

Technical Background Report:
Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035

Taka o te Mataara
Land Transport Authority

Te Mana Tumotu o te Kuki Airani
Ministry of Transport

Government of the Cook Islands
Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Technical Background Report: Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025 - 2035

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this document:

Abbreviation	Term
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARDF	Advance Recovery and Disposal Fee
BCI	Bank of the Cook Islands
CCCI	Climate Change Cook Islands
CIIC	Cook Islands Investment Corporation
CITTI	Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute
CPPO	Central Policy and Planning Office, Office of the Prime Minister
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
EV	Electric Vehicles
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LLA	Liquor Licensing Authority
LTA	Land Transport Authority
ICI	Infrastructure Cook Islands
ITF	International Transport Forum
MOT	Ministry of Transport
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MVDLA	Motor Vehicle Dealers Licensing Authority
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NES	National Environment Service
NIIP	National Infrastructure Investment Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister, Cook Islands
Pa Enea	Islands of the Cook Islands outside of Rarotonga
SDG	UN Sustainable Development Goals
TLA	Transport Licensing Authority
TMO	Te Marae Ora
TVP	Tarai Vaka Process
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change
WOF	Warrant of Fitness
NSDA 2020+	Te Ara Akapapa'anga Nui 2020+- National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement

1. Development Process and Methodology

1.1. Purpose

1.2. Context, Process and Methodology

1.2.1. Background and Rationale

1.2.2. Scope

1.2.3. Methodology

1.1. Purpose

This Technical Background Report forms the foundation for the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035, providing a comprehensive evidence base. It examines the current state of the land transport sector during the 2023-2024 policy development phase, including its institutional framework, legislation, operational realities, data limitations, stakeholder insights and strategic opportunities. This evidence base informs the identification of each policy pillar, objective, key focus area for implementation, risk mitigation and monitoring and evaluation.

This Report and the accompanying Policy were developed for the Ministry of Transport (MOT) the lead agency responsible for land transport policy in the Cook Islands. The land transport sector consists of a range of government agencies, each operating within distinct mandates and legislative frameworks that influence and deliver land transport outcomes.

The purpose of this Report is to provide sufficient contextual detail for the effective implementation of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025 - 2035. It guides:

- **Government ministries and agencies** in aligning planning, budgeting and regulatory functions.
- **Island Governments** in integrating national transport direction with local needs and implementation challenges.
- **Technical specialists and engineers** in designing systems that reflect current realities and comply with legal requirements.
- **Development partners and funders** in understanding the evidence base for investment and reform priorities.
- **Researchers and consultants** in accessing relevant policy, legislative and operational insights.
- **Community leaders and advocacy groups** in engaging with the rationale behind land transport policies and decisions.

The policy development process was funded by the New Zealand Core Sector Support Programme and administered by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM). In 2022, MOT commissioned Beca International Consultants to support the development of a Land Transport Policy for the Cook Islands. This process spanned two years, from 2023 - 2025, and was undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the policy accurately reflects the sectors' regulatory, operational and policy functions.

1.2. Context, Process and Methodology

1.2.1. Background and Rationale

The Government of the Cook Islands has long recognised that regular, reliable, affordable and efficient air, shipping, and land transport services are essential for sustainable development and national wellbeing. Since its establishment under the Public Service Act 1995-96, the MOT has primarily focused on aviation and maritime responsibilities, while land transport remained under the jurisdiction of the Cook Islands Police Service until recently.

The absence of a national land transport policy has led to fragmented efforts across various government agencies and stakeholders, lacking strategic guidance and coordination.

A 2018 capacity assessment report¹ confirmed the need for a policy and legislative review to ensure the transport sector remains relevant and effectively integrates the international conventions to which the Cook Islands is a signatory. The report recommended developing a national land transport policy to define the sector's strategic direction, structure, and stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

In July 2020, the Government established the Taka O Te Mataara - Land Transport Authority (LTA), as a dedicated division within the MOT, alongside Aviation, Maritime, Meteorological Services, and Corporate Services. The creation of the LTA reflected a growing need to address fragmented legislation, improve coordination across the sector, and respond to infrastructure and safety challenges affecting both Rarotonga and the Pa Enua.

