

LABOUR ON TRANSPORT

October 1999

Transport strategy for New Zealand

Labour's Transport policy is practical and aims to achieve cooperation from the industries and organisations involved.

Labour's Transport policy is about the safe and efficient passage of people and goods on any mode of transport in New Zealand.

The most common means of transport in New Zealand is by road. More than 500 people die on our roads each year. The road toll must come down. We need to raise the safety standards of our roads, our vehicles and our drivers. OECD estimates show that road deaths cost OECD economies the equivalent of 2 per cent of GDP. In New Zealand, the Land Transport Safety Authority estimates costs of death and injury at almost \$3.5 billion.

Labour will introduce a Transport Strategy for New Zealand. This will provide a clear direction for the transport sector. Economic growth, and social and environmental goals all depend on having a strong transport sector and good infrastructure. Investment in transport must be made in the public interest and should take priority over short-sighted moves like tax cuts.

Under National, the transport sector has been given no clear message by government. If anything, the Transport Minister has sent a series of contradictory messages. The market driven deregulation process has continued despite its effect on the road toll.

The nation's transportation goals have yet to be integrated within the wider framework of broader social, economic and environmental objectives. A Transport Strategy for New Zealand will help to achieve this.

The New Zealand Transport Strategy will provide a number of clear objectives in transport. These include:

- the integration of environmental, economic and social goals;
- a recognition that an efficient transport system can only be achieved by the best mix of all transport modes;
- giving a high priority to transport and its relationship with the environment. Issues should be judged on criteria such as long-term sustainability as well as low cost;
- significant and ongoing investment in land transport – both in roading and in public passenger transport;
- investigating ways of ensuring that, where land has been designated for future roading, rail or airport developments, a hold can be put on the land without unfair costs being imposed on landowners;

- making sure that the government plays a hands-on role in helping to determine the long-term direction of the transport sector;
- improving co-operation between central, regional and local government and other related bodies in carrying out the New Zealand Transport Strategy;
- delineating authority and responsibility under the strategy.

Ministry of Transport

The previous Labour Government began a process of devolving the responsibilities of the Ministry of Transport. Since 1988, the Ministry has been rationalised in order for it to concentrate on its original objective: providing policy advice to the Minister.

The Ministry of Transport has given up its regulatory, funding and commercial functions to more than a dozen satellite authorities, including Transit New Zealand, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Maritime Safety Authority. These will be required to be directly responsible to the Minister. The Ministry of Transport has transferred many of its responsibilities and staff elsewhere.

Labour began this process: it has made the transport system more effective and efficient. However, some of these authorities have now been operating for a decade. It is time to review them, in order to ensure that satellite organisations such as the Airways Corporation SOE and the Land Transport Safety Authority are operating effectively and accountably.

Labour will also ensure that government agencies take environmental and other externalities properly into account. We will require the Ministry of Transport (and all other departments/agencies) to subject all policy proposals to an environmental assessment.

LAND TRANSPORT

Land transport strategy will form a significant component of Labour's Transport Strategy for New Zealand. Labour will ensure significant and ongoing investment in both roading and in public passenger transport.

Labour will increase the activity of the Commercial Vehicle Investigation Unit to ensure that driving hours, truck standards and loading regulations are better complied with. Labour will also ensure that duplication is minimised within the industry and that bureaucratic interference is kept to a practicable minimum.

ROADING

Labour is committed to maintaining and building on our roading infrastructure and will place high priority on increasing funding for roading projects. This will particularly go to reducing "black spots" and increasing the number of passing lanes. **Benefit:cost** ratio formulae will be reviewed to ensure that roading priorities are based on sensible principles. Methods of evaluating safety and economic value of roading proposals will be improved and will take account of topography and the strategic nature of the route.

At present **benefit:cost** ratio thresholds hover between 4: 1 and 4.5: 1 which means any given project has, at best, only half the chance of proceeding than under the 1990 Labour threshold figure of 2: 1. Labour will move over time to improve road funding because of its significance to the economy and road safety.

