

# MEDIA RELEASE

**Making  
Rail Work**

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## Making Rail Work calls on all politicians to help prevent the continued derailment of Aotearoa New Zealand's prosperity

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In an open letter to all registered political parties, the Making Rail Work team continues its appeal for all political leaders to work together for the good of all Kiwis.

The community-led group is focussed on extending the Auckland-Hamilton passenger rail line (Te Huia) to Tauranga, which would complete the Golden Triangle connection. They make the case that, given the money being spent on port development and freight strategies in the Golden Triangle, the investment required to enable inter-regional passenger rail is small by comparison to the economic, social and carbon-reduction benefits it will deliver.

Making Rail Work Founder and Project Director, Katrina Ramage says:

*"While we never wished for inter-regional passenger rail to become a political football, we recognise that some factions of our society are forcing it to become one. This is why we want to open discussions with those writing this year's manifestos. Our second report, Beyond the Tracks, will be published after the election, but we will be discussing early chapters at the Future is Rail conference in June. That timing may be too late for the political process, which is why we're offering individual briefings now."*

Addressing the case against inter-regional passenger rail, Making Rail Work's Independent Expert on Rail, Freight and Public Transport, Michael van Droegenbroek is confident that the myths can be dispelled:

*"Let me start by confirming that there is enough capacity on the line to Tauranga; freight and passenger rail can work in harmony. The technical challenges, including those relating to the Kaimai tunnel, are surmountable and affordable. And by starting work in the Golden Triangle, in the way Making Rail Work suggests, we will be able to attract new technology and skills that will make delivering passenger rail in the rest of the country more affordable."*

Reflecting on inter-regional passenger rail's place in Aotearoa New Zealand's transport strategy, van Droegenbroek continues:

*"This isn't about roads versus rail, trains versus planes, or public transport rights versus private transport rights. It's about making sure that all our population can move around and enjoy the country we live in: Aotearoa should not only be open to tourists, business professionals and the wealthy."*

*"A good transport strategy is like a good diet; variety and balance are essential to ensuring a healthy body, brain, and lifestyle. In the same way, inter-regional rail should be a staple part of bolstering our nation's economic future, and ensuring our populations stays mobile and positively engaged with society. And if we can get to the point where we see inter-regional rail as the spine of our transport infrastructure then challenges with other modes will become much easier to overcome."*

In response to the Select Committee Inquiry into inter-regional passenger rail, which Making Rail Work's original report and cross-party meeting provoked, Ramage says:

*"We have appealed to the Select Committee, privately, that they conclude the Inquiry into Inter-regional Passenger Rail before the forthcoming election. It would be a shame if statutory response timings were used as a lever by any members political interests to hinder the process.*

*"We are concerned that any procrastination will create barriers to cooperative engagement with central government later down the line. And it is inevitable that such behaviour will put off potential investors and prevent us from bringing new investment into the country. Partisan behaviour of this nature will more than definitely count against us if we want to bid for the 2034 Commonwealth Games.*

*"We don't expect them to recommend in favour of our approach, just to agree that a full economic business appraisal should be conducted for the Golden Triangle case. That would allow central government organisations to work with experts in our team so that advice is ready for incoming ministers after the election."*

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## Notes to editors

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## About Making Rail Work

**Making Rail Work** is a community initiative with a bold plan to create New Zealand's first rail co-operative, which could act as a conduit to a public-private-community partnership for the delivery of inter-regional passenger rail and wider urban development in the Golden Triangle (Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga). It is a community-led team of industry experts, international professionals and passionate kiwi residents who believe that public transport connectivity is fundamentally important to our communities and economy.

While other campaign groups make demands and cause unnecessary disruption, **Making Rail Work** has been busy working behind the scenes with public, private and community networks in the Golden Triangle and across New Zealand to test its co-operative approach and economic business case. It is confident that its proposals will help the country change its approach and attitude to inter-regional passenger rail, starting with services between Tauranga, Hamilton and Auckland.

The team is supported by responsible citizen networks like **Save Our Trains** and the **Public Transport Forum NZ**. It will be publishing its next report, **Beyond the Tracks**, after the forthcoming election and presenting it as open briefing for incoming Ministers. Sections of the report will also be presenting at the **Future is Rail: Reconnecting Aotearoa 2030** conference in Wellington on 28th June 2023.