A key mandate of the LTA is to:

“Develop and efficiently implement a National Land Transport Policy to guide the strategic direction, structure, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within the sector”

MOT is the lead agency responsible for transport policy in the Cook Island. The Cook Islands Land Transport Policy, designed with a 10-year horizon and shaped through collaboration with key stakeholders.

The work included:

- A high-level desktop review of relevant legislation and policies across the Cook Islands (as of April 2024) to identify issues and gaps within the current legislative framework governing land transport across the Cook Islands. This review informed recommendations for strengthening both the Transport Licensing Authority and MOT's regulatory capabilities.

- A gap analysis comparing national priorities and international obligations, including the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ (NSDA 2020+) and multilateral environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement.
- Extensive stakeholder engagement in February - March and June - July 2023, involving participants from Rarotonga and the Pa Enua.

The insights gathered from the consultations were distilled into key thematic issues and corresponding action points. These were then cross-checked against existing transport and licensing legislation, including the Infrastructure Act 2019. Where legislative gaps were identified, recommendations were made - whether through new provisions or operational measures - to support policy implementation. These detailed actions are outlined in this Report.

The development of the Policy was guided by the need to establish a shared, evidence-based understanding of the structural, institutional, and regulatory factors affecting land transport in the Cook Islands. While past assessments have highlighted governance weaknesses, this Report consolidates detailed technical findings to clarify the nature and scope of these challenges.

In particular, the report responds to longstanding challenges such as:

- Unclear roles and responsibilities among government agencies involved in land transport.
- Gaps and inconsistencies in key legislation and enforcement mechanisms.
- Limited access to reliable sector data, particularly in the Pa Enua.
- Lack of consolidated guidance to support integrated planning, funding and service delivery.

The resulting Policy sets out an ambitious programme of transformational change for the land transport system. Government investment will play an important role in advancing this vision for the future. The Policy is intended to act as a roadmap for how the Government develops and maintains a transport network that is environmentally sustainable, adaptable to social and economic shifts, and is equipped to embrace new opportunities and challenges without compromising its core functions.

1.2.2. Scope

This Technical Background Report supports the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035 by providing a robust technical evidence base and contextual analysis to inform policy development. While it does not propose or prescribe policy positions, it presents the essential information required to shape and evaluate Implementation.

The scope of this report includes:

- Identification and analysis of key gaps, challenges and opportunities across the land transport sector
- Alignment between current sector conditions and relevant international commitments and national frameworks, including NSDA 2020+, the National Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021 (NIIP), and the international conventions.
- Stakeholder inputs, technical assessments, and available data that informed the structure, priorities and direction of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035.

The timeframe of the data and analysis presented span work conducted between 2023 and 2024, encompassing consultation phases and technical reviews undertaken during the policy development phase.

1.2.3. Methodology

This Technical Background Report is published alongside the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035, compiling the legislative, institutional and operational evidence base that shaped the final Policy.

The Policy was developed through four key development phases - problem identification, research and analysis, stakeholder input, and priority systematisation. This structured approach ensured a clear understanding of sector challenges to determine the current state. It is based on in-depth research, legal analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement, coordinated by the MOT and Beca International Consultants between February and August 2023.

1.2.3.1. Stakeholder Engagement

More than 60 stakeholders participated across Rarotonga and the Pa Enua, including representatives from government ministries, island governments, passenger and rental service operators, heavy vehicle operators, civil society organisations and community groups.

Engagements were conducted through semi-structured interviews, agency meetings, sector-based focus groups and public consultations, guided by thematic prompts exploring infrastructure, legislation, licensing, vehicle standards, sustainability and access.

