

**Infrastructure New Zealand's Submission on the Local Government (Auckland Council)
(Transport Governance) Amendment Bill**

1. About Infrastructure New Zealand

- 1.1 Infrastructure New Zealand (INZ) welcomes this opportunity to provide feedback to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on the Local Government (Auckland Council) (Transport Governance) Amendment Bill.
- 1.2 INZ is Aotearoa's peak membership organisation for the infrastructure sector. We promote best practice in national infrastructure development through research, advocacy, and public and private sector collaboration. Our membership is comprised of around 150 organisations, including government agencies, consultants, contractors, financiers, utilities, and academics. These organisations employ approximately 150,000 people in infrastructure-related roles and are united in their commitment to creating a better New Zealand through outstanding infrastructure.
- 1.3 This submission represents the views of INZ as a collective whole and may not necessarily represent the views of individual member organisations. We have encouraged members to provide their own submissions to raise issues specific to their expertise and areas of interest.

2. General Comments

- 2.1 INZ supports the restoration of democratic control to Auckland Council as the key funder of transport initiatives in Auckland. The proposed approach to develop an integrated and collaboratively agreed 30-year transport plan recognises the importance of promoting productivity and economic growth in Aotearoa's only international city. It also reflects the importance of strategic alignment, as demonstrated by the Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP) and its subsequent updates.
- 2.2 INZ supports the restored democratic accountability the amended framework will provide, along with the increased opportunities for Aucklanders to engage in discussions about their transport network and its management. Democratic oversight of these decision-making functions ensures citizens can hold the system accountable and determine whether it is meeting their needs.
- 2.3 Empowering local authorities with decision-making responsibilities supports the alignment of transport outcomes with community preferences and priorities, especially in more granular areas such as parking, cycleways, and speed limits.

- 2.4 INZ has questions about whether local boards and committees have adequate technical expertise, resourcing and staffing to undertake additional transport planning tasks. A more measured, transitional approach may better support this capability.
- 2.5 INZ endorses the establishment of the Auckland Regional Transport Committee (ARTC). It's balanced composition of ministerial appointees and elected representatives ensures accountability in the governance of Auckland's transport network and its planning. This form of public accountability will provide incentive to ensure that projects both utilise public funds, and respond to public sentiment, better reflecting the transport needs and desires of Aucklanders. The governance partnership between Auckland Council and Central Government will hopefully strike a balance between the two major funders and allow agreement to establish a 30-year plan to provide long-term certainty and a clear benchmark for the public to assess its performance. INZ considers this a promising model for potential adoption in other regions.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 INZ notes the ongoing potential risks associated with the politicisation of infrastructure decisions. These risks are not mitigated by this Bill. Allowing transport matters to become subject to short-term political pressures and electoral considerations may compromise long-term efficiency and integrated system outcomes. INZ supports efforts to preserve independence in infrastructure decision-making and cautions that increased political influence could disrupt the continuity of long-term planning. Our support of the membership composition of the ARTC (see 2.5) give INZ some reassurance there will be balance in the governance priorities of Auckland's long-term transport planning,
- 3.2 INZ supports the delegation of some decision-making authority to promote local empowerment. However, a prescriptive statutory approach may limit this intent. Drawing on the established principles within the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 for the allocation of functions would offer a more flexible and locally responsive framework.
- 3.3 Although local boards have the capacity to assume transport planning responsibilities, devolving decision-making authority carries the risk of reduced integration and increased fragmentation. This concern is particularly evident in the separation of public transport provision from road-controlling responsibilities, with the potential to create conflicts and undermine the delivery of coherent, multimodal transport solutions. Fragmentation could also lead to situations where local boards block critical public transport projects affecting their roads, even when such projects would benefit the wider transport network.
- 3.4 INZ is concerned the six-month transition period may be insufficient and encourages adequate time for a smooth, effective, and efficient implementation of the amended framework.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 In conclusion, INZ endorses the restoration of Auckland Council's authority over transport planning and activities, along with the proposed establishment of a jointly agreed 30-year plan.
- 4.2 We endorse strengthening local decision-making to better capture granular priorities. At the same time, we recognise devolution of authority carries a risk of fragmented planning and implementation. INZ suggests leveraging the principles set out in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 to guide the allocation of functions.
- 4.3 INZ supports the establishment of the ARTC, recognising the committee's composition represents a noteworthy model with potential applicability in other regions.
- 4.4 INZ notes the risks associated with politicising infrastructure decisions, and caution that introducing political considerations could undermine long-term planning and efficacy.
- 4.5 We advocate for an extended transition period to facilitate a more comprehensive and successful transition than the proposed six months would permit.
- 4.6 INZ thanks the Transport and Infrastructure Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Local Government (Auckland Council) (Transport Governance) Amendment Bill.

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