

# TE TAI TOKERAU NORTHLAND

## AT A GLANCE

*Our focus in Northland is to help create a safer, more resilient transport system that supports economic growth, stronger community connections and provides better access to employment opportunities.*

## COVID-19 INSIGHTS AND IMPACTS

This section sets out the how the current pandemic might impact on land transport in Northland. Significant levels of uncertainty remain regarding the scale and duration of COVID-19 impacts, particularly in the medium to long term. We will continue to monitor and update as things change.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON KEY SECTORS

- The key sectors in Northland's economy are reasonably well placed to recover from the pandemic, with the exception of retail trade.
- International tourism makes up approximately 20% of Northland tourism spend.<sup>54</sup>
- The reduction in international tourism may be offset by an increase in domestic tourism (at least in the short term) because of its proximity of Auckland.
- The region has relatively low reliance on temporary migrant labour (1.2% of labour force, 2019), so will not be unduly impacted by reductions in immigration. Most are employed in the agriculture and horticulture sectors.<sup>35</sup>

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITIES

- Northland's economy had been trailing behind the national average pre-COVID-19, but the region is forecast to recover relatively well from the pandemic.
- Under the slower recovery scenario:
  - the region's forecast fall in employment to 2021 (relative to BAU) is -5.6%, below the national average of -6.7%<sup>35</sup>
  - employment in the region is forecast to return to BAU levels in the latter half of this decade.<sup>35</sup>
- Māori, Pasifika and youth are likely to experience the greatest impacts, particularly those in smaller regional centres. An increase in youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is expected.

- Recent population growth driven by net migration. With lower levels of international migration and less 'spill over' from Auckland, Northland's growth is expected to slow significantly in the short to medium-term.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE LAND TRANSPORT SYSTEM

- Expect an easing of growth in passenger transport demand over the short-term because of slower population growth, reduced employment and less discretionary trips.
- No significant changes are expected in the nature, scale and location of transport demand over the medium to long-term. The 10-year outlook remains largely unchanged.
- Maintaining safe and reliable connections to Auckland and to domestic tourism centres (including the Twin Coast Discovery Highway) remain important to supporting recovery.
- There will be an ongoing need for transport services to support COVID-19 recovery by improving access to employment and essential services for vulnerable communities.
- There will be ongoing pressure on transport revenue as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.

## REGION STEP CHANGES

### IMPROVE URBAN FORM

Prior to COVID-19, Whangārei district's population was forecast to grow 28% by 2043.<sup>25</sup> Half the growth was expected to be outside Whangārei city,<sup>34</sup> meaning an increase in dependency on private vehicles. This long-term outlook remains largely unchanged despite a short-term easing of passenger transport demand.

We will focus on closer collaboration to support land-use changes that encourage more people to live in urban centres and offer greater use of public transport, walking and cycling modes.

### TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY

Whangārei relies on private vehicle use with limited public transport services. Future growth in Whangārei and Marsden/Ruakaka provides new public transport and walking and cycling opportunities.

### SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS

Northland has a poor road safety record – speeding, impairment, not using seat belts and fatigue are primary contributors.<sup>47</sup> Post-COVID-19 recovery growth from tourism and freight could exacerbate this.

### TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Increased extreme weather events and sea level rise will affect the region.

Greater urbanisation in eastern Northland is an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions through promotion of walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.

### SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

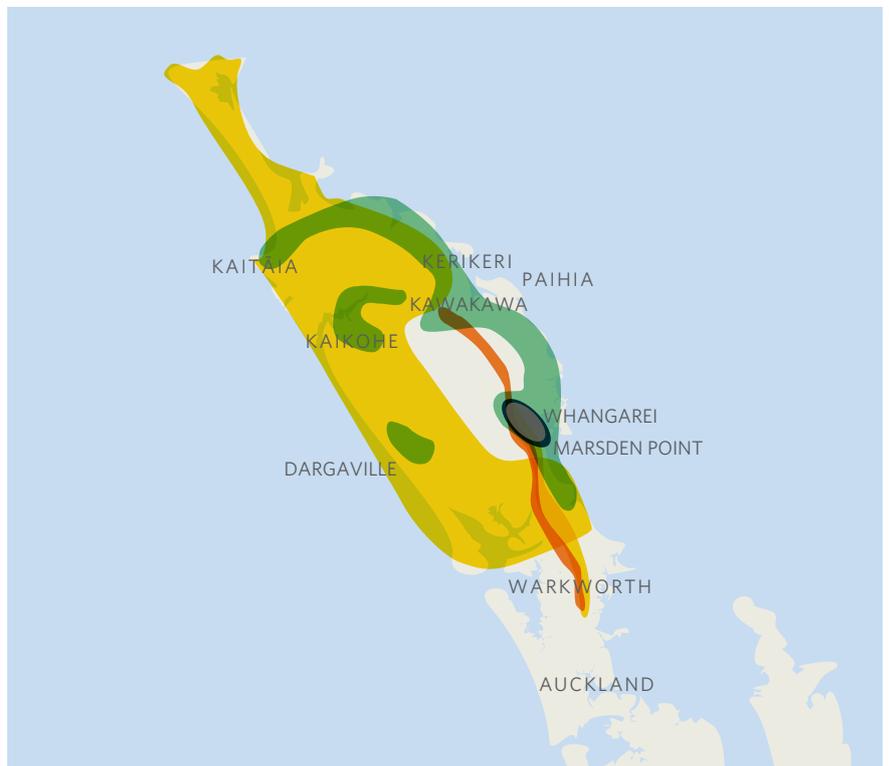
Northland has the lowest household income<sup>50</sup> and second highest unemployment rate in New Zealand.

Access to employment, education and essential services needs to improve, particularly for remote communities in the Far North and Kaipara.

Northport's future as part of the upper North Island freight system could significantly increase freight volumes on road and rail, requiring increased investment to ensure safe and reliable movement of people and freight.



SIGNIFICANCE OF STEP CHANGE TO REGION 2021-31



**179,076**

REGIONAL POPULATION<sup>25</sup>

**18.1%** REGIONAL POPULATION GROWTH 2013-18<sup>25</sup>

**3.8%** OF NATIONAL POPULATION<sup>25</sup> 2018

**6.6%** OF NATIONAL DEATHS & SERIOUS INJURIES (DSI)<sup>47</sup>

**198** TOTAL DSI<sup>47</sup> ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR PERIOD 2016-19

**4%** OF NATIONAL VEHICLE EMISSIONS<sup>48</sup>

**2.6%** OF NATIONAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT YEAR END MARCH 2018<sup>26</sup>

**6%** REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE  
**4.1%** NATIONAL RATE YEAR END JUNE 2019<sup>49</sup>

Pre COVID-19 data

## NORTHLAND TODAY

Because of the level of uncertainty of population and economic trends, this section has not been reviewed in detail for Arataki V2

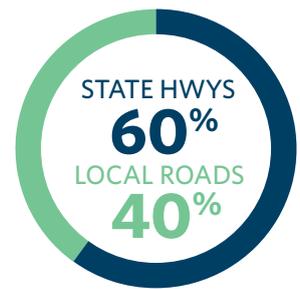
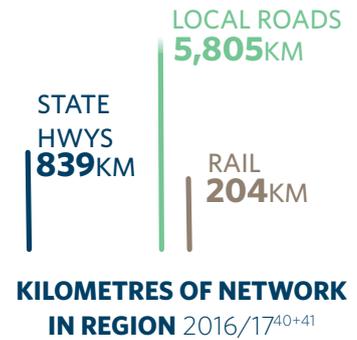
### NORTHLAND'S ECONOMY IS LARGELY RURAL BASED, RELYING ON DAIRY, FARMING, FORESTRY AND HORTICULTURE PRODUCTION.

The oil refinery at Marsden Point remains a large employer in the region, while tourism is offering significant growth opportunities. The region's economic advantages include its proximity to the large Auckland market, easy access to export markets, its natural environment and climate.