Consultations in Rarotonga (February–April 2023), included representatives from:

- Government agencies (10):
 - MOT
 - Office of the Prime Minister
 - Central Policy and Planning Office (CPPO)
 - Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI)
 - Island Governance

- MFEM
 - Border Management (Customs)
 - Budget Planning
- Te Marae Ora (Ministry of Health, TMO)
- Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI)
- National Environment Service (NES)
- Cook Islands Police Service
- Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC)
- Bank of the Cook Islands (BCI)
- TLA
- Licensed Transport Services operators (17):
 - Kaimani Shuttles, Moana Sands Group, Dive Raro, Tiki Tours, Cooks Buses, Rehab Ltd, Tiare Transport, Safari Tours, Cook Islands Tours, Destination Cook Islands
 - Adventure Cook Islands, Dive Centre, Raro Adventure Tours (Raro Quads, Raro Tours and Raro Buggies), Eric Short Automotive, Pacific Cars, Sweet as Rentals
- Motor vehicle dealers (3)
 - OTC, Polynesian Rentals, Polynesian Bike Hire
- Commercial Heavy vehicle operators (8):
 - Triad Petroleum Ltd, Ports Authority, TOA Petroleum, Cook Islands General Transport, Land Holdings Ltd, T&M Heather, Mike Rennie Builders, G&S Contractors
- Taxicab operators (6)
 - Dorothy's Taxi and on behalf of Cook Islands Taxi Association (1AAA, Atupa Taxis, Muri Heights and Price Taxis) (Mama Ru's)
- Expatriate community representatives (2)
 - Filipino Community, Indonesian Community (Tongan, Samoan, and Fijian representatives also invited)

In the Pa Enea (June - August 2023), consultations were conducted for nine islands: Aitutaki, Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, Nassau, Pukapuka, Manihiki, Rakahanga and Penrhyn (Tongareva)

- Each location included meetings with Island Governments, followed by public consultations with residents.
- Consultations for Manihiki Island Government were held in Manihiki and were combined with the visiting Rakahanga Island Government representatives.
- Consultations with Pukapuka Island Government included Nassau representatives.

This engagement process ensured a broad representation across geographic, sectoral and institutional contexts.

1.2.3.2. Desktop Review

A comprehensive desktop review was conducted to identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities in the current land transport framework. This review included a stocktake of existing legislation, national policies and conventions relevant to land transport in the Cook Islands.

Findings, as of April 2024, are detailed in Section One: Policy and Legislation Review of this Report.

National Legislation and Policies:

- Transport Act 1966 including its 19 amendments
- Transport Licensing Act 1967
- Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986
- Infrastructure Act 2019
- Carriage of Goods Act 1998
- Dangerous Goods Act 1984
- National Environment Policy 2022–2032
- Cook Islands Road Safety Strategy 2016–2020
- Cook Islands Climate Change Policy 2018–2028
- Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill (Draft, 2023)
- Advance Recovery and Disposal Fee Scheme (Draft, 2023)
- Economic Development Strategy (EDS)
- National Infrastructure Investment Plan (NIIP) 2021
- NSDA 2020+ - Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui

International Conventions and Multilateral Environmental Agreements:

- Paris Agreement (2015)
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Noumea Convention and Dumping Protocol (1986)
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes

1.2.3.3. Analysis

Insights from stakeholder engagement and legislative review were distilled into four topic areas:

- Leadership and Governance
- Sustainability and Climate Resilience
- Road Safety

- Pa Enea Access and Equity

These topics structure the issues analysis presented in this Report and align with the Policy's four key pillars.

Issues and initial findings were mapped against current legislation and institutional responsibilities. Where gaps or inconsistencies were identified, corresponding policy or operational responses were proposed. Findings were reviewed and validated through collaboration between MOT and the CPPO.

2. Policy and Legislation Review

2.1. Stocktake of existing Legislation, National Policies and International

2.1.1. Overview of Existing Legislation and National Policies and International Conventions

2.1.2. Alignment with National Developmental Frameworks

2.1.3. International Conventions

2.1. Stocktake of existing Legislation, National Policies and International Conventions

This section presents a comprehensive overview of the legislative and policy framework governing land transport in the Cook Islands as of April 2024.

