The Future Is Rail

Preventing another Te Huia extinction

Source: Bullers Birds

28 January 2026

Who are we?

The Future is Rail is a community-led organisation started in 2022, campaigning for the return of accessible passenger rail across New Zealand. We also support a strong rail freight sector to underpin the revival of passenger rail. We have a mailing list of over 11,000 supporters.

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Preventing another Te Huia extinction

Te Huia, the bird, is thought to have become extinct near the start of the 20th Century. It was one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most beautiful creatures with a special place in Māori society. Te Huia was regarded as tapu with the wearing of its skin or feathers reserved for people of high status.

Through a lack of care, and ignorance at the time, we lost a bird that would have enriched our lives.

Now Te Huia, the train is yet again under threat with its trial service coming to an end. There is a possibility it too will become extinct. This would be a big mistake.

The Future is Rail supports the Waikato Regional Council's current efforts to both retain and improve the service. We hope in the not-too-distant future that Te Huia will not only link Auckland and Hamilton, but connect through to Tauranga.

A brief history

In the not-too-distant past, there were regular passenger trains linking Auckland and Hamilton. Many were simply on their way to other destinations, including Wellington, Tauranga, New Plymouth and Rotorua. There were night trains and day trains. But as Andre Brett sets out in his book *Can't Get There from Here: New Zealand's Shrinking Passenger Rail Network, 1920–2020,* now almost all those trains have gone. What is left in the upper North Island is an infrequent and expensive tourism-oriented train linking Auckland and Wellington. And Te Huia.

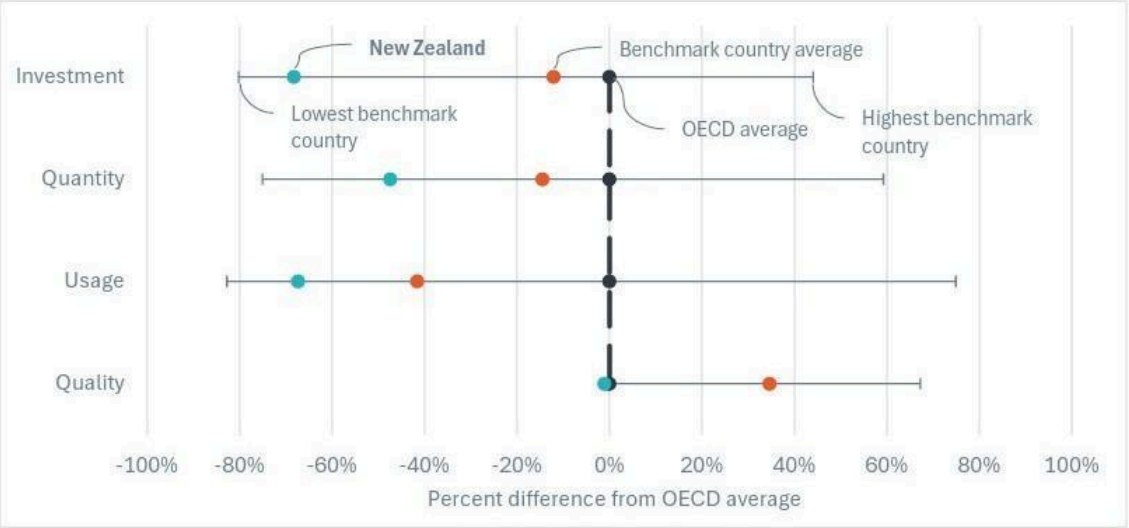
Some overseas comparisons

New Zealand stands out internationally in its lack of long-distance passenger trains. While the same factors of the growth of air travel and greater availability of cars have been present in all nations, there has been support by most governments to also retain passenger rail. As Te Waihanga - Infrastructure Commission points out, we have retained our rail network, but it has been underfunded and under utilised compared with many other similar nations.

Figure 7 is from their benchmarking report.

Figure 7 below shows the benchmarking results for rail infrastructure. New Zealand's investment in rail infrastructure is well below the OECD average and well below the benchmark country average. New Zealand's quantity and use of its rail infrastructure is also well below the OECD average and benchmark countries. The quality of New Zealand's rail infrastructure is around the OECD average, but worst amongst benchmark countries.

Figure 7: Benchmark results for rail infrastructure



In the northern hemisphere, Finland is one example. While both nations share similar geographic challenges, their approach to rail couldn't be more different. In Finland, cities comparable in size to Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga enjoy frequent, reliable train services—operating even on Christmas Day. In contrast, New Zealand's long-distance rail network often grinds to a complete halt during the holidays.

The impact of this infrastructure is clear in the numbers:

- Finland (Pop. ~5.6M): Over 15 million rail passengers in 2024.
- New Zealand (Pop. ~5.3M): Approximately 360,000 long distance rail passengers in the same period.