Much time has been taken in recent years debating different structures for the ownership, management and funding of roading. Labour regards roading investment as the key issue. If that issue is not addressed, then the roading debate is only a debate about how to reorganise the allocation of scarce resources.

Labour favours roading management continuing to lie with bodies which are accountable to local communities. National's roading proposals threaten the maintenance of the existing nationwide network and would remove accountability for roading away from elected community representatives. National's commercial reforms would have particularly adverse implications for rural communities.

Labour will work with local government to identify and adopt roading policies which would lead to local and national benefits. National's proposals will not proceed.

Labour will consider the regional clustering of local government's roading responsibilities. This could include the devolution of state highway management to regional clusters under a national strategy. This has already been tested and found to be of real benefit in the Rotorua area. Such integration of roading management could lead to significant efficiencies.

Labour would consider arrangements to speed up the investment in alternative routes by allowing developers to build roads on a build, operate, toll and transfer basis. These arrangements would be on the basis that the roads would transfer back to public ownership on a contracted time scale. The condition of the roads at the time of the transfer would need to be specified. Prior to transfer, the original or alternative road in public ownership would need to be maintained to a satisfactory standard.

Labour will also investigate the setting up of a joint venture initiatives development fund with a capped amount of money each year. The fund would allow for strategically important new roading or rail developments to be jointly built by central government, local government and private interests in order to rapidly upgrade infrastructure. At the completion of a contract period, such infrastructure would be returned to Crown ownership. These kinds of arrangements could play an important role in speeding up the modernisation of our bridge and roading infrastructure.

Labour will have a significant focus on vehicle and driver safety in order to make savings in other areas of government expenditure.

ROAD SAFETY

Labour's safety and standards policies can be summarised as "the three E's -education, engineering and enforcement".

Labour's commitment to road safety remains as strong as ever. The road toll must be brought down. When last in office, we initiated a number of road safety strategies which resulted in a decline in accidents and road deaths.

More than 500 people die on our roads each year. The road toll steadily increased for years until Labour took steps to reduce it in 1987. These steps have succeeded in bringing road deaths down until recently. The road toll now appears to be rising again. National's road safety programme has been modelled on that of Victoria, Australia. However our road toll remains steadfastly more than 50per cent worse than theirs. Significant action will need to be taken to reduce the carnage, suffering and financial cost of the current road death and injury toll.

To bring the road toll down, Labour will use a range of methods to achieve safe roads, safe drivers and safe vehicles. There is a clear link between saving the environment and

saving lives. By encouraging public transport, Labour will lessen many people's reliance on older, less safe cars.

Safe roads

Creating safe roads is the responsibility of Government. This requires adequate resourcing, and sensible systems for evaluating priority roadworks. Labour is committed to improving the safety of New Zealand roads. More effort needs to be put into increasing the number of passing lanes on highways. Fatal head-on collisions are often the result of unskillful overtaking. Basically the fewer times that drivers have to overtake on the wrong side of the road, the less often fatal collisions will occur. Labour will put considerable effort into increasing the number of passing lanes or overtaking opportunities. Speed limits will also be reviewed so that they are appropriate and do not change too abruptly.

Labour will make it compulsory for Transit to put in "Use Left Lane Unless Passing" signs wherever two or more lanes exist on a road, except in cases where there is a right hand off-ramp within one kilometre. High accident risk areas will be identified and the excellent programme of providing barrier separation will be reinstigated in order to separate opposing lanes in these areas.

Particular attention will continue to be focussed on improving the sealed surface of New Zealand roads to ensure that not only cost effective but also safe surfaces are used and the current practice of having steep verges graded onto roads will be reviewed. The suggestion by road safety researcher John Bailey to have rumble strips placed shortly before sharp corners on main highways, will be trialled as a potential cost-effective way of improving safety in these locations.

Safe drivers

Creating safe drivers will require public education campaigns and enforcement. Labour will investigate public education and awareness methods to find the best and most effective way of sending the road safety message to drivers. The resulting campaign will target young male drivers as the group which continues to cause a disproportionate share of road accidents.

