

Media Statement - for immediate release
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Road pricing will be needed to fund timely delivery of the Wellington Northern Corridor and other roads of national significance

The New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development (NZCID) welcomes the \$2.2 billion strategic upgrade plan for State Highway 1 from Wellington Airport to Levin but says the strategy must now be backed by a detailed funding and delivery programme.

"The strategy announced today by Transport Minister Steven Joyce resolves decades of planning uncertainty about the alignment of the new State Highway corridor into and out of Wellington. This will be a relief to the communities served by the corridor and to the road users that use it. But plans aren't much use if there's not enough money to fund their implementation", says Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood.

"Projected national land transport funding is insufficient on its own to see the Wellington Northern Corridor and the other six roads of national significance completed within ten years. Current projections prepared by the New Zealand Transport Agency show a funding gap of up to \$400 million per annum by 2015.

"If these projects are to be delivered within the next decade, as they should be, road users will have to contribute more through increased user charges. This could be in the form of increased fuel excise and road user charges, toll roads or other forms of road pricing.

"The government needs to clearly spell out the amount of funding that will be required to see the roads of national significance completed. The sooner the total funding gap is identified, the sooner the Government can engage with road users on how these projects can be funded.

"While some road users may balk at the thought of having to pay to use the roads, the reality is that they are already paying in time lost through congestion, safety risks and poor service standards.

"The costs of delay are substantial. The Wellington corridor is an essential link for the one million plus people who cross Cook Strait yearly, the supply chain that moves over seven million tonnes of long distance freight through Wellington on an annual basis, the five million people who use Wellington airport every year and the thirty two million people a year who use State Highway 1 through Wellington on a daily basis. Every one of those users are incurring costs in travel time, vehicle running costs and productive capacity and are driving on roads that do not meet the minimum safety standards required for the volumes of traffic that they carry.

"Given that fuel excise duty and road user charges are not sufficient to fund completion of this corridor within ten years, toll funding and or network pricing of the Wellington transport system should be advanced so that the strategic network can be finished sooner rather than later", Selwood says.