Finland's commitment to consistent scheduling has transformed rail from a novelty into a backbone of national travel, while New Zealand's ridership remains a tiny fraction of its potential.

A southern hemisphere example is Chile. The "Chile on Rails" project has a goal of tripling the number of train passengers and doubling freight transportation. Like New Zealand, a once extensive rail network had been rundown but policies and funding are in place to revive and expand the network.

In Australia there is a federal government backed High Speed Rail Authority. This is planning a high-speed rail network to connect Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and regional communities across the east coast of Australia. The first stage would connect Newcastle to Sydney in about one hour on a new dedicated high-speed railway. Establishing high speed rail in Australia has faced many challenges in the past but the current initiative seems to be on a more sustainable footing.

In Southeast Queensland (SEQ), using the same narrow-gauge track as New Zealand, hundreds of electric passenger rail trains criss-cross the region each day, with urban trains operating at speeds of up to 140kph and longer distance tilting trains up to 160kph. At about the same time that the Muldoon government cancelled "Robbie's Rapid Rail", Brisbane committed to electrify and grow their commuter rail network. On a population comparison; at that time Auckland was home to 750,000, while Brisbane was home to 1,100,000.

On the back of the initial electrification, the first section of the regional Gold Coast railway line to Helensvale, was completed in 1996. Subsequent extensions in 1997 and 2009, took the Gold Coast railway running inland, but parallel to the coast, to its current destination of Varsity Lakes. Meanwhile, from 2014, the Gold Coast tram, known as the 'G-Link', has been operating from the heavy rail connection at Helensvale, along the Gold Coast itself. The 20km line carried 13.83 million passengers in FY 24/25, a 20% increase on the previous year. Extensions are underway and planned further south.

The SEQ rail network is a core component of the regional transportation network covering some 262km in distance from the northern most to southern most points, across 12 lines, with 1,100 services per day. 53.04 million passengers were carried in FY 24/25, an increase of 13.6%, relative to FY 23/24. The correlation of SEQ rail passenger network growth with SEQ's economic and population growth, and the delta of the economic prospects between SEQ and New Zealand's so-called Golden Triangle, is outlined in a little more detail here.

It should be noted that transit oriented private sector property development is a key feature of the SEQ landscape. Now Queensland is home to around 208,000 kiwis, including a significant population of 65,000 identifying as Māori.

Over in West Australia, and on a scale perhaps more equivalent to contemporary New Zealand regional passenger rail, train-builder Alstom is in the final stages of testing and commissioning a new fleet of 'Australind' diesel railcars for operation between Perth and regional centre, Bunbury. With a population of 83,000, Bunbury is 167km distant from Perth, the rail journey involves a 2.5-hour journey time, and the previous trains carried 77,000 riders annually in the year to June 2023. The vehicles are also built for narrow gauge, but unlike New Zealand, there was never any doubt that new trains would be ordered to replace the previous fleet which dated from the 1980s. The new fleet is expected to enter service this year, with an increase in journey frequency from two trains a day to five each day.

Caption: Artists' impression of the new West Australia regional narrow-gauge trainset. With an operating speed of 130kph, it has a very similar capacity to a Te Huia train-set including seating for 146, with two wheelchair locations expandable to six, an on-board café, space for up to eight bikes, and innovative boarding ramps that address regional station platform-to-train interfaces (image c/o PTA West Australia).

In Aotearoa New Zealand Te Huia, which carried 86,377 passengers in 2024 using 1970s era former British Rail carriages, in terms of rolling stock, it is a very modest start to the revival of passenger rail in the Golden Triangle and beyond.

Original Vision for Te Huia

Wikipedia sets out the hard work and many struggles to get Te Huia up and running.

The Future is Rail reaffirms the original vision established at the commencement of the five-year Te Huia trial (2021–2026):

"*to become a permanent, expanded regional rail service connecting the Waikato and Auckland, potentially expanding to Tauranga, offering more frequent services (up to*

hourly), faster journeys, with CBD access (Hamilton Station), and integrating with Auckland's City Rail Link, aiming for increased ridership, lower emissions, and greater economic benefits beyond its current trial period (2021-2026)".

In essence the vision is to grow Te Huia from a trial into a core, integrated part of the region's public transport system, boosting connectivity and sustainability between the Waikato and Auckland. It also recognises that the 'Golden Triangle', including Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga will increasingly be the economic engine of New Zealand with strong population growth projected.

Population growth through to mid-century is illustrated in a study carried out on behalf of the Airports Association.

