

## Ministry of Transport input into Northland Auckland Line (NAL) business case on hui

1. The Terms of Reference for the NAL business case state that it should identify “the views of local government, Iwi and Northland Inc.” The consultants and the Ministry of Transport (the Ministry) agreed in November 2018 that the Ministry would lead this aspect of the business case process.
2. The Ministry, with support from KiwiRail, organised and undertook engagement with Iwi Māori during three hui at:
  - Otiria Marae, Moerewa – 6 March 2019
  - Whangārei Terenga Paraoa Marae, Whangārei – 7 March 2019
  - Te Hana Te Ao Marama Marae, Te Hana – 8 March 2019.
3. As detailed in earlier the business case, rail played a significant part of Northland’s development during the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not only did it connect the region with the rest of the country and the outside world, but the railways also served as an important employer, where it once had approximately 22,000 workers across the country during rail’s golden age. At the hui, many local Maori recalled the important role that the railways played in their whanau and hapu as a means of improving their economic wellbeing while offering admirable and skilled jobs to the region. Many local Maori also recalled their fond memories of travelling on the Northland Express (also known as the Opuā Express) which was a long distance passenger service that ran from Auckland via Whangārei to Opuā in the Bay of Islands between 1925 and 1956.
4. These positive memories of the railways are also somewhat bittersweet. Many whanau and hapu still remember that significant amounts of land were acquired using the broad powers under the Public Works Act to construct the railways between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This frequently occurred without consultation or their consent, negatively impacting on their way of life, physically dividing up land, limiting their access to waterways and undermining their views of kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the environment). The message was made clear at the three hui – if investment is to be made to upgrade the NAL, the Crown needs to take a measured approach and treat Maori as partners throughout the process. There was also a strong desire to be approached on a whanau/hapu level to address any specific issues or interests they may have. KiwiRail and the Crown committed to building a relationship with local Maori to address their specific interests if investment is made.
5. While there was a strong message of historical pain and a sense of wrongdoing by the Crown, local Maori also acknowledged that rail presented a unique opportunity to improve Northland’s regional economic development. There was a strong feeling that Northland was a “forgotten region”, and had been neglected from Government investment in its transport system. In this sense, the possibility of investment in the NAL was widely understood as an opportunity that could breathe life into many local communities as it once did many years ago. Given this, many remarked that the Government should just “get on with it”. There was wide ranging support for a rail connection to Northport, which is one of only two ports in New Zealand which are not rail

enabled (Port Nelson being the other). The relocation of the rail enabled Port of Whangarei in April 2007 to Northport was one of the key factors which saw rail freight in Northland drop 66% between 2000 and 2008.

6. Many local Maori were also interested in the employment opportunities which could arise if the investment was made. Northland's unemployment is higher than the national average and the railways once employed many Northlanders. Many agreed at the hui that employment opportunities could be greatly supported by the potential tourism services that the business case is examining.
7. A range of views were also expressed by individuals representing their whanau or hapu. These views included:
  - Northland requires a range of transport investments, particularly on State Highway 1, 10 and 11. Severe flooding still affect these roads which can greatly impact on the ability of locals to get around Northland safely. Given that rail can only transport a portion of the freight in Northland, roading improvements also need serious consideration for network resilience and safety reasons.
  - There was a strong message from a select number of hapu/whanau who will not support reinstatement going past Otiria station due to ongoing land issues with the Crown.
  - There was expressed interest for a rail line to transport large volumes of waste to a gasification plant in Marsden Point (this was also mentioned at Te Hana). Many felt that this would have a positive impact not only on the environment, but also in terms of supporting local businesses and creating more jobs. This proposition has been raised to KiwiRail in the past.
  - Many of the current tourist services operated by KiwiRail are out of reach for locals to enjoy.
  - The business case should consider how commuter rail can support Auckland's satellite suburbs (Warkworth or even Wellsford) for people who are pushed out of Auckland's housing market but travel to Auckland. These would be similar to interregional services such as the Wairarapa Line, Capital Connection or the Hamilton-Auckland service currently being developed.

Erin Wynne  
**Manager Rail and Freight**