



17 June 2025

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport, Minister for Infrastructure

C.Bishop@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Simon Bridges, Chair, Waka Kotahi

boardsecretariat@nzta.govt.nz

Tēnā kōrua,

Waka Kotahi Proposals to Downgrade Ōtaki to North of Levin (O2NL)

Further to our letter of 23 May, we write to reiterate our concerns with Waka Kotahi proposals to downgrade extensive parts of the O2NL works. We have since met with Waka Kotahi on 12 June and appreciated the opportunity to be heard in that forum.

However, this meeting did not resolve our concerns, nor demonstrate how the significant impacts of O2NL downgrades on our communities will be addressed. **We stand by these concerns and request the opportunity to attend the next available Waka Kotahi Board meeting and speak directly to the Board.**

As stated in our previous letter, we are four Councils that work together under the Wellington Regional Leadership Forum, planning for the future growth of the Lower North Island with a 30-year outlook. The [Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua Future Development Strategy](#) (FDS) sets out where this growth will occur (with 99,000 more homes needed in our region over the next 30 years) and what capacity needs to be provided to meet at least the expected demand. As set out in the maps in **Attachment 1** to this letter, O2NL is not only a key part of our existing strategic transport network but will be a corridor for the growth forecasted for Horowhenua and Kāpiti, providing a significant link between regions as well as opening up the freight and distribution capacity of the lower and central North Island.

As we have stated, **this growth will involve significant new residential developments that require quality infrastructure to meet demand.** The FDS plans for an 8 percent increase in the distribution of development in Horowhenua/Kāpiti in years 1-10, and a further 15 percent increase in that area in years 11-30.

With this growth on the horizon, we reiterate that retroactive downgrade proposals reduce O2NL to not just a minimum viable product, but would essentially curtail growth in these areas rather than support it.

We acknowledge the constraints of the current fiscal situation, but would argue that reducing the project scope at this late stage would compromise the long-term benefits from the full set of O2NL improvements, and result in a negative impact on economic growth and productivity.

We note that removing the Tararua Road interchange for exit/entrance into Levin town, replacing it with a five-road roundabout, would have significant negative impacts given the scale of projected growth and development already underway – in the next 30 years, the FDS estimates 3,500 houses in prioritised housing developments in Tara-ika Greenfield and 2,500 houses in Levin Greenfield–Tararua Road South.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Board on these issues. We seek to further understand what options you have to intervene as the Minister of Transport and the Chair of Waka Kotahi, so that the Lower North Island is given the quality and capacity of roading infrastructure required to cater for the urban and industrial growth that is already materialising on this corridor.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Chair: Greater Wellington Regional Council



Dr Rachel Keedwell
Chair: Horizons Regional Council



Mayor Bernie Wanden
Horowhenua District Council



Mayor Janet Holborow
Kāpiti Coast District Council



Darrin Apanui
Chair: Wellington Regional Leadership Committee



Councillor Adrienne Staples
Chair: Wellington Regional Transport Committee

CC:

Tim Costley, MP for Ōtaki, tim.costleyp@parliament.govt.nz

Suze Redmayne, MP for Rangitīkei, suze.redmayne@parliament.govt.nz

Tangi Utikere, MP for Palmerston North, Tangi.Utikere@parliament.govt.nz

Barbara Edmonds: MP for Mana, barbara.edmonds@parliament.govt.nz

Debbie Ngarewa-Packer: MP for Te Hauauru, debbie.ngarewa-packer@parliament.govt.nz