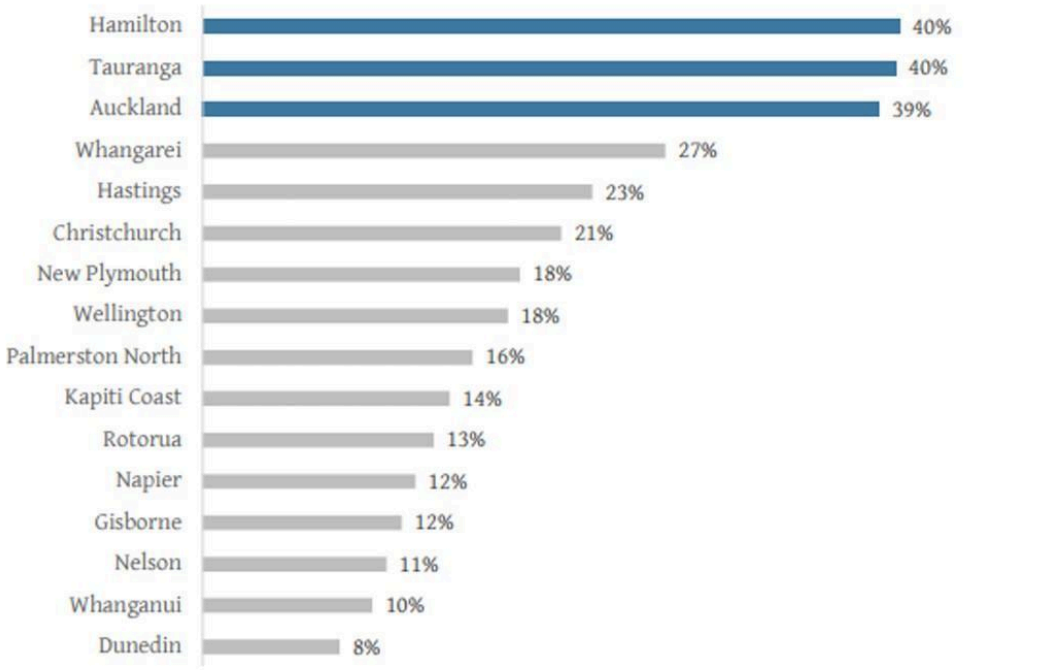


Figure 7: Projected population growth by 2048. Information produced by WSP NZ. (WSP NZ, 2024).

When considering the rail network in the Bay of Plenty, it should be noted that Whakatāne is another regional centre with great natural amenities but unrealised economic potential. Whakatāne has had ongoing issues with securing a regular air service. With KiwiRail's rail corridor east of Tauranga towards Kawerau in generally good condition, could a short branch-line from Awakeri to the retail precinct east of Whakatāne River, be a useful addition to Golden Triangle regional passenger rail?

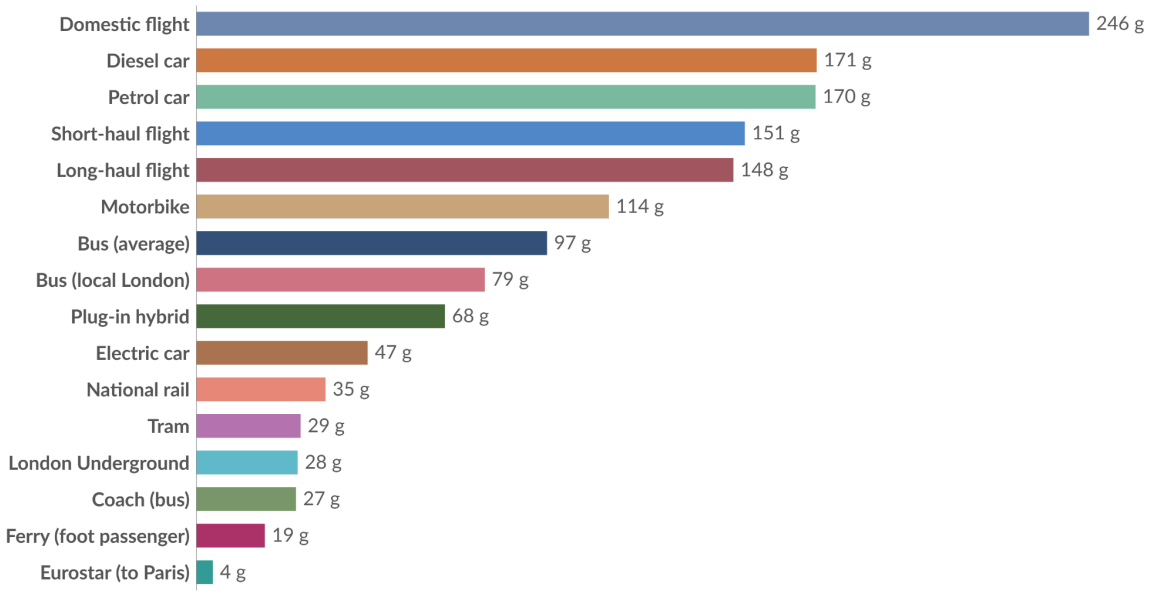
Not all of those living in the Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions will want to drive, or will be able to drive. A study, based on 2018 data, indicated that across New Zealand over 200,000 males aged 16 or older and nearly 300,000 females 16 and older did not hold a full licence. Over-represented in these groups are lower income people and Māori. If those under 16 are included, up to a third of New Zealanders may not hold a full licence. In addition, there are those who hold a licence but, for various reasons, are not able to, or should not, drive.

