Safer, cleaner freight

There has been insufficient investment in rail and coastal shipping, forcing more and more trucks onto New Zealand roads. In just 10 years we can expect to see another 1.7 million truck trips on our roads, making roads more dangerous for all road users, and driving up pollution.[i]

Every year, an average of 55 people are killed in crashes involving trucks, and over 850 are seriously injured.[ii] We know that a single train can remove 70 heavy trucks from the road.[iii]

By investing in rail and shipping, we can make roads safer and the air cleaner, as well as create a safer climate for future generations.

Instead of demanding that rail return a profit, which has set it up to fail, we'll fund it from the transport budget in the same way roads are, providing the investment needed to move freight in the most effective and clean way possible.

The Green Party will:

1. **Fund rail infrastructure from the transport budget, on the basis of best overall economic and climate impact for New Zealand**

   For decades our transport spend has been overly concentrated on highways, leading to a very unbalanced transport system with a lack of choice. This imbalance comes at a high cost: more crashes on the roads, expensive maintenance, higher costs for exporters, and higher carbon emissions. Although National has invested some money on rail in the past eight years, it has spent five times as much upgrading a few stretches of highway, and the economic benefits of these projects are low. We'll rebalance the transport network by allowing the use of the National Land Transport Fund for investment in rail infrastructure, and to support coastal shipping.

2. **Set a target for 25% of freight to be moved by rail and 25% by coastal shipping within 10 years – 2027**

   The NZ Transport Agency and KiwiRail will work alongside freight operators to get half of freight off the road and moving by rail and ship within 10 years. We estimate this would avoid at least 1.7 million truck trips every year.[iv]

3. **Electrify rail in the Golden Triangle (between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga)**

   We will electrify the rail lines between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. This will be an $860 million[v] investment in the low-carbon infrastructure New Zealand needs to reduce transport pollution, and meet the climate commitments we made in Paris. Electrifying rail in the Golden Triangle will reduce freight costs and cut emissions in the regions with the fastest growing freight volumes in the country. New electric locomotives sufficient to cover the main freight routes in the North Island have been costed at $480 million[vi], and will be much cheaper to maintain and run than the current diesel trains. In the long-term, we plan to complete the electrification of the lines between Auckland and Wellington.

Why do we need this policy?

To make our roads safer

Unless we invest now in safer rail and sea freight options, our roads will be clogged with more large trucks and become increasingly dangerous. National's long-term plan is to have more than 70 percent of freight moving by road in the next 30 years.[vii] Under this plan we can expect to see another 1.7 million truck trips on our roads each year within 10 years, as freight volumes are forecast to grow by 32 percent by 2027.[viii]

This can only make our roads more dangerous. Trucks are already over-represented in serious crashes. Trucks make up only 2.5 percent of the vehicles on the road,[ix] yet were involved in almost one in five of all fatal crashes in 2014[x]. On average, 55 people die every year in crashes involving trucks and more than 850 are seriously injured.[xi]

A growing number of large freight trucks are now travelling through our towns and cities, adding to congestion, creating noise and pollution, and putting people walking, cycling, and driving at greater risk. The frustration of being stuck behind slow-moving large freight trucks on rural roads is an increasingly common experience for Kiwi drivers.

National's solution has been to simply propose putting bigger, heavier, and wider trucks on the road.[xii]

To prevent dangerous climate change

In order to meet our commitment to stop climate change, our transport system needs to be carbon neutral by 2050. Electrifying rail will enable us to move freight using renewable, local energy. It's a smart investment in the low-carbon future.

Sea freight also offers huge climate benefits. Moving a tonne of freight by truck produces six times more pollution compared to moving that freight by ship[xiii]

We estimate that shifting 50 percent of freight by rail and sea would cut projected climate pollution from transport freight by 15 percent by 2027.[xiv] This is the equivalent of replacing over 300,000 petrol and diesel cars with electric vehicles.[xv]

The best overall economic benefit

National has refused to invest properly in the rail network, choosing instead to spend over a billion dollars every year on a few low-value motorways – almost five times the amount invested in rail.[xvi] We'll allow the NZ Transport Agency to invest in the projects with the best overall economic, social, and environmental benefits, whether that's rail, coastal shipping, or roading.