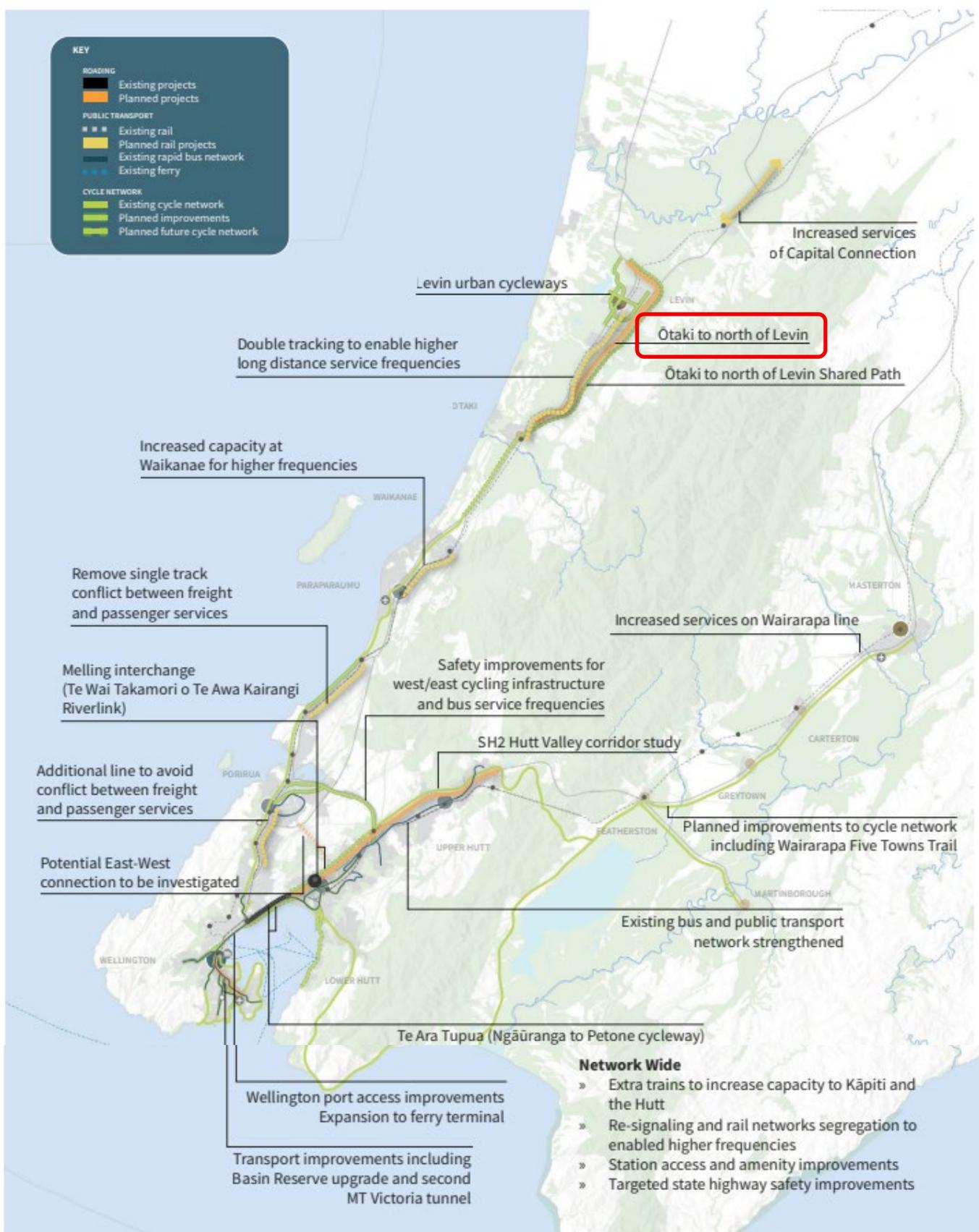
Grant Smith, Mayor of Palmerston North, mayor@pncc.govt.nz

