

23 July 2025

Te Waihanga the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission
Level 7, The Todd Building
95 Customhouse Quay
Wellington 6011

To Whom it May Concern,

Submission on the Draft National Infrastructure Plan

We are writing on behalf of the Te Utanganui to express our support for the direction set out in the draft National Infrastructure Plan, particularly the inclusion Manawatū Regional Freight Ring Road (MRFRR), and to emphasise the importance of prioritising strategic freight and logistics infrastructure that will deliver benefits across New Zealand.

About Te Utanganui

Te Utanganui is New Zealand's only intermodal hub where road, rail, and air converge. Its strategic location in Manawatū, and is well served by international ports, and connects both islands, complementing major freight hubs in The Golden Triangle and Canterbury. Several infrastructure projects in Manawatū, either planned or underway, combine to establish Te Utanganui as the primary distribution and transport hub for central New Zealand.

Support for a clear, long-term strategy

We welcome the Plan's intention to establish a clear, long-term strategy for nationally significant infrastructure projects, providing certainty for communities, councils, and industry. New Zealand cannot afford to fund every potential project, and a strategic, integrated plan will ensure investment is targeted where it delivers the greatest national benefit.

The case for freight and logistics

While the draft National Infrastructure Plan sets a strong direction, it is currently light on freight and logistics - areas critical to New Zealand's future prosperity and resilience. Freight underpins New Zealand's economy and is forecast to grow by 60% over the next 30 years, driven by population growth, changing consumer demands, and regional economic development. Supporting this growth requires well-planned, strategic infrastructure that enables the safe, efficient, and low-emissions movement of goods across the country.

Investment in freight infrastructure is not just about moving goods; it underpins productivity across every sector, supports export competitiveness, and ensures communities can reliably access essential products and services, even during

disruptions. Progress on the New Zealand Freight and Supply Chain Strategy has been slow and the recent and disappointing decision by the Ministry of Transport to not refresh the strategy makes it imperative that the National Infrastructure Plan steps up to provide the clear direction and investment needed to advance this work. A stronger focus on freight and logistics within the Plan will ensure infrastructure decisions drive improvements in the resilience, sustainability, and efficiency of New Zealand's supply chains to meet the demands of the future economy.

The role of Te Utanganui and priority projects

Te Utanganui is a key component of the national freight system, providing a central node that connects major ports, regional centres, and markets. It will support the efficient movement of goods while reducing congestion in urban centres, contributing to lower emissions and improved safety on our roads.

To support robust decision-making, Te Utanganui commissioned a comprehensive report by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER). This work found that, depending on the scenarios modelled, Te Utanganui as a whole, delivers a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) between 1.71:1 and 2.05:1, demonstrating strong national benefits and value for money, and delivering key priorities identified in the National Infrastructure Plan.

We strongly support the inclusion of the Manawatū Regional Freight Ring Road (MRFRR) within the Plan's Infrastructure Priorities Programme. This project is essential to enabling Te Utanganui, addressing congestion and safety challenges caused by high freight volumes in the region, and enhancing connectivity across the lower North Island. We also note and support the inclusion of the Defence Force projects at Linton within the priority list, MRFRR will directly benefit these Defence investments by improving access to Linton Military Camp. It is encouraging to see this type of strategic alignment across priorities, whether by design or happenstance, as it demonstrates how integrated infrastructure planning can deliver wider national benefits.

We also encourage the Infrastructure Commission to consider prioritising KiwiRail's Central North Island Freight Hub in the next tranche of priority projects. This hub is a critical part of the Te Utanganui network and aligns with the Plan's goals for efficient, low-emissions freight infrastructure.

Conclusion

We commend the Commission for its transparent and independent approach to prioritising nationally significant infrastructure and for its commitment to addressing maintenance backlogs alongside new, well-planned investments that deliver value for money.

Te Utanganui aligns closely with the objectives of the National Infrastructure Plan and represents an opportunity to deliver tangible national and regional benefits in line with the Plan's direction, through agglomeration and increased resilience – Getting more out of the infrastructure we have today.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how Te Utanganui can support the delivery of a connected, productive, and sustainable infrastructure system for New Zealand.

Yours sincerely

Programme Director
Te Utanganui
[REDACTED]
www.teutanganui.co.nz