Education campaigns work to a point in addressing the causes of drink driving, but Labour will attack the consequences of road carnage caused by drunk drivers through a strictly enforced regime of detection and prosecution

At present speed camera fines contribute a large amount of money to the government. Labour will see that this money goes into road safety measures, including additional police traffic patrols and will ensure that a standard speed camera operating code of practice is adhered to.

Improving driver safety will be a key part of Labour's plan to bring the road toll down. This is a long term goal and it requires us to attack the problem at all levels. Future drivers need to learn about road safety from a young age.

Labour will:

- pilot children's road safety programmes which will teach school groups about road hazards and the road code as well as basic driver instruction for older children. These programmes could be supported with sponsorship and community donations;
- use incentives to encourage new drivers, and drivers caught driving hazardously, to take an advanced skills and defensive driving course;
- require slower drivers travelling well below the speed limit on the open road to

- pull over and let other cars pass;
- encourage neighbourhood watch groups to monitor pedestrian crossings and other road safety hazards.

Safe vehicles

Vehicle safety can often mean the difference between a road crash and a road death. Improving vehicle safety will play an important part in Labour's plan to bring the road toll down. By improving the quality and safety of the vehicle fleet, both the road toll and the environment can be improved over the long term without penalising those on low incomes.

Vehicles up to five years old will be subject to annual licensing and warrant of fitness which will occur simultaneously. Older vehicles will be subject to six monthly warrant of fitness and relicensing, but the total annual cost of relicensing will not be affected. Warrant of Fitness requirements will include a visual inspection of petrol systems components. As at present, taxis and rental cars will be required to reach a higher standard than other cars, and will be subject to a Certificate of Fitness.

All vehicles being registered for the first time in New Zealand, or after being rebuilt or unlicensed for more than six months, will go through a more comprehensive mechanical safety inspection at an authorised inspection station.

Labour will:

- investigate alternative ways of raising the revenue currently collected from registration fees with a view to linking the charge to the extent of vehicle use;
- examine the introduction of Compulsory Third Party Insurance in conjunction with the registration issues investigation;
- introduce a standard of construction for New Zealand built vehicles, including those which involve the structural integrity of floors on vehicles which carry animals (e.g. horse floats);
- apply stricter requirements for seatbelts to achieve an improvement in the safety of current older vehicles and all future vehicles introduced onto our roading system;
- introduce a comprehensive safety programme to ensure that significant improvements are made to vehicle safety and to improve driver behaviour;
- apply a labelling system identifying models of cars which meet international safety requirements and publicise crash test and safety assessment results for different models of cars, to enable car buyers to make informed choices;
- change the Health and Safety in Employment Act to make it an employer's responsibility to ensure that the vehicle his/her worker must drive meets international crash test standards. Labour will make it compulsory for government departments to buy the safest cars in their price range. This will not only protect the occupants of those vehicles, but it will mean an overall improvement in the vehicle fleet as these vehicles are sold into the general population in later years;
- promote the use of hand-free devices for cell-phones while driving a motor vehicle;

In addition, Labour will pass regulations to ensure motor vehicle purchasers are protected against odometer fraud ("speedo clocking"). All vehicles imported second-hand must have adequate documentation supporting the odometer reading.

DRIVER LICENCES

Labour will develop driver education programmes in partnership with schools and professional driving instructors to improve the standard of New Zealand drivers for the

long term. A course of professional driving instruction will result in a shorter "probation" period.

Labour will review the costs and management of providing driver licences, particularly as they relate to senior citizens and passenger service drives licences.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Both local and regional government play a substantial role in maintaining and improving the transport system. They have worked closely in the past with the Ministry of Transport and Transit New Zealand.

There are two major problems facing local and regional governments: first, they have been provided with little or no vision by central government, particularly since 1990; and secondly, they find themselves constantly hamstrung by a lack of funding, particularly in the main centres and provincial towns.