This includes older people whose numbers are increasing as the population ages. Statistics New Zealand population projects suggest the number of people aged 65 and older in the Golden Triangle will increase from an estimated 382,000 in 2023 to over 635,000 in 2043. More detailed projections suggest the number of people aged 80 or over could increase from 91,000 to 210,000 in the same period.

Rail passenger and rail freight connection, especially if fully electrified, will be essential to realise economic growth opportunities for New Zealand while also reducing transport emissions.

Carbon footprint of travel per kilometer, 2022

The carbon footprint of travel is measured in grams of carbon dioxide-equivalents per passenger kilometer. This includes the impact of increased warming from aviation emissions at altitude.



Data source: UK Government, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022) OurWorldinData.org/transport | CC BY

Note: Official conversion factors used in UK reporting. These factors will vary across countries depending on energy mix, transport technologies, and occupancy of public transport. Data for aviation is based on economy class.

1. **Carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2eq)** Carbon dioxide is the most important greenhouse gas, but not the only one. To capture all greenhouse gas emissions, researchers express them in "carbon dioxide equivalents" (CO_2eq). This takes all greenhouse gases into account, not just CO_2.
To express all greenhouse gases in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2eq), each one is weighted by its global warming potential (GWP) value. GWP measures the amount of warming a gas creates compared to CO_2. CO_2 is given a GWP value of one. If a gas had a GWP of 10 then one kilogram of

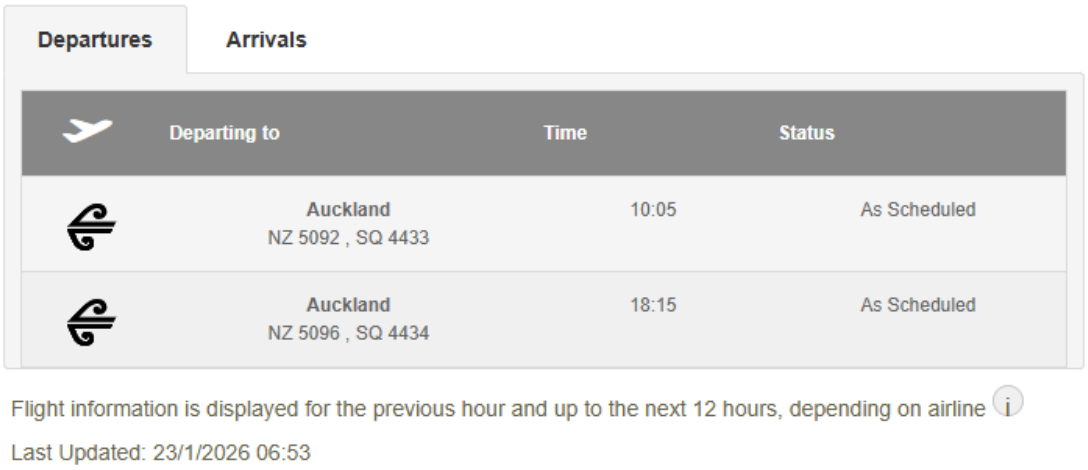
Enhanced connectivity will also support the equitable development of regional communities. Through enabling affordable access to education, jobs, new regional businesses, family, social events and health services, Te Huia and its successor regional passenger rail services, may play a role in encouraging more kiwis to stay in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Subsidies and economics

Te Huia has been a lightning rod for those concerned about subsidised travel. But transport subsidies is a murky area, with rail not being the only area receiving subsidies. In New Zealand, roads and aviation are big recipients of central and local government support. As an example, *The Future is Rail* has set out the significant subsidies provided to the road freight industry through them not paying the full costs of damage to roads.

As an aviation example, the upgraded Taupō airport, paid for by taxpayer and ratepayer funding, is little used with currently no scheduled direct services to Wellington. At the start of 2020, when announcing the nearly $10 million upgrade, the then Taupō District mayor David Trewavas stated '[w]e'll be able to accommodate bigger planes and larger numbers of passengers coming into and out of the Taupō District; the opportunities that affords is really exciting.' [1]

Yet on a weekday in early 2026, there were only two scheduled flights out of Taupō airport.[2]



As a wider subsidy to aviation, domestic flights connecting to an international flight are exempt from GST, and international flights to and from New Zealand are not subject to the ETS.

