Transporting New Zealand's

Election Platform 2026

Improving our country's wellbeing through better transport productivity

Productivity • Infrastructure • Sustainability

Stronger Transport Businesses

Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting NEW ZEALAND

About us

Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting New Zealand is a national membership association representing the road freight transport industry. Our 1,100 members include urban, rural and inter-regional commercial freight transport operators throughout the country.

As the peak body and authoritative voice of the road freight sector, which employs approximately 33,000 people (1.2% of the total workforce), Transporting New Zealand helps trucking operators drive successful, safe, sustainable businesses.

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Transporting New Zealand

Driving New Zealand's **Future**

Our world is developing rapidly and while much progress is being made we are facing increases in competing priorities and limited funding.

How we use and maintain our infrastructure is key to connecting our communities and their economic survival.

We must take an evidence-based, risk-informed approach that ensures our spend provides good value for money and supports long-term prosperity.

"**Ninety-three per cent** of annual freight tonnage is moved by trucks"

Transporting New Zealand has identified five priority areas where action is needed to strengthen productivity, resilience and long-term growth.

1. FUEL AND SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE
2. INFRASTRUCTURE
3. SAFER ROADS
4. FUTURE WORKFORCE
5. LOWER-EMISSION FREIGHT

1 Fuel and supply chain resilience

This year's international fuel supply disruptions and associated price shocks have highlighted how important it is for New Zealand to have resilient fuel reserves and effective contingency plans in the event of sustained disruptions. The crisis has also highlighted the essential role that diesel plays compared to petrol and jet fuel.

> "Truckstop diesel prices **more than doubled to nearly $4.00/litre** in April 2026"

Transport companies, fuel importers, and the government have responded effectively to the crisis, with New Zealand experiencing no supply shortages, although record price rises have seen some job losses, increased freight costs, and have negatively impacted business confidence.

Evidently, the road freight transport industry is crucial in keeping New Zealanders supplied, employed and in-business. Despite diesel prices more than doubling, heavy vehicles kept moving with only minor falls in demand recorded by NZTA and telematics providers.

New Zealand's economy depends on reliable freight connections, with approximately 93% of annual freight tonnage being moved by road, with the remainder by rail, coastal shipping, and air freight.

The Government has an important role in ensuring critical freight infrastructure and institutions support a productive, competitive and resilient freight system.

Transporting New Zealand calls on all political parties to:

- **Increase onshore diesel reserves to 60 days' supply** or **establish a Fuel Resilience Fund via a 1c/L levy** on transport fuels to increase onshore reserves.
- **Formalise fuel contingency arrangements** with refining partners, including South Korea, building on the Singapore model.
- Prioritise **alternative fuel infrastructure investment** for heavy vehicles, with a focus on public battery charging stations.
- **Ensure resilient Cook Strait freight connections** by maintaining adequate dry-dock capacity and supporting reliable ferry operations.
- Require **regular Infrastructure Commission reporting** on whether **rail freight investment** is achieving its intended outcomes, ensuring future investment decisions are evidence-based and deliver value for taxpayers.
- Continue supporting the **New Zealand Freight Advisory Council** as the principal forum for collaboration between Government and the freight sector.
- Develop a **nationally coordinated freight data platform** providing better real-time information on freight movements and network performance across road, rail and coastal shipping.

2 Infrastructure that **supports growth**

Reliable roads are essential for safety, productivity and economic growth. These all contribute to the country's well-being. Increased investment in road maintenance and resilience has begun to improve network condition after decades of underinvestment.

However, Transporting New Zealand's National Road Freight Industry Survey identified ongoing concerns about the quality and efficiency of maintenance delivery, including repeat repairs.

According to NZTA's Transport Insights Dashboard, average road maintenance costs increased by approximately **36% per kilometre** between 2021 and 2025.

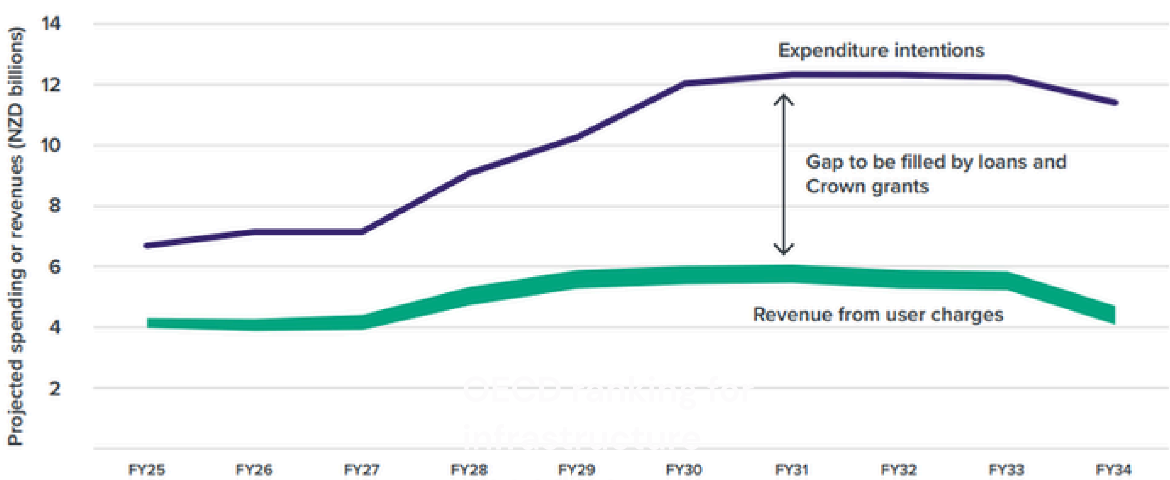
The Infrastructure Commission's National Infrastructure Plan highlights that New Zealand is in the **top 10%** of OECD countries for **infrastructure spending** but in the **bottom 10% for return on investment**.