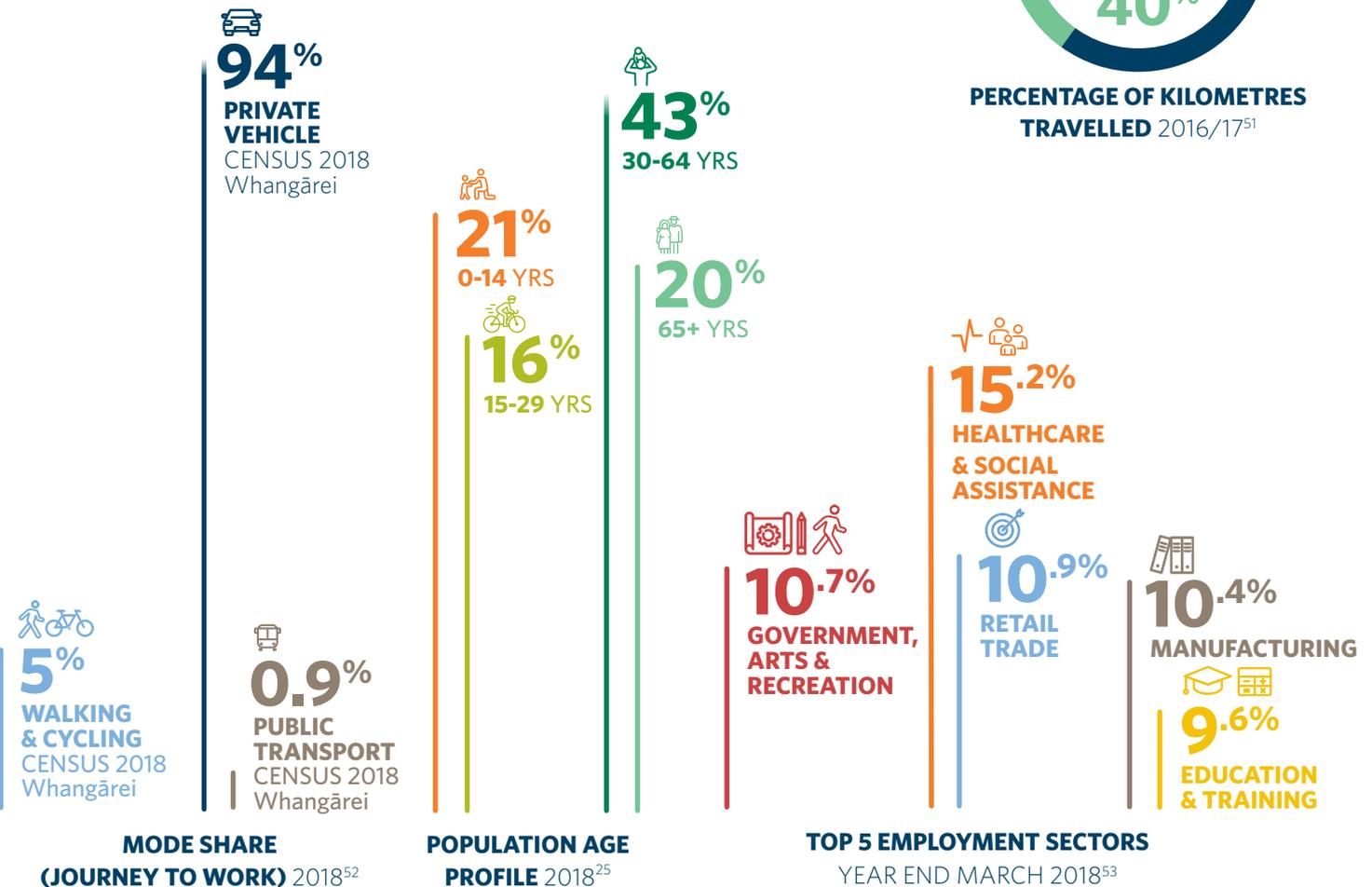
Almost 70% of the population lives in rural communities outside the region's only major centre, Whangārei.<sup>34</sup> This dispersed population means there is

limited public transport service beyond Whangārei and Kaitaia and a high dependency on private vehicle use to access key services, such as tertiary education, training and healthcare.

Northland's population grew by 27,000 or 18.1% between 2013-18,<sup>25</sup> faster than any other region as a result of immigration and accommodating the growth overflow from Auckland. Key transport routes, such as SH1, are critical in connecting Northland's towns and communities. This will continue as access along the corridor north of Auckland is improved, making Northland an even more attractive region in which to live, work and visit.



**PERCENTAGE OF KILOMETRES TRAVELLED** 2016/17<sup>51</sup>



## NORTHLAND TOMORROW

Northland's percentage population growth rate from 2013 to 2018 was the highest of any region. Prior to COVID-19, it was forecast to grow to approximately 197,000 by 2043 or 4% of New Zealand's population,<sup>27</sup> largely because the effects of Auckland's strong growth had been expected to continue during the next decade. It is currently expected that growth could slow significantly in the short to medium-term because of less 'spill-over' from Auckland but the region's labour force is not expected to be significantly impacted by reductions in international immigration. Future growth is expected to result in increased traffic volumes and congestion around Kerikeri, Whangārei and Ruakaka, and along the Whangārei to Auckland corridor.