In looking at the provision of transport services, there is the cost of setting them up (capital expenditure - CAPEX) and the cost of operating them (OPEX which can include some operating subsidy support). Then there are the benefits from the services, both to the individuals using them and to wider society. When deciding to

[1] https://www.taupodc.govt.nz/council/news?item=id%3A2961u0fj51cxby0sc633
[2] The airport is now being promoted as a destination for private jets https://www.tauponews.co.nz/stories/direct-private-flights-to-australia-explored

support a new service, or build a new road or cycleway, benefit cost ratios (BCR) are often calculated. These are open to a range of assumptions, including discount rates used for assessing future costs and benefit flows. The benefits calculations of a project will ideally cover a full range of outcomes, such as lowering greenhouse gas emissions and improving mobility outcomes for disabled people.

Public transport can be subsidised for a variety of reasons. Affordable fares make it accessible for low-income members of society, including providing mobility options for children for both recreation and schooling. Encouraging people to use public transport helps reduce congestion on roads thus benefitting drivers, lowers emissions, and allows older people who cannot drive or use active transport to fully participate in society. It reduces costs of living for lower paid workers and allows those without cars to reach workplaces thus boosting the economy.

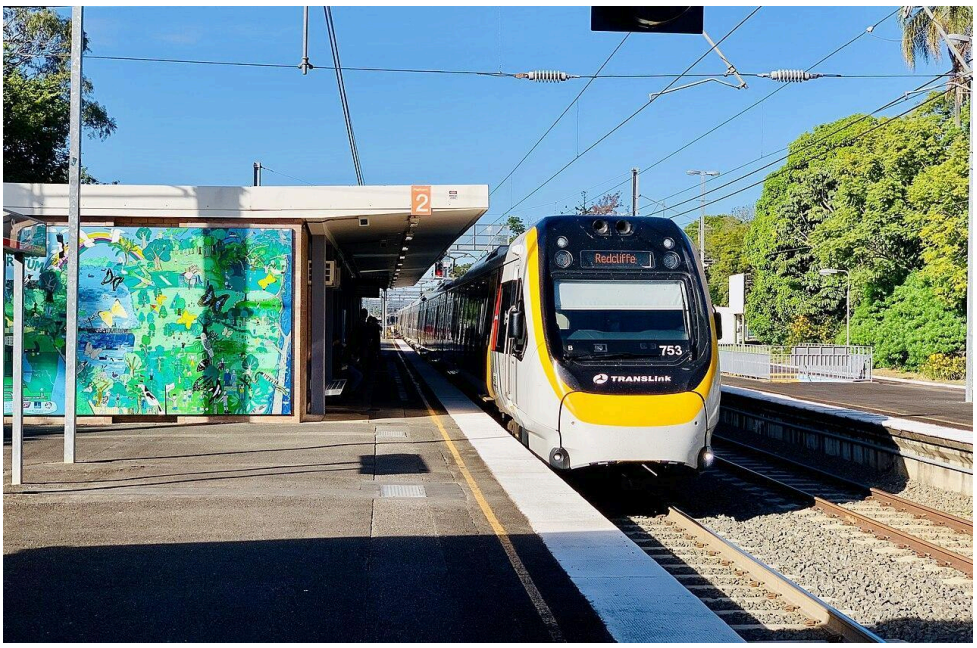
Transport for those with specific accessibility needs, enables a far greater community participation for this group, who are often also on low-incomes. The right to accessible transport is, or should be, a fundamental obligation on civilised society.

The tax-payer funded Goldcard allows older New Zealanders to travel free on mainly urban based public transport at some times of day. Some councils top the subsidy up with ratepayer funding to increase the times of day this free travel applies. There are also examples of businesses subsidising public transport for their employees.

The funding for Te Huia totalled $98 million for CAPEX (capital expenditure) and 5 years of OPEX (operating subsidy support). The breakdown is roughly one third / one third / one third, between (a) the refurbishment and upgrade of the trainsets and locomotives, (b) the development of Rotokauri and Huntly / Raahui Pookeka stations, and (c) the operating subsidy support. Te Huia in comparison with other international and domestic projects such as City Rail Link, and the various RoNS, has a very small CAPEX component.

Transport economists are well aware that it is primarily the economic costs and benefits that determine effectiveness of investment. But for both road and rail investments, wider economic, social and environmental benefits are of critical importance. This has been a key driver for regional economy game-changing rail projects, such as in South East Queensland (SEQ). The SEQ rail network continues to enable equitable and sustainable development of regional communities, across SEQ. An agreed appropriate framework for assessing wider benefits, is a key task for Te Waihanga - New Zealand Infrastructure Commission. The challenge is to align their views on rail, with equivalent international passenger rail investment assessment tools.