The Transport Strategy for New Zealand will provide a clear set of objectives for local and regional government to work towards. Regional land transport strategies arising from the Land Transport Act will be required to be appropriate to the distinctive needs of each region, and to be consistent with regional policy statements prepared under the Resource Management Act.

Labour will also work with local government to develop efficient and well-designed public transport options and will amend legislation and review funding options as necessary to make integrated public transport a reality in metropolitan areas.

TAXI AND LIGHT PASSENGER SERVICE VEHICLE INDUSTRIES

Labour will strengthen the ability of the police to refuse applications for taxi and passenger service vehicle licences from unsuitable persons. Labour will also address the issue of driver licence requirements for private minibus and courtesy vehicle operators.

Labour will introduce a spot-check regime for the testing of taxi drivers to ensure that drivers are not exceeding license hours requirements and meet required standards.

Labour will introduce legislative changes to put the legal requirement on the passenger to pay thus dealing with 'runners'.

Labour will initiate a parliamentary Select Committee Review of the taxi industry to ensure that any problems occurring as a result of change since deregulation in 1989 can be identified and rectified as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF TRANSPORT

In New Zealand the Transport sector is responsible for a significant proportion of total atmospheric pollution. The level of emission is continuing to grow. Public transport will play an important role in reducing vehicle emissions as will environmental standards. CNG and LPG also require support as the use of these fuels will lead to enhanced environmental outcomes, lower transport costs for our nation, and a better use of a valuable primary resource.

Labour will:

- continue to take a positive approach to the provision of low emission vehicles;
- investigate methods of increasing the number of vehicles fuelled by LPG and CNG;
- develop air quality guidelines;
- ensure environmental performance indicators to monitor local air quality are implemented;
- implement emission standards for excessively smoky vehicles, except historical vehicles;
- investigate traffic management techniques such as bus lanes, traffic calming and congestion pricing to reduce traffic emissions from busy roads;
- consider mandating catalytic conversion exhaust systems on all new vehicles while also examining the prospects for gasohol fuels.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TRANSPORT EFFICIENCY

Labour will invest in public transport, recognising the social economic and environmental spin-offs of such an approach.

Transit New Zealand (set up by Labour to integrate the funding of roading and urban public transport) will be required to give a high priority to public transport. Labour believes that public transport should be subsidised through Transfund, to reflect its true economic and environmental benefit. We will develop appropriate benefit:cost analyses to quantify that benefit. Transfund will be required to consider capital contributions to, for example, light rail systems, as well as the traditional fare subsidies. Labour will also investigate the closer integration of local public transport through such overseas practices as train/bus/taxi links.

See Labour's Public Transport policy for details.

TRANSPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Access to transport is essential for active participation in the economy and society. The development of the special transport services such as the Total Mobility Programme which subsidises taxis, was an important advance for people with disabilities. That programme, however, came under increasing pressure from demand and is unable to provide for the level of access to transport that people with disabilities have a right to.

Labour will provide on-going support for the total mobility programme.

International studies indicate that considerable savings will be made in areas such as health, income support and other services if people with disabilities can access employment and support facilities independently through the use of low floor buses and other public transport.

Labour will work towards the development of accessible public transport.

Labour's transport strategy will be integrated with the national strategic plan for rehabilitation and disability support.

MARITIME

Labour's waterfront reforms when last in office, resulted in huge reductions in shipping costs. National's open coast policy has not lived up to its promise of generating economic windfalls for South Island producers. It has however raised the

risk of pests and diseases arriving unchecked into New Zealand. It has also put pressure on New Zealand shipping companies to employ cheap foreign labour rather than New Zealand shipping crews, and cut other costs, in order to “keep up” with large overseas competitors.

New Zealand has unilaterally, and without precedent, introduced this open coast policy. The result has significantly damaged the New Zealand shipping industry with enormous loss of jobs both offshore and onshore. The last foreign going New Zealand ship has been sold off recently to foreign carriers leaving us effectively a maritime nation without a fleet.

Labour wants a fair and competitive shipping policy which will see New Zealanders involved at the maximum possible level in the transport of our import and export products.