This population growth, industry changes because of climate change and the country's transition to a low-emission economy will impact rural land-use in Northland. For example, there is already evidence of a transition from dairying to avocado production. Primary industries will remain the backbone of the region's economy and are expected to provide the basis for Northland's COVID-19 recovery along with the region's other key sectors. However, the growth of employment in service industries in the main centres may slow in the short to medium-term because of COVID-19.

Hotter, drier summers, an expected outcome of climate change, will increase dust issues on the region's high proportion of unsealed roads, while sea level rise and increased intensity of storm events will result in greater disruptions to access in some areas. Only 40% of the region's 5,805km of local roads are sealed.<sup>40</sup>

There are 10 high-risk, natural hazards areas within the Northland region that affect long-term resilience. These relate predominantly to landslip and flooding. The section of SH1 from the Brynderwyn Hills to Whangārei is subject to both landslips and flooding, which is likely to increase in the future because of sea level rise.

Rural communities in Kaipara and the Far North are looking for increased local employment and improved connections to centres such as Whangārei for their young people to access education and employment, and for older residents to access physical and social activities, health and social services. This will be particularly important because of the expected increase in young people not in employment, education and training.

Emerging technologies, such as on-demand shuttles, could provide a feasible shared transport option in the future to help people get around within the Far North and Kaipara, and improve access to services in Whangārei. Improved access to high-quality data and information will enable better management of the existing transport system to get the most out of existing infrastructure.

The proportion of the region's population on fixed incomes is likely to place even greater pressure on Northland's councils' ability to maintain existing infrastructure and fund new infrastructure.

## KEY SYSTEM INSIGHTS

- Northland's social and economic opportunities are dependent on its connections, both rail and road, south to Auckland and the rest of the country to support key industries, enable visitors and allow communities to thrive.
- A greater role for Northport within the upper North Island could significantly increase freight volumes on road and rail. This would need support from transport networks (road, rail and coastal shipping) that can support the safe and efficient movement of goods to Auckland and other domestic markets. Investments announced recently will support an increased role for rail freight, such as an ability to move high-cube shipping containers and reopening the Northland Line between Kauri and Otiria where a container terminal is being built.
- Forecast growth in Whangārei and Marsden/Ruakaka and coastal townships potentially increases reliance on private vehicle travel and travelling long distances to access services.
- Sea level rise and more extreme weather events will impact coastal communities and result in more frequent road closures. Land slips are a particular issue for this region.
- Northland has a poor safety record – the greatest risk areas are SH1 from Warkworth to Pakaraka (SH10), Whangārei's urban area and high-risk rural roads. Driver behaviours such as speeding, alcohol, drug impairment and people not wearing seatbelts are also key issues.
- Regional development can be supported by improved access to employment, education, training and essential services for remote communities, access to visitor destinations and goods to market.

## FOCUS OF EFFORT: 2018-21

This section represents the existing commitments (eg the NLTP and NZUP). V2 has not been updated to include economic stimulus packages as that space continues to evolve.