Linda Stewart, Director of Regional Relationships, linda.stewart@nzta.govt.nz

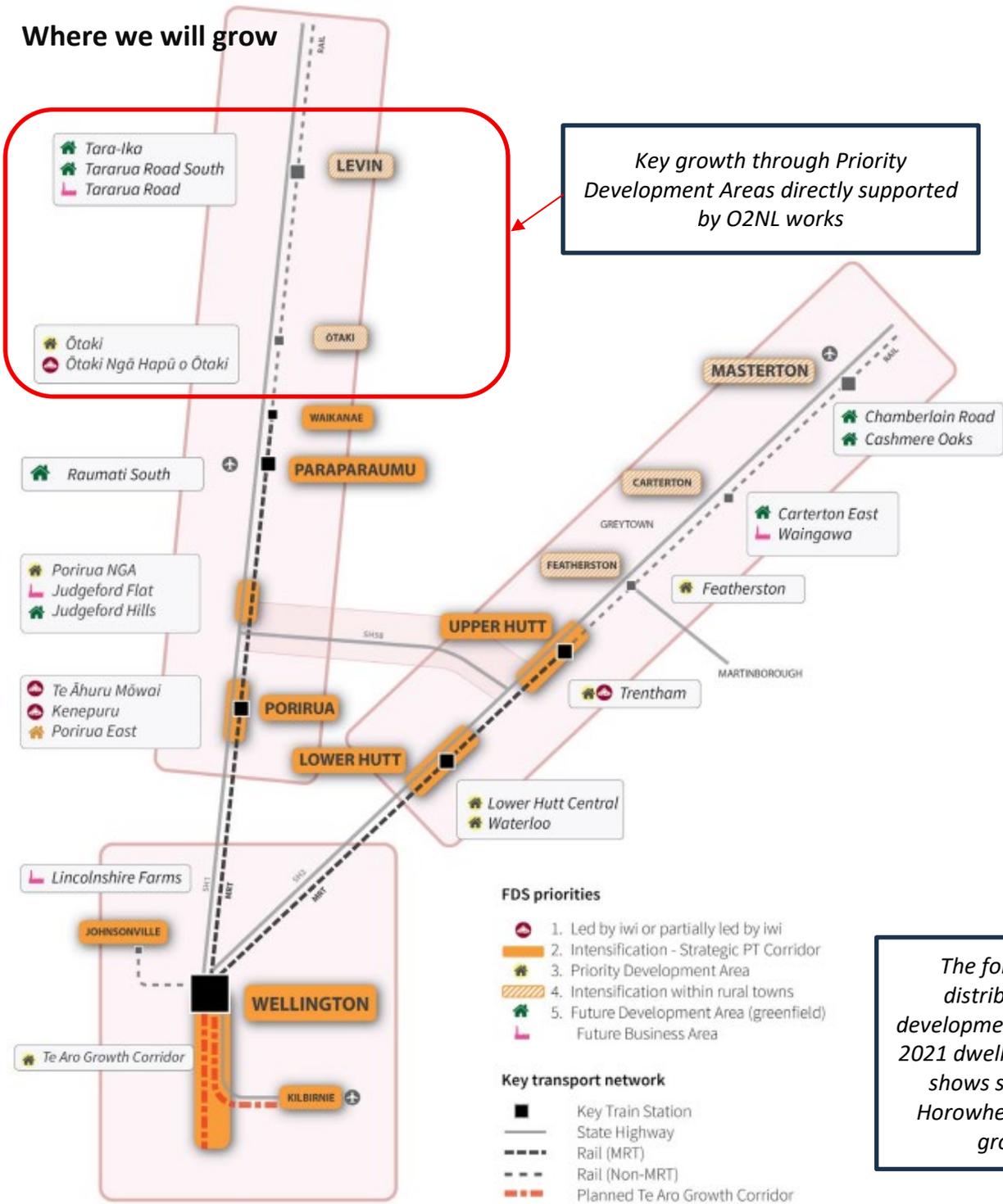
Kevin Reid, Principal Advisor, kevin.reid@nzta.govt.nz

Attachment 1. Maps from the Future Development Strategy

Key parts of our strategic transport network



Where we will grow



The forecasted distribution of development relative to 2021 dwelling numbers shows significant Horowhenua/Kāpiti growth

