

To All Registered Political Parties:

New Zealand Labour Party, The New Zealand National Party, The Greens, ACT New Zealand, Te Pāti Māori, New Zealand First Party, The Opportunities Party, New Conservative, Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party, NZ Outdoors & Freedom Party, Freedoms New Zealand, DemocracyNZ, Heartland New Zealand Party, New Nation Party, One Party, Vision NZ

4th May 2023

Tēnā koutou kātoa,

Open letter to New Zealand's Political Parties

Aotearoa is evolving. Our country is full-to-bursting with opportunity and potential. There are so many things that Kiwis do that are the envy of the world, many which we take for granted.

The unfortunate truth is that our whole is not greater than the sum of our parts. Our country knows how to come together in times of crisis but not in times of calm. When we are not in fight or flight mode, we are a country of solitary chiefdoms and not interconnected allies. It is sad that individualism has become a systemic part of our culture. We can do better.

Worldwide, New Zealand is respected and admired. How do we use that standing to deliver strategic capital infrastructure that brings us together and creates a secure future for our country? How do we balance the preservation of our unique culture and way of life with letting the world in, attracting new money, reducing carbon emissions, and rebalancing inherent social inequalities?

It has been proven internationally time and again that investment in rail infrastructure gives everyone, globally and locally, time to save, plan and prepare for a collective future vision. It creates time for discussion, debate, and behaviour change. As part of a national economic strategy, inter-regional passenger rail can attract new money to our shores and help us build back better, together. And while they are essential to our domestic economy and primary industries, the same is not true of roads.

We can also underground power and communications beneath rail corridors, which are built to withstand the weight of heavy bulk, forestry and container freight; this makes rail more resilient, if well maintained, than the transport corridors of other modes for these types of utilities. Mixed used, high-density living is also easier and cheaper to plan around train stations, not to mention the fact that they are more inclusive and empowering for those who cannot or choose not to drive.

New Zealand's Golden Triangle (Auckland-Hamilton-Tauranga) represents more than 50 percent of the country's GDP. The ports in this triangle are the country's importing and exporting lifelines. Most importantly, Waikato and Bay of Plenty are among the regions in Aotearoa least susceptible to water level rises. Little is required to operationalise this line; we are already investing significantly in improvements for freight rail.

Commitment to developing passenger rail at the same time as freight rail investment will ensure that Auckland's economy can expand beyond its boundary constraints. If managed correctly, using the London 2012 Olympic Games as a model for delivery, it can act as a gateway for inward investment and the development of a community-driven partnership model adaptable for other regions. Our nation's nascent bid for the 2034 Commonwealth Games is further incentive to adopt this delivery model.

We already have investors knocking at our door; willing to put money into New Zealand only if rail is firmly embedded in our future. The climate change argument for rail has been well-made and does not need to be repeated here, but the economic case has not been investigated properly to date.

We are asking you to open your doors to conversations with us. Let us help you understand how making rail work in Aotearoa New Zealand is essential to creating a sustainable economy, society, country and planet. We are urging you to write in your manifestoes to consider the long-term ambitions of our nation. We believe that rail, specifically passenger rail, should be a key component of that vision.

We hope you do too.

Nā māua noa, nā,



Katrina Ramage,

*Making Rail Work Founder & Project Director
Political Strategist, Complex Governance Expert & Inward
Investment Specialist, Tarakin Global Limited*



Michael van Droegenbroek,

*Making Rail Work Independent Expert Contributor
Rail, Freight and Public Transport Consultant & Advisor,
Australasia, Heriot-Edievale Limited*

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.

