

# One eye on the land, the other on the road: improving integrated transport assessments in New Zealand

Guidance on when and how to carry out an integrated transport assessment, plus what should be included in assessments of varying complexity, is contained in a recent report facilitated by the Trips Database Bureau.

New research has produced guidelines to improve practice on undertaking integrated transport assessments in New Zealand.

Although transport assessments are happening, and some guidelines are already available, it is generally acknowledged these assessments produce variable results and quality. This is a problem, because it may mean that valuable resources are being under-used or over-used, and important decisions are being made without the benefit of fully understanding the transport effects.

The new guidelines seek to rectify this by drawing on best practice here and overseas to explain how integrated transport assessments should be conducted, with particular reference to the requirements for integrated and sustainable management of resources contained in New Zealand legislation.

## What's in the guidelines?

Steve Abley of Abley Transportation Consultants, one of the principal authors of the research with Malcolm Douglass of Douglass Consulting Services and Paul Durdin also of Abley, says that in developing the integrated transport assessment guidelines there was a need to reconcile the sometimes conflicting needs of decision-makers and practitioners. 'A uniform methodology was required for carrying out an integrated transport assessment and, with this in mind, we developed the guidelines to improve understanding of the process and the relevant inputs as well as the fit and context for integrated transport assessments within the New Zealand regulatory structure.'

The level of detail covered by a transport assessment, and the nature of the assessment for a particular issue or project, depend on the particular circumstances of each site. Factors such as the

statutory planning framework that applies, the degree of traffic impact or adverse effects indicated from a preliminary assessment, and the sensitivity of adjacent networks to changes in travel demand will all influence the type of assessment required.

The guideline outlines the scope and content required for four types of integrated transport assessments, namely simple, moderate, broad and extensive, with decisions about which level of assessment is required based on two dimensions: the geographic effect and the policy effect.

Steve explains that this approach differs from what has occurred in the past. 'Guidelines in the past have either limited themselves to full integrated transport assessments, or allowed for varying levels of assessment based purely on the expected transportation effects within a particular geographic area. In the current guidelines, we've added another dimension, so that decisions about which type of assessment is required now also take into account policy considerations.'

## ITA scope definitions

ITA scope	Geographic	Policy
Simple	Expected to have an effect within the site and at the interface with the transport network	Expected to be compliant with statutory rules
Moderate	Expected to have an effect over a small area or neighbourhood	Expected to align with local policies
Broad	Expected to have an effect over a larger area, eg part of or a whole suburb	Expected to align with local and regional policies and objectives
Extensive	Expected to have impacts over a wide area, district or region	Expected to align with regional and national policies, objectives and visions

## What is an integrated transport assessment?

The term 'integrated transport assessment' was first used in New Zealand by the Auckland Regional Transport Authority, and refers to a particular method of assessing transport issues and effects in New Zealand.

Integration in this context means the integration of land use and transport, which is a key outcome sought through the New Zealand Transport Strategy 2008 and the Land Transport Management Act 2003. Integrated transport assessments are seen as a key mechanism for delivering successful

environmental outcomes from transport projects. The Resource Management Act 1991 requires regional and local authorities to achieve 'integrated management of the natural and physical resources' in order to promote their sustainability. The transport system is considered a physical resource and therefore critical to integration issues.

The current project has widened the scope of what is meant by an integrated transport assessment to encompass five dimensions:

- consideration of national, regional and local transport and growth strategies
- discussion of land use control policies and district plan zoning objectives
- recognition of varying thresholds for assessments both on and off the site
- greater emphasis on person-trips by all modes
- consideration of travel demand management techniques for larger sites with high trip generating developments.

In the guidelines, the consideration of geographic issues relates to the spatial distribution of the expected effects, and the area over which the effects of the proposal will be noticed or deemed important. The consideration of policy and planning issues relates to district, regional and national strategies and plans (with the issues concerning the interactions between transport, land use and community under these documents). The larger an integrated transport assessment's scope, the greater the range of policies and strategies that will need to be addressed.

The guidelines outline the process to follow in developing an integrated transport assessment, and the typical contents for assessments of each type. In general, the content for simple assessments will be modest (because small projects will typically have limited impacts) and may only include consideration of such impacts as site access, on-site provisions and safety issues. Moderate integrated transport assessments will add to this a consideration of the project's impact on adjacent streets and nearby intersections. This may incorporate consideration of the land use characteristics and zoning provisions in the relevant district plan, and some local site modelling for pedestrian effects, and on-site and off-site vehicle movements.

Broad assessments will pull in adjacent blocks and could require strategic assessment of the location, evaluation of neighbouring land uses, consideration of a range of travel modes, surveys and

more extensive modelling. Extensive integrated transport assessments have the widest consideration of issues, and will require more extensive and complex transportation modelling, and consideration of district and regional effects in the context of longer-term planning objectives.

Technical assessment methodologies for the various aspects of an integrated transport assessment can vary significantly, so the report also provides four practice notes for practitioners to use (on vehicle-trip generation surveys, estimating design trip generation rates for retail activities, relevant case law, and discussion of the permitted baseline), with recommendations for more to be developed in the future.

## Contact for more information

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*Integrated transport assessment guidelines*  
NZ Transport Agency research report 422

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