

media release

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is increased funding never going to be enough for critics ?

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NZCID analysis: we just need to hit the mark

"Any commitment to increase much needed transport funding is most welcome and the Government's most recent move is no exception", according to NZCID Chief Executive Stephen Selwood. The latest Land Transport New Zealand forecast pledges an 11 billion spend of new capital works over the next 10 years.

Critics of project deferrals and unreasonably long completion timeframes will be pleased by the announcement enabling earlier completion of key projects and a 5 year actual budget commitment to the State Highway programme.

Selwood claims it's not enough. And while the powers that be could respond that to some whatever is pledged will never seem enough, that they are doing their best, and that this is good progress towards an admirable end; Selwood remains firm and points to other nations who have faced the same challenges and conditions New Zealand's transport currently suffers and yet have seemingly turned things around in a big way.

And when you examine the examples it is hard not to agree that if we are to truly make headway and sufficiently meet our transport needs for the present and the future, the time for baby steps is past.

Ireland's national plan Transport 21 commits \$70bn capital expenditure over the next 10 years, 7 times the amount of NZ. Irish Ministers of Transport, Martin Cullen, and Finance, Brian Cowen describe a situation eerily similar to New Zealand's and extol the progress their nation is making to turn things around.

"On transport, we have to move from far behind to the lead", explains Cullen, "a comprehensive and efficient transport network is essential if we are to continue to improve our living standards while remaining competitive in the global market place." And Cowen agrees, pointing out the benefits are not just urban, "quality, integrated transport is critical for competitiveness, return on investment and regional development".¹

Over the next four years Queensland has committed a staggering A\$16 billion to development. State Premier, the Honourable Peter Beattie MP, is riding high on the surf of change his region is creating. "South East Queensland is the fastest-growing metropolitan region in Australia", says Beattie. "Around 1000 people move to the region every week. By 2026, this corner of the

world will be home to almost four million people. Although this new growth brings opportunities, it also brings its own challenges.ⁱ

“The Infrastructure Plan is integral to ensuring the South East Queensland Regional Plan delivers a sustainable future for the area. This plan protects more than 80 per cent of the region from future urban development - ensuring South East Queensland remains one of the most liveable urbanised areas in the world, while catering for strong population growth and future prosperity. Key to achieving these outcomes, however, is the strategic long-term planning of infrastructure provision throughout the region”.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to Selwood these comparisons are not unreasonably made. Both Ireland and Queensland share similarities with New Zealand, both Ireland and Queensland have 4 million in population. The Gross State Product of Queensland, at A\$126 billion, only slightly larger than the New Zealand GDP. Perhaps tellingly, Ireland, whose strive for change has persisted the longest, enjoyed a growth in GDP that now puts it at 1.6 times that of New Zealand.

Studies by GHD and the NZ Council for Infrastructure Development (Transport 2025, www.nzcid.org.nz) project that if we are to likewise meet the needs of our nation future land transport spending in NZ must increase by \$6 to \$8 billion over the next 20 years, representing a 40% increase on current projections. Selwood argues, “this investment will drive growth in productivity and establish a long term sustainable transport system for NZ, including essential investment in both public transport and roads”.

He points out that the long term infrastructure development plans of Ireland and Queensland are key. “We should follow this approach. If we do New Zealand will provide certainty for industry, we will drive investment confidence, we will increase growth, and we will achieve those development objectives vital to securing our future prosperity”.

endnotes

ⁱ Cullen, M & Cowen, B, Transport 21 (2005)

ⁱⁱ Beattie, P, South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2006-2026 (2006)

ⁱⁱⁱ Beattie, P, South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2006-2026 (2006)

further information



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