Operating subsidies, also known as farebox recovery, do carry some importance in the overall costs through the lifetime of a project. But these costs are relatively less significant, than assessing the ongoing rate of return on the CAPEX. In contrast perhaps to the rigour of CAPEX analysis, determining farebox recovery appears to be more an exercise in political judgement, than a clearcut scientific enterprise. There are examples in Australia where the financial support for particular public transport services is much higher than that given to Te Huia. In particular, regional services examples indicate a far higher level of funding support, to enable equitable access and development, of regional communities.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Some Australian and New Zealand examples of rail farebox recovery[3]

Region	Farebox recovery
Victoria Regional	5.3%
New South Wales Regional	14.1%
Western Australia Regional	13.6%
Southeast Queensland	2.4%[4]
Auckland Transport passenger rail network	32.9%
Greater Wellington (all modes)	32.3%[5]
Te Huia	16%

Any discussion about farebox recovery, should also provide context, as to what customers receive for a given level of operating subsidy. The below table provides some rudimentary analysis. It must be noted that trying to compare different fare types can be a challenge. The below is an indication only, with acknowledgement that there are different types of fare for different passenger user groups, and/or multi-trip ticketing concessions, that may significantly change pricing.

Frequency of service is another factor that provides a hint of the level of OPEX, that may impact farebox recovery. Journey time and average speed relative to competing modes, can also impact on the sorts of fares able to be charged to attract passengers.

[3] The input of Darren Davis is acknowledged in drawing up this table.
[4] The South-east Queensland (SEQ) rail network includes city, suburban and regional rail passenger traffic within the 12-line network, covering some 262km in distance from the northern most to southern most points.
[5] The FY 24/25 Wellington figure is for all modes, with no specific rail figure located. The Domestic Transport Costs and Charges Study, published in 2023 recorded that for FY 2018/19, the cost recovery for the Metlink Greater Wellington rail network was 36%. The rail network comprises three main lines, radiating from Wellington Railway Station: (i) Kapiti line (to/from Waikanae); (ii) Hutt Valley/Wairarapa line (to/from Upper Hutt and Masterton, with a branch line to/from Melling); and (iii) Johnsonville line (to/from Johnsonville).

Australian and New Zealand examples of rail fares, journey times, frequency

Route	Ticket price[6]	Typical Weekday frequency	Distance	Price/ distance	Schedule time	Distance/ time
Brisbane Central - Varsity Lakes (Gold Coast)	$0.58[7]	40 services daily. Every 30 min over a ~20-hour day.	89km	> $0.01	1hr20min (1.33)	67km/hr
Brisbane Central - Varsity Lakes (Gold Coast) pre-2022	$16.94		89km	$0.19	1hr20min (1.33)	67km/hr
Perth - Bunbury	$22.13[8] to $87.34	2 services daily	167km	$0.13 to $0.52	2hr30min (2.5)	67km/hr
Melbourne - Ballarat	$7.80[9] to $11.64	32 services daily	113km	$0.07 to $0.10	1hr16min (1.26)	90km/hr
Wellington - Masterton	$12.56[10] to $22.50	5 services per day	91km	$0.14 to $0.25	1hr40min (1.66)	55km/hr
Wellington - Palmerston North	$20.00[11] to $40.00	1 service per day	136km	$0.15 to $0.29	2hr5min (2.08)	65km/hr
Te Huia: Auckland - Hamilton	$24.06[12] to $40.00	2 to 3 services per day	138km	$0.17 to $0.29	2hr30min (2.5)	55km/hr

Road subsidies context

The Future is Rail commissioned study about Heavy Vehicle Subsidies provides analysis of how the trucking industry does not pay the costs it should, to enable New Zealand's roads to be adequately maintained. In August 2025, T*he Future is Rail* submitted our response to the draft Infrastructure Commission - Te Waihanga Infrastructure Plan.

An overview of the response is outlined here. *The Future of Rail* spoke of concerns about the costs of current and future roading projects, and how the next tranche of Roads of National Significance (RoNS) in particular were to be funded. Despite 'gung-ho' promises they would be able to be funded through public private

[6] Pricing currency conversion shown in $NZD equivalent as at January 2026
[7] Note this is based on current $AUD0.50 fares. Prior to the introduction of $AUD0.50 fares in 2022, the cost of a single peak hour ticket was $AUD14.55
[8] It has recently been announced that fares are to be reduced by 50% for regional passenger services in West Australia. Service frequency is to expand from twice daily to 5 services each way per day
[9] Pricing is based regional fare caps introduced in 2023, by train operator Vline
[10] Pricing variations shown c/o Metlink are Snapper off-peak fare and adult cash fare options
[11] Pricing variations shown c/o KiwiRail with standard adult one-way and concession one-way fare options
[12] Pricing variations shown c/o Te Huia website with adult cash fare one-way and 'Bee Card' one-way fare options

partnerships, and pricing mechanisms such as tolls, it has become clear that our concerns were real.