The review includes three key components:

1. **National legislation**, including primary Acts and subsequent amendments and regulations, with a particular focus on the Transport Act 1966 and its numerous updates, the Transport Licensing Act 1967, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986, and other relevant sectoral laws.
2. **National policies** and strategies, featuring cross-cutting frameworks such as the NSDA 2020+, NIIP, the Cook Islands Climate Change Policy and the Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020.
3. **International conventions** and MEAs to which the Cook Islands is a party, including the Paris Agreement, the Basel Convention, and the Noumea Dumping Protocol, which shape the country's responsibilities regarding emissions, waste management, and environmental protection.

The legislative and policy framework forms the basis for understanding the current state of land transport governance, highlighting areas of fragmentation, overlap, alignment and opportunity.

2.1.1. Overview of Existing Legislation and National Policies

2.1.1.1. Cook Islands Transport Act, Amendments and Regulations

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
1966	Transport Act 1966	Registration and licensing of motor vehicles, registers of motor vehicles, licensing of drivers, general offences including disqualification of drivers, rules of the road, and standards for roadworthy motor vehicles.	The Registrar of Motor Vehicles (Part II, III) and the Chief of Police (IV, V, VI, VII, VIII)
1967	Transport Amendment 1967 No.4	Provision for the wearing of safety helmets by motor cyclists.	Police
1968-69	Transport Amendment 1968-69 No. 21	Specifies a speed at which motorcyclists must wear a helmet.	Police
1975	Transport Act Amendment 1975 No.22	New registration and annual license fees for vehicles and miscellaneous (change of ownership, annual license stickers, driver's license, testing fee, WOF, number plate)	Registrar of Motor Vehicles

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
1977	Transport Act Amendment 1977, No.3	Erection of traffic signs - inserts a section that requires proof that any sign that is erected, or any markings, are done in accordance with the provisions of the parent Act.	Police
1984-85	Transport Amendment 1984-85, No. 24	Fees and New Schedule Fees - adds words that fees shall be used for the maintenance and construction of roads. Inserts new Schedule - Registration Fees for Motor Vehicles, annual license fees and miscellaneous.	Police
1987	Transport Amendment 1987, No.5	Changes the words/text used for speed limits in the Schedule - miles an hour to kilometres an hour.	Police
1990	Transport Fees Order 1990, No.6	Replaces the First Schedule - Registration fees, annual license fees, miscellaneous fees.	Police
1992	Transport Amendment 1992, No.5	Controls the parking of vehicles and appoints traffic wardens to regulate the parking of vehicles, whether a parked vehicle causes an obstruction or a hazard.	Police
1992 - 1993	Transport Amendment 1992 - 93, No.15	Provides evidence of testing and accuracy of speed measuring devices and the erection of traffic control measures.	Police
1994	Transport Amendment 1994, No.12	Stipulates unlicensed persons are not to drive motor vehicles. Sets out rules for applying for a driver's license, and renewal and expiry time.	Registrar of Motor Vehicles
1995	Transport Amendment 1995, No.3	Minor offences procedure established.	Police
2000	Transport Amendment 2000, No.8	Disqualification of driver's license and partial disqualifications - amends Section 31.	Registrar of Motor Vehicles
2007	Transport Amendment Act 2007	Amends Section 2 of the principal Act inserting new definitions. Changes punishment for causing bodily injury or death by drink driving or reckless or dangerous driving. Replaces provisions for driving reckless or dangerously, under the influence of drink or drugs. Instructions for arresting and license disqualification as a result of breathalysing and/ or taking blood specimens. Rules for speed, outlining minor offences and fines. Calibrating devices, rear vision mirrors, and safety helmet (motorcycle, quad or bicycle) requirement for standard	Police