By creating competitive and reliable rail and coastal shipping services, we can also significantly reduce the cost of moving goods around New Zealand. Already, for example, moving a standard container from Auckland to Christchurch door-to-door is estimated to cost significantly less by rail and ship than by road.[xvii]

How will it work?

The National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) will be made available for investment in rail and coastal shipping infrastructure and logistics, in addition to the road network. This will allow KiwiRail and the NZ Transport Agency to invest for the long-term, and avoid having to make short-sighted cost savings, such as the recent decision to buy interisland ferries without capacity for rail.

Opening up the NLTF to rail investment may mean it makes economic sense to revive the Wairoa to Gisborne rail line, or extend rail to North Port in Whangarei, rather than further expand the road network.

The electrification of rail will likely take place in two phases, prioritising lines between Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga where freight volumes are forecast to grow the fastest. Long term, we will complete the electrification of rail between Auckland and Wellington, filling the gap in the electric network between Waikanae and Palmerston North. Electrification will be funded through the NLTF at no additional cost to the tax-payer.[xviii]

Rail currently carries just 16 percent of freight, and coastal shipping 14 percent.[xix] A Green Government will direct the NZ Transport Agency and KiwiRail to achieve a target of transporting 50 percent of freight by rail and coastal shipping within 10 years. This will be achieved by improving port and rail infrastructure, funding integrated planning and logistics, alongside other Green policies such as fuel economy standards, and a revenue-neutral carbon tax.

A Green Government will be committed to better integrating coastal shipping into New Zealand's transport network. Transport funding will be made available for coastal shipping infrastructure where there is a national benefit. A National Policy for Coastal Shipping will be developed, aimed at improving the linkages between road and rail, and ensuring there is sufficient skilled labour to cope with an ageing workforce in the sector. We'll also investigate the role government should play in enabling ports to work more collaboratively in support of the coastal shipping sector.

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[i] Our estimate is based on Ministry of Transport freight volume projections in the 2014 National Freight Demand Study and KiwiRail's 2016 net tonne/kilometre comparison of the freight capacity of trucks and trains.
[ii] Ministry of Transport, Motor Vehicle Crashes in New Zealand, 2014. Based on the average road toll between 2008 and 2014.
[iii] KiwiRail, Steel Wheels news, 2014. A Diesel-electric locomotive provides capacity to pull a 2000-tonne train; moving this freight on the road would require up to 70 trucks.
[iv] Our estimate is based on Ministry of Transport freight volume projections in the 2014 National Freight Demand Study and KiwiRail's 2016 net tonne/kilometre comparison of the freight capacity of trucks and trains.
[v] Figures provided to the Green Party by KiwiRail.
[vi] Figures provided to the Green Party by KiwiRail.
[vii] Ministry of Transport, National Freight Demand Study, 2014, figure 7.21, page 297.
[viii] Based on Ministry of Transport freight volume projections in the 2014 National Freight Demand Study and KiwiRail's 2016 net tonne/kilometre calculations of the freight capacity of trucks and trains.
[ix] Road Transport Forum, Transport Facts: Fleet Make Up/Size.
[x] Ministry of Transport, Truck Crash Facts, 2015, table 1, page 5. Based on the average road toll between 2008 and 2014.
[xi] Ministry of Transport, Motor Vehicle Crashes in New Zealand, 2014. Based on the average road toll between 2008 in 2014.
[xii] Ministry of Transport, Review of Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2002 – Questions & Answers, 2015.
[xiii] Ministry of Transport, Sea Change: Transforming Coastal Shipping in New Zealand, 2008, page 10.
[xiv] Compared to a business as usual increase in freight emissions where there is a 32 percent growth in freight volumes and no change in mode share.
[xv] Based on calculations by Massey University's Professor Ralph Simms, reported in Carbon News, 6 May 2016.
[xvi] An average of $213m per year has been spent on the KiwiRail Turnaround Plan between 2010 and 2014, according to the Treasury. An average of $1.03 billion per year was spent on new State Highways between 2010 and 2012 according to NZTA.
[xvii] Ministry of Transport, Sea Change: Transforming Coastal Shipping in New Zealand, 2008, page 10.
[xviii] There are several low-value motorway projects, still in the design phase, which could be delayed to pay for the electrification of these rail lines.
[xix] Ministry of Transport, National Freight Demand Study, 2014, table 6, page 9.

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