417_Managing_Traffic_Congestion.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Costello, A., Abbas, M., Allen, A., Ball, S., Bell, S., Bellamy, R., Friel, S., Groce, N., Johnson, A., Kett, M., Lee, M., Levy, C., Maslin, M., McCoy, D., McGuire, B., Montgomery, B., Napier, D., Pagel, C., Patel, J., Antonio, J., Oliveira, P., Redclift, N., Rees, H., Rogger, D., Scott, J., Stephenson, J., Twigg, J., Wolff, J., & Patterson, C., (2009). *Managing the health effects of climate change*. *The Lancet* (373), 1693–733.

(including a complete analysis of all costs and benefits) is undertaken as part of any future strategic planning or major project.

Thank you for considering our feedback.