On becoming government, Labour will establish the New Zealand Shipping Industry Review Team to conduct a short-term inquiry into the future of the shipping industry and to make strategic recommendations to the Minister of Transport.

The review team will be chaired by a person with wide experience in the shipping industry both domestic and international and with up to four other members with expertise in the following areas: ship ownership, unions, manufacturing, international taxation law and maritime law.

Transport of imports and exports across the Tasman is of the order of \$600 million per year and of course, a large number of jobs and training opportunities are involved.

Labour will negotiate under the CER agreement with the Australian Government for the introduction of a single maritime market for our two countries. The aim is Australian and New Zealand ships having first call and competing with each other Trans-Tasman and port to port for domestic or inter-country cargo. Such an agreement would be within the spirit of CER and similar to the bilateral single aviation market agreement.

These measures will aid the development and broadening of the nautical skills base.

Labour will work with all sectors of the maritime industry to develop an agreed maritime policy for New Zealand to the benefit of our economy and the industry. The process will include examination of such issues as “the single Maritime Market” concept, the so called level playing field in domestic transport and international competitiveness. It will also involve reviewing all maritime and related reforms to ensure effectiveness, and will incorporate an audit of compliance with conventions to which New Zealand is party, in order to examine whether those undertakings are being honoured.

Labour will closely monitor marine pollution, including the regulation of ballast discharge to avoid the importation of seabome pests and ensure that New Zealand keeps its international obligations in these areas.

AVIATION

Aviation Safety

The expected increase in the volume of civil aviation will result in an increasing number of aircraft accidents worldwide unless the accident rate is reduced. In the next twenty years the number of airliners world-wide will double and, unless air safety improves, there will be one major loss somewhere in the world every week. Aviation is vitally important for the economic and cultural growth of New Zealand.

Over the last fifteen years our aviation industry has changed dramatically. Labour will review the aviation industry now that we are one decade on from the 1990 Civil Aviation Act which implemented the Swedavia McGregor Report. The 1990 Civil Aviation aimed to encourage internal competition and give more latitude to the industry. This change was accompanied by greater penalties to key individuals such as managers, pilots and engineers, who had the responsibility but very little authority. This authority has at times been compromised by economic sanction within the industry.

Over the past five or so years we have seen a less safe aviation environment as has been demonstrated through several accidents. There has been a change of culture within the industry. One of the features of organisations with a strong safety culture is a high degree of openness; a climate in which people are prepared to report their errors. This culture has changed and a review is needed to ensure that the holes in the safety network are closed and that New Zealand takes advantage of what is available on the world aviation safety market.

Aviation is one of our most vital transport connections with the outside world. It is also important for our growing tourist industry. Labour will improve these connections by implementing the following policies:

- re-establish the position of the Minister of Civil Aviation. The policy unit within the Ministry of Transport will report directly to this Minister;
 - work internationally for harmonisation between countries on areas such as aviation standards, certification and pilot licensing, with particular focus on harmonisation with the United States;
 - broaden bilateral reciprocity agreements for New Zealand airline access to overseas markets;
 - support further Trans-Tasman aviation integration;
 - continue to fund those border control activities which the state presently funds. They are core responsibilities of the state;
 - work with the industry to achieve “one level of safety” so that passengers will know they are receiving a seamless standard of safety when they move from one commercial passenger aircraft to another;
 - review all aviation agencies to ensure logical and sensible developments and the eradication of unnecessary costs;
 - ensure that the Civil Aviation Authority has the expertise and the procedures in place to uphold standards;
 - continue efforts to reduce our high small aircraft crash rate;
 - ensure that the cockpit voice recorder continues as a device intended for safety purposes and that no pilot using a CVR should be inhibited or intimidated by the prospect of self-incrimination should an accident occur;
 - inquire into the safety of all New Zealand commercial airports, including approach routes to ensure no unidentified risks remain unaddressed;
- work with industry to find ways to reduce noise at major metropolitan airports.