The updated Government Policy Statement 2024-2027 (GPS) on Transport provides an indication of the funding sources for roads, including a Crown grant (capital expenditure) for $3.1 billion and a loan of $3.1 billion. So therefore, it is acknowledged that a Crown top-up is needed, as revenue does not cover costs. Moreover, elsewhere in the GPS, it became clear that many of the "new" RoNS are unfunded.

The recent release of a heavily redacted Ministry of Transport (MOT) report provides enough information to make very clear the extent of the funding issues. Current estimates for the 17 projects exceed $56 billion, requiring an additional $49 billion in funding beyond current budgets. The report states that many projects have medium to low BCRs (0.7 to 3.1). It appears that some potentially qualify only due to manipulation and changes to the current calculation methods. Greater Auckland provided some great background analysis work late last year, before the updated extent of the costs became known.

A total cost of more than a quarter of a trillion dollars has been forecast for the 17 RoNS, a second Auckland harbour crossing and a Northwest Busway. It is clear that for even a portion of these projects to be delivered within a regime of politically acceptable tolls, increases in Road User Charges (RUC), fuel excise duties (FED), and motor vehicle licensing fees (MVR) a very substantial crown funding (i.e. subsidy) for the overall roading programme may be required.

It has been estimated that annual roading revenue may be substantially less than roading costs during construction, creating the need for the government to take on additional borrowing, either directly or through expensive financing via public-private partnerships. Based on experience with Transmission Gully (link here: https://www.thepost.co.nz/politics/360878413/actual-cost-transmission-gully-be-25-billion) and other roading projects, crown funding may also be required in future to enable the funding of a "huge uptick" in ongoing maintenance costs, over and above the construction costs.

Against these sorts of numbers, funding for the Te Huia trial to continue, and funding for future improvements in brand new rolling stock and infrastructure, looks like an absolute bargain.

A bright future

Rather than going extinct, *The Future of Rail* believes Te Huia has a bright future if current challenges can be overcome and an improved service receives the investment it deserves. There can be another golden age of passenger rail in Aotearoa New Zealand if failure is no longer baked into thinking about rail.

The Future is Rail has expressed its support for the letter from Warren Maher, Chair of the Waikato Regional Council (WRC), to NZTA dated 10 December 2025, as presented in the Council meeting agenda on 18 December 2025. Specifically, we highlight his closing statement: *"Council is very grateful to NZTA for its continued support for Te Huia and hopes that this request for a one-year trial extension at 60% FAR will be considered at your Board meeting in February 2026."*

Making Te Huia a better service

The independent review, conducted by consultant Heriot-Edievale and submitted to the August 2024 meeting of the Future Proof Public Transport Subcommittee of the Waikato Regional Council (and subsequently provided to NZTA), was commissioned to identify opportunities for reducing operating costs, increasing revenue, improving farebox recovery, and reducing taxpayer subsidy. The review recommended several actions with Waikato Regional Council noting from the review that: "whilst there are several challenges, Te Huia has significant potential to be a high-performing, long-term train service".

In mid-2024, public transport expert Darren Davis had also set out ways to improve the service in a number of blogs including one republished on the Greater Auckland blog site.These were:

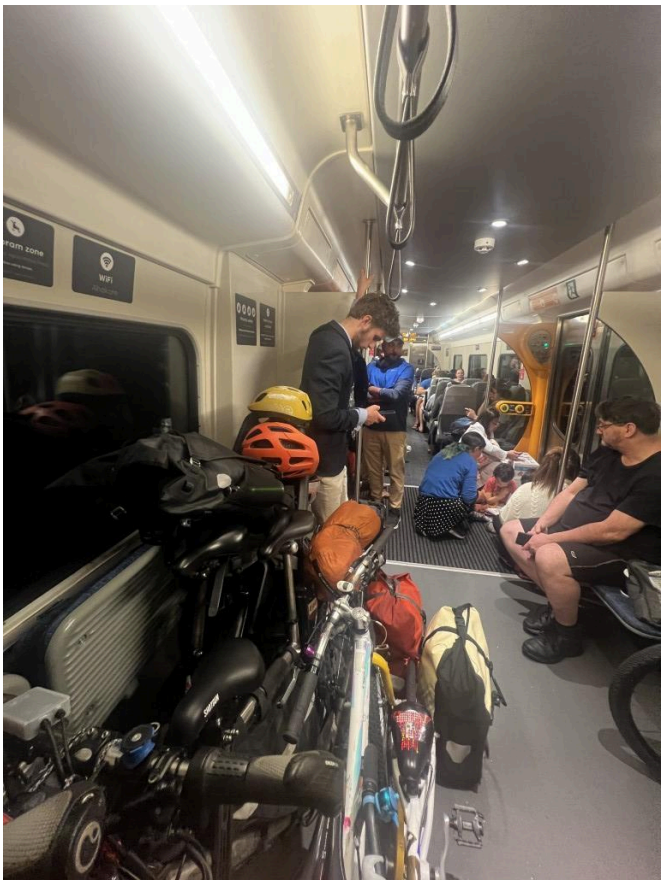
1. More station stops in the Waikato
2. More frequency
3. Better bus connections at both ends
4. A station stop in Pukekohe
5. Auckland paying its fair share

6. The need for more speed

Since then, the stop at Pukekohe Station and greater frequency have become a reality.