New Zealand's stop-start approach to infrastructure investment has also contributed to a significant infrastructure deficit and reduced certainty for businesses, communities and skilled contractors.

A stable pipeline of transport investment is essential to support economic growth, improve productivity and strengthen network resilience.

Land transport faces a large funding gap under current plans

Figure 23: **New Zealand plans to spend much more on land transport than it collects from users**



Source: NZTA National Land Transport Programme 2024–2027.

Transporting New Zealand calls on all political parties to:

- **Make road maintenance a transport funding priority** and ensure future funding increases keep pace with rising costs.
- **Direct the Infrastructure Commission to complete a review** of road maintenance delivery, network performance and value for money.
- Retain **economic growth as a strategic priority** within the GPS (Government Policy Statement) on Land Transport.
- Maintain a **stable pipeline of nationally significant transport projects**, including Roads of National and Regional Significance identified in the National Land Transport Programme.
- Ensure any services procured deliver the required construction quality and life and are good value for money.

3 Safer roads through **smarter enforcement**

New Zealand's road safety outcomes are moving in the right direction, with **annual fatalities declining** each year between 2022 and 2025 and two regions recording zero fatalities in 2025.

However, there is still more to be done to keep all road users safe. We need Police and NZTA to be utilising **modern technology and enforcement** to reduce harm on the roads.

Regulators must crack down on non-compliant freight operators who hop between easily obtained transport service licenses and undercut reputable firms, damaging the industry's reputation.

A strong, credible, risk-based regulatory system helps protect road users and responsible transport businesses.

Over 30% of fatal crashes involve drivers with drugs in their system *- Ministry of Transport*

Transporting New Zealand calls on all political parties to:

- **Expand roadside drug driving enforcement** and **public awareness campaigns,** increasing annual roadside tests from 50,000 to 150,000, consistent with successful Australian approaches.
- **Increase penalties for illegal mobile phone use and seatbelt non-compliance** while driving, crack down on repeat offenders, and expand camera-based enforcement technology to capture these offences.
- **Invest in rest stop facilities on key freight routes** and target safety improvements on high-risk sections of the road network.
- Crack down on poorly performing operators by **reviewing the Transport Service Licence (TSL) scheme** to ensure commercial transport operators have the necessary experience, business facilities and technical expertise to operate a business safely and sustainably.

4 Supporting the **future workforce**

New Zealand's 33,000 truck drivers are the industry's greatest asset. However, an ageing workforce, ongoing driver shortages and barriers to obtaining licences threaten the long-term sustainability of the freight sector.

One in ten truck drivers are over 65, and one-third of transport businesses expect up to a quarter of their workforce to retire or leave the industry within five years.

More than one million New Zealanders aged 16 and over do not hold a full driver licence, and close to half of this figure have no licence at all. This is not only problematic for the road freight sector, as **at least 70% of all jobs require a driver licence** as a prerequisite.

Ensuring New Zealanders can access licensing pathways and career opportunities in transport will be critical to meeting future workforce demand.

Transporting New Zealand calls on all political parties to:

- **Expand funding for driver licence training and support programmes** in schools and communities. Improving access to licensing will help remove barriers to employment and create pathways into the transport industry.
- **Shorten heavy vehicle licensing pathways** by recognising supervised work experience and competency-based assessment. This will enable capable drivers to progress more efficiently while maintaining appropriate safety standards.
- **Ensure immigration settings allow transport companies to immediately fill critical workforce gaps**, across all sectors and license classes. Targeted immigration pathways should complement domestic workforce development initiatives where shortages persist.

5 Productivity and Lower-Emission Freight

New Zealand's national productivity has slumped, making it more important than ever to maximise freight efficiency across road, rail and coastal shipping.

At the same time, reducing transport emissions will require practical policies that support **fleet renewal**, **uptake of new technologies** and **infrastructure investment**.

Road freight operators are already taking action through the use of newer vehicles, fuel-efficient driving strategies, higher-productivity vehicle combinations and exploring low-emission technologies.

However, faster progress will require **additional government support and investment.**

In sectors where a small number of major freight procurers, processors or port and depot operators hold **significant market power**, commercial pressure can also reduce investment in safety, productivity and lower-emission vehicles.

TODAY'S FLEET

Transporting New Zealand calls on all political parties to:

- **Review EECA's Low Emission Heavy Vehicle Fund** and introduce **full capital expensing** for high-productivity and low-emission heavy vehicles to accelerate fleet renewal.
- Continue to lift freight productivity and innovative heavy vehicle uptake through **vehicle dimension and mass reform.**
- **Strengthen bridges and culverts** to ensure fuel efficient higher capacity trucks and zero emission heavy trucks can operate on more of the roading network.
- Direct the Commerce Commission to **investigate competition and bargaining dynamics in freight supply chains**, including whether imbalances in market power are reducing productivity, innovation and investment in the road freight sector.
- **Strengthen the Commerce Commission** and give it greater independence and powers to identify and address areas where a lack of competition is driving up costs for New Zealand businesses and consumers.

Low-emission technologies

Higher productivity vehicle configurations

Lower emissions per tonne moved

NEXT-GENERATION FLEET

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