

New Zealand Infrastructure Commission – Te Waihanga

6 August 2025

Porirua City Council - Submission on the draft National Infrastructure Plan

Introduction

Porirua City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft National Infrastructure Plan. As the local authority for Porirua, a growing urban centre, we strongly support the Plan's objectives to align infrastructure investment with long-term social, economic, and environmental goals.

Transport System

We strongly support transport system reform.

We are concerned that, historically, significant investment in our transport infrastructure has only followed disruptive events, such as natural disasters. This reactive approach undermines both community wellbeing and economic resilience. As a coastal and seismically active city with key transport links such as State Highway 1 (Transmission Gully), State Highway 59 and the Kapiti rail line, Porirua cannot afford to wait for a major event to trigger investment.

Infrastructure investment should be based on risk exposure, projected growth, and strategic value to the wider network, not solely on post-event recovery.

We are also concerned that our local and regional transport infrastructure remains highly disaggregated, planned and managed across multiple agencies and funding streams without coordination. This fragmentation leads to duplicated effort, misaligned investment priorities, and missed opportunities to deliver integrated transport solutions that support housing, employment, and climate goals. At the moment, investment in one part of the network often proceeds without regard for its impact on the others.

Furthermore, changes to central government policy reducing funding for walking and cycling infrastructure risk undermining the strategic direction set out in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development and our own growth plans. A key component of successful intensification in the city centre and around our train stations and key bus routes is the ability for people to move easily and safely by foot, bike, or micro-mobility. Investment in active transport infrastructure supports compact, high-density neighbourhoods by reducing car dependence, improving access to local services, and enhancing overall urban liveability.

Without adequate funding support, councils like Porirua face significant barriers to delivering the kind of well-connected, low-emission communities envisioned in national and local planning strategies. We urge the government to reconsider these funding cuts and instead align infrastructure investment with long-term urban development goals.

Funding pathways

Porirua City Council supports, in principle, the funding pathways outlined in the draft plan. We agree that diversifying funding tools is necessary to meet the scale and complexity of New Zealand's infrastructure needs.

As a rapidly growing city with significant infrastructure pressures, from three waters and transport to climate resilience, we recognise the importance of sustainable, long-term investment strategies. Alternative funding approaches, including targeted rates, user-pays, and infrastructure financing models, can help to deliver infrastructure in a more timely and equitable way.

Stable, long-term government funding

We support the principle of stable, long-term government funding as a foundation for effective infrastructure planning and delivery. Certainty of funding enables councils to plan, coordinate investments, and deliver outcomes efficiently across multiple asset classes.

However, we note a level of scepticism due to recent reversals of major infrastructure programmes, such as the cancellation of the Inter-Island Resilience Connection project and the dismantling of the Three Waters reform process. For stable funding to be meaningful, it must be matched with policy consistency, bipartisan support where possible, and early engagement with councils to co-design delivery pathways.

We welcome the continued emphasis of sustainable infrastructure investment in the draft plan. However, we note that sustainable investment was also identified as a key objective in the previous infrastructure strategy, yet progress on embedding it in funding decisions and delivery models has been limited.

To give effect to this principle, the final Plan must include clear implementation mechanisms, including funding criteria, accountability measures, and alignment with long-term spatial and climate planning.

Needs-based Government investment

Equity must be considered in national infrastructure planning. Parts of our city experience higher levels of social and economic deprivation, ageing infrastructure, and limited access to safe, efficient transport options. We support, in-principle, a needs-based approach to government infrastructure investment. We believe national funding should be guided by measurable indicators of community need, including population growth, infrastructure capacity constraints, climate risk, and socioeconomic disadvantage.

A one-size-fits-all or purely population-based allocation model does not reflect the complex and uneven infrastructure challenges faced by fast-growing cities like Porirua. Infrastructure investment in Porirua should aim to reduce disparities by improving access to essential services, enabling affordable housing, and ensuring safe and reliable transport networks for all residents. We encourage a stronger equity lens throughout the Plan to support inclusive, resilient, and fair urban development across the country.

Additionally, Central Government could lead by example with asset management best practices, especially with roads, hospitals and schools.

Waste as a key infrastructure and climate issue

Waste is one of the most critical and under-recognised infrastructure challenges facing Porirua and similar urban centres, both in terms of climate impact and long-term investment. As the Draft National Infrastructure Plan acknowledges the need for low-emissions, climate-resilient infrastructure, we urge greater national prioritisation of waste systems as core infrastructure.

Recognising waste infrastructure in the same category as transport, water, and energy would better enable councils to meet both climate targets and community wellbeing outcomes.

Enabling vertical development and infrastructure

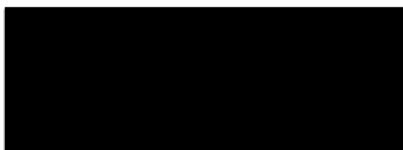
Council strongly supports infrastructure planning and investment that enables vertical, higher-density development within the city centre particularly near Porirua Railway Station, and in areas with good access to transport links. This approach aligns with the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD), which promotes well-functioning urban environments and intensified development near existing and planned rapid transit and also aligns with proposals set out in the Going for Housing Growth package.

Concentrating infrastructure improvements in these areas will help realise the full potential of the city centre as a compact, connected, and vibrant urban hub. It also supports Council's growth strategy and wider aspirations to deliver housing choice, reduce emissions, and create a more accessible and liveable city.

Although higher-density development near transport hubs can require upfront investment, these costs can offset the much higher long-term costs of greenfield development. New developments and infrastructure on the outskirts of our city usually means extending roads, pipes, and other infrastructure over large areas, which is expensive to build and maintain. These areas also tend to rely heavily on cars, adding to congestion and emissions.

In contrast, building up in places like Porirua's city centre – where transport and services already exist – is more efficient and cost-effective over time. We encourage the plan to reflect the long-term benefits of supporting compact, well-connected communities instead of continued outward expansion.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission.



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Mayor