

INFRASTRUCTURE

Quality roads

The challenge

For decades, investment in New Zealand's local and national roading infrastructure has lagged well behind what's needed for a safe, productive and resilient roading network. This includes both the construction of new roads and the maintenance of existing ones. OECD data shows New Zealand's transport investment infrastructure has sat behind UK, US, Canada and Australia on a per capita basis since 2007, when NZ data was included.

The lack of investment is increasingly visible across New Zealand's roading network - from routes that are not resilient to weather events, to damaging potholes, to roads and lanes that are too narrow and therefore unsafe. This impacts truck drivers and operators, the broader transport industry and the country's productivity. Substandard roading infrastructure affects the quality of life for all New Zealanders. It creates an unsafe and unpleasant environment for everyone using our roads. In many situations, investments have been made but - without reliable evidence underpinning decisions or consistency of funding - outcomes have been ineffective.

Roading investments and funding initiatives are easy for local and central governments to delay in the short-term, often for other legitimate priorities, without obvious consequences. But before long, the impact of either no progress or stop-start progress is noticeable and it becomes more and more expensive to catch up. This approach is unsustainable and effectively pushes the cost of maintaining and improving today's roads on to the next generation of New Zealanders.

The absence of a reliable infrastructure plan (and the funding to implement), free from conflict with short-term government priorities or other interests, also makes it difficult for the trucking industry and other infrastructure businesses to plan and invest for the long term.

What is National Road Carriers' position?

National Road Carriers advocates for:

- 1. Development of a 50-year roading infrastructure plan that delivers a safe, productive and resilient roading network and helps New Zealanders and businesses connect to each other, and to the world.**

The plan needs to contain:

- The roading infrastructure required to meet New Zealand's broader long-term economic, social and climate objectives.
- The pathway required to achieve the plan including understanding what engineering and construction methods and labour and technology needs are anticipated over time, as well as attracting investment where necessary.

- A funding model that considers the holistic value of quality roading infrastructure to New Zealand including the economic and social return on investment. National Road Carriers favours an investment-based funding model rather than the current consumption-based funding system.
- A clear maintenance plan for existing road assets, with a staged timeline for pavement rehabilitation of the entire network at least every 50 years, and a build plan for new road assets. Sustainable funding and long-term, performance managed supplier contracts to maximise value of spend.
- Clear measurement of progress against goals. This should also include the compound benefits of quality roads and associated transport infrastructure including social and economic benefits such as fewer deaths and serious injuries, and increased productivity.

2. Evidence and expertise must underpin the plan

The roading infrastructure plan must be based on consultation with industry as well as quantitative inputs including data and other evidence:

- Quality long-term solutions should be based on modelling that includes expected demand, availability of skills, technology evolution and climate change.
- Planning and ongoing maintenance decisions should draw on the experience of those using the roading network.

3. The plan, including funding, should be overseen independently from the government-of-the-day to ensure the emphasis remains on the long term.

- Oversight of the plan and its funding and measurement should be carried out by an autonomous body enabled by legislation.
- In providing oversight, the body would have a mandate to ensure the right balance is struck between national and local interests when it comes to the planning, funding and implementation of roading infrastructure.
- Funding and measurement should include a focus on the underlying value that roading delivers as a social and economic enabler.