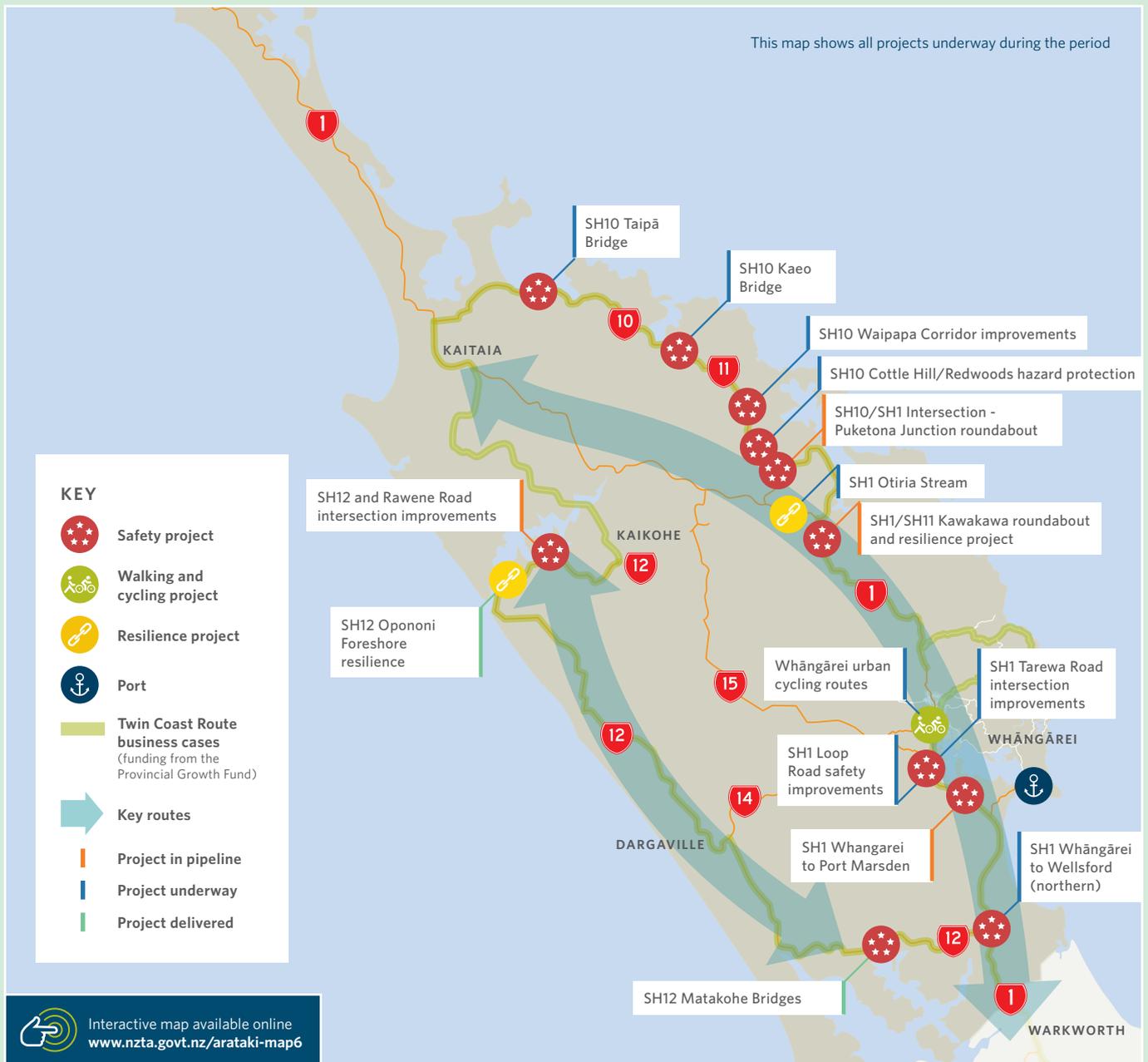
Planning for local road improvements in Northland will provide improved access across the region. It will also support increased growth in the urban areas to reduce reliance on private vehicles, provide better public transport services and more walking and cycling facilities. The planned Whangārei urban cycle network will make it safer and more convenient for residents to travel about the city.

Work continues to identify and improve high-risk safety areas across the Northland network, as well as monitoring use by freight and tourists, to help reduce deaths and serious injuries. A programme of safety improvements is

planned at regional hotspots, particularly along the popular tourist Twin Coast Discovery Route.

Improvements to Loop Road will make it safer for freight trucks accessing Northport, while the replacement of single-lane bridges at Taipā and Matakoho will not only improve safety but support growth of the region’s economy.

Free driving lessons and tests for the region’s young drivers is expected to both improve access to education, training and employment opportunities for those without access to alternative transport services and help reduce road deaths.



## AREAS OF FOCUS: NORTHLAND 2021-31

### SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HARMS (HIGH)

#### SAFETY

Support implementation of the *Road to Zero: New Zealand's road safety strategy 2020-2030* and its associated *Action plan 2020-2022*, and regional safety strategies with emphasis on:

- targeting road policing and behaviour change programmes with a focus on alcohol and drug impairment, people not wearing seatbelts and speeding
- safety treatments targeting run-off road and head-on crashes on high-risk rural roads (rural roads are roads with speed limits >80km/h)
- speed management to provide safe and appropriate speeds on high-risk rural roads with targeted use of safety cameras to reduce speeding
- supporting opportunities to reduce conflict between visiting drivers and heavy vehicles on the network north of Whangārei
- exploring with Northland district councils how the sealing programme can be accelerated to reduce harms.

