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Good roads critical to infrastructure goals

Without good roads few of the infrastructure goals laid out by the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission will be realised, says Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett.

The RTF has responded to the He Tūāpapa ki te Ora Infrastructure for a Better Future: NZ Infrastructure Commission Strategy Consultation Document stressing the need for roads; electricity generation to match demand; distribution infrastructure to match alternative “fuel” sources; and connectivity throughout New Zealand to support both technology in trucks and communications with customers.

“The conundrum for us is commenting on future infrastructure while the Government downplays roading investment and cancels significant roading projects in favour of funding the Auckland cycle bridge, without any appropriate economic evaluation,” Leggett says.

“No matter what powers future heavy vehicles, we need to optimise the existing roading infrastructure and to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. Roads will be critical to all other infrastructure builds.

“There is a Government view that by reducing personal mobility, such as car use, and creating more condensed urban development, the demand for roading serviceability will reduce. But people will inevitably select personal transport over shared transport. It is also a particularly city centric view and ignores the revenues generated by New Zealand’s rural and primary sectors, via road.

“A fundamental flaw in the present approach to infrastructure policy is a misplaced ideological position that rail freight is a competent competitor to road freight, instead of being seen as a complementary service. This position is based on an irrational assumption that rail can flourish without road transport support. In reality, it is the opposite.

“Like similar types of government publications covering climate change, this one is largely silent on the household economic impacts. We think there needs to be both a realistic approach to costs and transparency around how the money will be generated.

“Costs added at the input side will inevitably find their way into the end-line prices paid by New Zealand households.

“Like many, we are worried there will be both the electricity generation and reticulation to match a future New Zealand almost entirely reliant on electricity for everything, including transport.

“There are some basic infrastructure needs that must be met for our economy to remain competitive. Given New Zealand’s geographical and natural hazard profile, as well as the fact that we are technology takers, rather than makers, that must include high performing roads for a long time to come,” Leggett says.

The RTF submission to the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission available [here](#).

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About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Association NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 32,868 people (2.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports 93% of the total tonnes of freight moved in New Zealand.