In a late 2025 blog, *Making Te Huia a permanent service*, Darren gives further thoughts on how to improve the service.

In another study, the ability of trains to carry bikes opens up new opportunities for regional cycle tourism, including biking along the Waikato river trails.



Impact of Auckland Rail Network Closures

Te Huia has not had a fair chance to fully achieve its targets within the five-year trial due to the adverse effects of Auckland's rail network track rebuild, which caused 96 days of full or partial closure in 2025. With the opening of the City Rail Link in mid-2026, Te Huia will gain uninterrupted access to the Auckland rail network. Extending the trial for one more year will allow the service to grow, from the latter half of 2026.

Rail upgrades also mean that Te Huia does not currently operate on public holidays. It should do so in the future. People travel for all sorts of reasons beyond work, with public holidays being a great time for people to connect with family and friends. The

ability to use trains on public holidays would go some way towards broadening the appeal of rail transport.

Alignment with Future Funding and Planning

A key reason for the extension of the trial period is that any NZTA decision to co-invest in a permanent train service, through the 2027–2030 National Land Transport Plan, would likely be at the normal 51% FAR. As stated in the WRC Chair's letter, the "*Council commits to consulting with the community about the future of the service and increased local share costs via the 2027–2037 Waikato Regional Council Long Term Plan process*". An additional year's trial would provide more time for NZTA and WRC officials to conduct the technical and business case work necessary to support future funding bids and decisions regarding Te Huia rolling stock options.

A further positive development is the Tūhono train contract for Lower North Island trains, announced in the 2025 Budget - co-funded by the Government, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Horizons Manawatū Whanganui Regional Council, allows for future cost reductions on similar rolling stock within a specified time frame. This contract leverages Alstom's battery-electric multiple unit (BEMU) technology, offering significant potential cost savings in procurement and maintenance for future rail projects in New Zealand.

With good access to around 85% renewable electricity across the motu, and relatively short journeys, Aotearoa New Zealand is uniquely positioned to build a regional rail passenger network using a mix of batteries and re-charge stations, and overhead power, where it is available.

The new Tūhono Lower North Island local narrow-gauge trainset are powered by batteries and 1.5kV DC mains power. Each train-set has capacity for 233 passengers and two wheelchair users. In addition, there are flexible spaces for prams and bikes, and a vending machine for snacks and cold beverages. It is envisaged that the Tūhono design could be adapted to other configurations such as different internal layouts, battery plus 25kV AC mains power in the central and northern North Island, or exclusive battery operation in the South Island. They will also be able to accommodate slightly

different station platform layouts across Aotearoa New Zealand (image c/o Metlink, Greater Wellington and Horizons Regional Councils).

Alignment of Te Huia with Future Land Use

One key area not directly addressed in the current and future business case for Te Huia is alignment with transit-oriented public and private sector property development. The merging of Transport, Housing and Environment into the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT), provides the opportunity to align transport investment with regional planning, housing and infrastructure. A first for New Zealand, this strategic alignment could be a game-changer for passenger rail, in a similar manner to the way that the South East Queensland rail network has supported the growth of that region. Acknowledging decades of lost opportunities in general, it was interesting to note that at the announcement of the new ministry, Minister Chris Bishop had this to say about the City Rail Link;

"I have spoken often about how City Rail Link, which will open next year, has been a real missed opportunity for New Zealand. It will be a transformational project for Auckland once open, but it presents opportunities across land use change, infrastructure funding and financing, and urban development which have either not been taken up or are only now being belatedly explored. My firm view is that the disconnected nature of central government policy advice has contributed to those missed opportunities."

Conclusion

There are compelling reasons to support a one-year extension of the Te Huia trial until the end of June 2027, with significant benefits for the region and the country. The cost of $5 million for the extension is modest compared to other transport projects currently under consideration in Aotearoa New Zealand. Long-term, the integration between Te Huia and transit-oriented development enroute at key locations in the Waikato, and ultimately the Bay of Plenty, presents a compelling case for further investigation.

Enhanced connectivity will also support the equitable development of regional communities. Through enabling affordable access to education, jobs, new regional businesses, family, social events and health services, Te Huia and its successor regional passenger rail services, may play a role in encouraging more kiwis to stay in Aotearoa New Zealand.


WE
TE HUIA
PROTECT
TE HUIA