#### HEALTH

Our approach to delivering better health outcomes, particularly the reduction of harmful emissions, will primarily be through initiatives that target other step changes, including improved urban form, increasing access to and use of public transport, walking and cycling, and efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

We will support future pandemic planning by identifying from our COVID-19 experience, successful low-cost and temporary street calming, and active transport projects that enable social distance, health benefits from increased physical activity and reduced air emissions. We will also continue to work to ensure that the noise impacts of transport are appropriately managed through a mix of land-use planning and mitigation works.

### IMPROVE URBAN FORM (MEDIUM)

While our focus is on multi-agency partnerships in the largest and fastest growing urban areas, we recognise the potential for growth in and around Whangārei to support a safe and thriving city, with increased access to public transport, walking and cycling options and reduced carbon emissions. We will:

- increase focus on collaborative work with WDC in producing the Future Development Strategy (FDS). Review district plan urban sections and support the city centre masterplan with appropriate transport investment for growth that make the best use of existing infrastructure
- support for WDC's FDS to incorporate their revised programme business case
- support land-use changes that enable better public transport, walking and cycling facilities to significantly increase the number of residents living in the town centre
- support improved connections between the Whangārei city centre and waterfront (Town Basin)
- advocate for increased strategic integrated planning for land-use and transport along the Auckland-Whangārei corridor, including growth in coastal communities along the route and the future role of Northport.

### TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY (MEDIUM)

Projected population growth in and around Whangārei will increase at a slower pace. Future travel demand on the region's networks and provides opportunities to support increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Our focus will be on:

- assisting and enhancing the Whangārei District Council (WDC) with the implementation of their Walking and Cycling Strategy
- assisting and supporting Northland Regional Council with planning and implementation of the Revised Regional Public Transport Plan
- supporting initiatives to improve connections and travel choice between the main Whangārei urban area and the growing urban area at Ruakaka/Marsden Point
- investigating opportunities for on-demand transport services in Whangārei and smaller regional centres
- working with WDC to encourage actively manage car-parking in the city centre, city fringe area and other key centres to increase uptake of public transport, walking and cycling for trips to these locations.

## TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE (MEDIUM)

We will continue to work to understand the opportunities to support climate change adaptation and mitigation, and start to prioritise interventions and responses for high-risk areas.

### ADAPTATION

We will focus on:

- engaging in local planning processes to avoid infrastructure and development in locations at increased risk of natural hazards and effects of climate change
- enabling continuous improvement in network resilience through maintenance and renewals, and 'low cost/low risk' investments
- engaging in long-term strategic planning to respond to the vulnerability of existing assets
- enabling quick recovery following disruption to the land transport system.

### MITIGATION

We will focus on:

- engaging locally in planning processes so that development supports reduced carbon emissions by reducing private vehicle travel and average trip length
- ensuring network design and operation makes the best use of existing transport systems to manage demand and reduce emissions by prioritising the move to public transport and low-emission options, and actively managing speed, urban freight and congestion.

## SUPPORT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (MEDIUM)

Northland is a priority for regional development support because of the long-term challenges it faces, such as high unemployment and low incomes. It is a surge region identified by the government as needing investment to support regional economic development, particularly outside Whangārei. To support regional growth, enable improved access to education, employment and visitor destinations, and to help raise standards of living, we will:

- provide a safer and more resilient journey on SH1 Auckland to Whangārei, including Northport, for people, freight and visitors. We will progress initiatives in line with Te Hana to Whangārei business case re-evaluation work and continue route protection for longer-term corridor improvements
- provide a safer and more resilient new 22km four-lane corridor of SH1 from Whangārei to Northport, with a separated shared walking and cycling path. This will be progressed through the New Zealand Upgrade Programme
- support freight initiatives that are multi-modal, efficient and safe, such as improving the efficiency and reliability of the North Auckland Rail Line and rail connections to Northport
- delivery of priority cycle trails and walkways
- support improvement to prioritised rest areas with essential amenities to improve safety and journey experience
- support planning initiatives and township improvement plans in the Far North and Kaipara to deliver safer and more accessible local travel options
- support improvements in social and economic outcomes in areas of high deprivation, particularly improving access to employment, education and essential services for isolated communities
- explore opportunities to support the mobile delivery of education and essential services
- maintain focus on selected, high-priority state highway improvements, including SH11 and SH12 for the benefit of forestry and horticulture industry development initiatives in the Far North and Kaipara.

