



RUAPEHU DISTRICT COUNCIL

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To: Chair Shanan Halbert
Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Subject: **Inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand**

Submission from: Ruapehu District Council
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Mayor Weston Kirton wishes to speak in support of this submission.

This submission also supports the submission from "Ruapehu District Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, and Horizons Regional Council alongside the Councils of the North Island Main Trunk Railway)" and its attached Feasibility Study.

1 Introduction

Ruapehu District is a large (6,730 sq kilometers) area in central North Island, sufficiently distant from main centers and New Zealand's largest cities. While having a large area, the usual resident population is small (around 13,000), diverse and well spread out over the district. Ruapehu also has a very high number of properties that are holiday homes and owned by outside of the district ratepayers (in some areas up to 60%).

The district is landlocked and contains the western half of the Tongariro National Park, a dual World Heritage location, including most of Mount Ruapehu and the western sides of Mount Ngāuruhoe and Mount Tongariro, as well as part of the Whanganui National Park, and the Whanganui River. The district is also home to the world famous Raurimu Spiral on the North Island Main Trunk railway line.

The Ruapehu District ... where adventure begins!



2 Accessibility and Affordability

Ruapehu has very limited public transport, and high affordability issues which have ongoing impacts on employment, health and education. The ability to own (and run) transport is a challenge for some of the residents in high deprivation areas.

Ruapehu population (URP) is high on the deprivation index (overall 9) with some areas, like Taumarunui, even higher at 10. Current unemployment is higher than the national average (at 8% at the district level) and in double digits when drilling down into specific communities.

Ruapehu's Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu Portal ([Ruapehu Livability \(livinginruapehu.co.nz\)](http://livinginruapehu.co.nz) data and Narratives) highlight the issues of having limited access to services, like health, higher education and some basic services like banking.

"I'll be quite honest, I have been pushing (my husband) to actually move, with our children, because we are both getting to the stage where soon neither of us will be able to drive. If you cannot drive and you don't have children here you can't keep relying on neighbours, because they're in the same boat. I know many people who have moved."

3 Submission

Ruapehu submits that the Committee should investigate, support, and encourage the possibility and viability of passenger rail along the North Island Main Trunk Line, particularly in respect of those communities that are currently underserved by rail or where previous services have been disestablished.

- The expansion of passenger services along the Main Trunk Line are consistent with the Treasury's Living Standards Framework with economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits
- Will help meet Government Emissions Reduction Plan (Developments in technology that might reduce the carbon impact of other travel modes)
- Supporting and increasing the Passenger rail provides and encourages job growth in the area, supporting towns to become economic hubs where people wish to live and work
- Taumarunui, along with other towns on the North Island Main Trunk Line, owe their earlier prosperity to having rail connections. Taumarunui has large existing rail yards that can be utilised.
- There is a well-founded sense of loss in these communities that a "lifeline" to the rest of the country has been ripped away.

Mayor Weston Kirton

