

July 2009 Strategic Review of the Road Controlling Authority Forum

Executive Summary

Strategic Review

The Executive Committee of the Road Controlling Authority Forum (RCAF) requested that a Strategic Review of the Road Controlling Authority Forum be undertaken. The emphasis of the Strategic Review was to be on the overlaps that exist with some of the many transport fora in New Zealand. The RCAF has many relationships and there is a view that there may be a lack of clarity in the transport sector around who does what. The transport industry is made up of many different players including asset owners, service providers, utility companies and their service providers, as well as road users. The process for the Strategic Review used multiple methods to collate information and draw findings, these included review of core documentation, face to face interviews, a questionnaire and an Executive Committee workshop.

Strategic Context

The Strategic Plan and Objects of the RCAF highlight what the strategic intent is, however these are somewhat out of date. The primary objective relates to providing a forum for Road Controlling Authorities to develop consistent roading environments through the development of national standards to promote road safety. The goals for the RCAF include: Asset Management; Asset Investment; and Peer Support/ Networking. The RCAF is not meeting all of its objects nor is it delivering on the current Strategic Plan. Based on feedback from members an updated Strategic Plan and revised objects are recommended.

The Executive Committee considered adoption of the core principle that the RCAF will continue to focus on the whole road corridor.

General feedback relating to the RCAF

From the general discussions a variety of views were represented, including “would like to see a better balance between strategic and operational topics” and “many other fora relating to transport exist in New Zealand and there is duplication and overlap.”

The RCAF operates a number of Work Groups which specifically focus on Research and Guidelines, Performance Measurement and specialised projects such as the NZ Utilities Advisory Group, Stock Crossings, Level Crossings, Stormwater and the Local Road Supplement development for the Code of Practice for Temporary Traffic Management. Given that resources for the Work Groups are generally volunteers it is difficult to make progress unless services are contracted to provide support. There are also issues when officers involved in the Work Groups face competing objectives in their day to day role. The question arises as to whether the RCAF should in fact operate Work Groups and whether aspects like Research and Guidelines should be left to the NZTA to undertake, given that the NZTA already operate in this space with their own Standards and Guidelines Group.

The organisational and administrative (Convenor role) responsibilities could rest with LGNZ in future. There was a view that LGNZ provides stronger representation of the RCAF members than NZTA or Ingenium.

Analysis of key documentation

The analysis of documents includes the budget for 2009/10 financial year. The budget indicates that subscriptions are expected to reach \$287,500 for the full year. This is a significant increase compared to the previous year and commitment to the RCAF will continue to be tested.

The Government provides guiding documents such as the Transport Indicator Framework and this in particular presents a national framework for robust and consistent monitoring for the New Zealand transport system. This information is important to the RCAF as the government's overall goal to grow the New Zealand economy is a responsibility of all those in the transport sector, including the RCAF members.

The analysis of the agenda topics since 2006 reflects a significant shift from operational to technical subjects (vs strategic and changing political expectations from Government). This subjective analysis shows that many of the other transport organisations also cover the same topics, highlighting that duplication does occur. In future, members will be asked to provide feedback on their preferences for topics for each forum. It will be hard to meet the needs of such a diverse group of road controlling authorities without such feedback. There should be better integration and planning across the many transport organisations so that unnecessary duplication is avoided. Consideration should be given to splitting the RCAF fora between strategic and operational topics, noting that some flexibility is required.

Feedback from the members

Member interviews provided real context of how each felt about the RCAF. Mostly positive feedback was provided along with some generic comments around overlaps with other fora and the need for a more strategic focus. There was recognition that the RCAF was well organised but needed to refocus in the future. There was a strong view that many benefits came out of the networking and social opportunities.

Of the twenty five questionnaire responses the majority provided positive feedback along with constructive suggestions for the future of the RCAF. Some of the general suggestions related to agenda management; the balance between strategic and technical focus; the role of regional NZTA forums versus the RCAF and; and the provision of sufficient resources for Work Groups. A significant proportion of the members' responses believe that the GPS will impact the future role of the RCAF and that at each forum more time should be spent on this.

Transport Fora Analysis

The analysis of the transport organisations/fora in New Zealand provides a useful resource for the sector and should help provide clarity over the roles and responsibilities. There are strong linkages and overlaps between the many organisations identified. The challenge will be to create synergies across the sector so that time and money are not wasted by organisations working on the same thing. Improved communication and better planning will help avoid such situations. The RCAF plays an important role in bringing together parties who are involved in road control and therefore present a unique value proposition.

Major players such as Ingenium should link up with the RCAF more closely along with TRAFINZ. Both Ingenium and TRAFINZ represent 95% of the road controlling authorities. NZTA regional forums and the Standards and Guidelines Group should provide input into the RCAF, rather than the RCAF take on these aspects. Specialist Groups such as the New Zealand Utilities Action Group should continue to report into the RCAF, as should the Low Volume Roads Working Group. The transport organisations that represent private contractors or industry generally should continue to share information with the RCAF. In particular, making use of Rooding New Zealand specialist committees is of particular benefit to the RCAF members. International links with Austroads provide benefits relating to standards and guidelines and, through continued subscription, road controlling authorities can learn from overseas experience and research.

The users of the roading network, such as heavy haulage, Automobile Association, Tourism New Zealand and Taxi /Association are not represented at the RCAF. This is

a gap and there may be benefit in inviting these groups to attend. Regional Councils are now tasked with preparation of Regional Land Transport Programmes and coordinate local authority and NZTA funding requests.

Executive Committee Leadership

The Executive Committee provides leadership and guidance to the members of the RCAF and they have a challenge ahead of them. There are a number of strengths, including the positive feedback from members, but there are certainly weaknesses such as lack of progress of the Work Groups. There are opportunities to grow the membership of non RCAF affiliates and to create a more integrated and coordinated approach with other transport organisations. The threats to the RCAF include duplication across the sector and declining memberships. Many questions relating to the future of the RCAF will not be resolved until members provide more feedback on what their most important needs are.

Summary

Findings: the Strategic Review found that:

- The RCAF has a specific and unique role among transport fora in NZ, which is to bring together and facilitate discussion and capability development among the owners and managers of the road corridors in New Zealand;
- Members see good value in the RCAF and have suggestions for how it can be improved; and
- There are opportunities for improved coordination and integration between the RCAF and other fora, mainly through agenda planning and joint research.

Recommendations:

Following on from the Strategic Review, the **Executive has committed to the following actions for the future:**

- a) Exploring an alternative arrangement to the Convenor and administrative functions, including whether these could be provided by Local Government New Zealand;
- b) Review of agenda management to ensure the right topics are covered at each forum;
- c) Reviewing and updating the Strategic plan and Objects of the Incorporated Society to reflect the needs of the RCAF members; and
- d) Providing greater recognition of the role of RCAF volunteers.