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
		sticker. Prohibition on travelling abreast. Repeals Transport Amendment Act 1989.	
2008	Transport Amendment 2008, No.5	Amends section 1 (3) of the 2007 Amendment Act by deleting '4' and replacing it with '8'.	Police
2008	Transport (Fees) Regulations 2008/19	Replaces Part 1 and 2 of the First Schedule (Registration fees for Motor Vehicles and Annual License fees) of the principal Act with a new Schedule 1. Deletes the existing Schedule 4 (Testing and Drivers' License fees) and replaces it with a new Schedule 4 set out in Schedule 2.	Registrar of Motor Vehicles
2014	Transport Amendment No.4	Adds a new definition, inserts a new section (17A), amends section 31 (Disqualification of Driver's license and partial disqualifications), and savings provisions.	Police
2016	Transport Amendment 2016, No.3	Provision for an effective driver licensing system, making the wearing of approved safety helmets mandatory for ages 16 to 25 while riding motorcycles. Improves operability of certain provisions and provides for related matters. Repeals items (b) to (i) in clause 3 of the First Schedule (Transport Act fees). Second Schedule (forms 1 and 2) are repealed.	Police
2016	Transport (Motor Driver Licensing) Regulations 2016 (Transport Act)	License classes, theory tests, practical driving tests, eyesight and medical tests, powers of commission, demerit points, fees for licenses and testing, and savings provisions.	Registrar of Motor Vehicles
2020	Transport Amendment 2020, No.5	Lowers blood and breath alcohol limits. Prohibits use of mobile phones and similar devices while driving. Prohibits use of headphones while driving. Makes changes to requirements for the supply of helmets, including fines for breaching provisions. Makes it compulsory for drivers of motorcycles, power cycles, and any electric bikes on the road, to wear, and ensure any passenger wears, an approved safety helmet.	Police
2021	Transport (Motor Driver Licensing) Amendment Regulations 2021	Makes regulations pursuant to Section 24A of the Transport Act 1966 Amends visitor licenses including the requirement of medical examination and medical certificate(s).	Registrar of Motor Vehicles

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
		Replaces the period of validity of licenses and medical examinations.	

2.1.1.2. *Transport Licensing Act*

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
1967	Transport Licensing Act No.8	Provides for the system of licensing transport services. Establishes a transport licensing authority which consists of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles and two other members appointed by the Minister. Members may not be an officer or employee of the public service. Transport licenses - passenger services, taxicab services, and rental services.	Transport Licensing Authority
1973-74	Transport Licensing Amendment No.34	Authority to consider Government policies. In considering applicants for service licenses, there shall be consideration made by the Minister and any policy of Government, conveyed in writing by the Minister.	Transport Licensing Authority

2.1.1.3. *Motor Vehicle Dealers Act*

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
1986	Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986, No.16	Makes provision for the licensing and disciplining of motor vehicle dealers and their staff. Reforms the law relating to contracts for the sale of motor vehicles by dealers, to promote and protect the interests of consumers.	Registrar and Motor Vehicle Dealers Licensing Authority (s11) - Secretary for Trade, Labour and Transport Minister of Trade, Labour and Transport
1987	Motor Vehicle Dealers (license Fees) Order 1987	Requires an annual license fee for motor vehicle dealers for every application for a license and renewal of dealer's license (\$50).	Motor Vehicle Dealers Licensing Authority (s11) - Secretary for Trade, Labour and Transport Minister of Trade, Labour and Transport

2.1.1.4. Other legislation and policies

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
1991-92	Sale of Liquor Act	Establishes a reasonable system of control over the sale and supply of liquor to the public, with the aim of contributing to the reduction of liquor abuse. (Relevant to any premises on which liquor may be sold, that includes any conveyance such as a train, coach, or other vehicle used for transport of persons e.g. for VIP and Party bus operations).	Liquor Licensing Authority
2003	Environment Act 2003	Provides for the protection, conservation and management of the environment in a sustainable manner. Establishes the National Environment Service, with functions that include prevention, control, and correcting the pollution of air, water and land.	National Environment Service
2022	National Environment Policy	Establishes objectives and methods that will guide planning and implementation across the Cook Islands. This ensures there is an effective legal platform and provides, promotes and supports an integrated approach to the protection and conservation of the environment.	National Environment Service
2019	Infrastructure Act 2019	Provides for the planning, delivery, and management of infrastructure; and provides for the construction, installation and maintenance of infrastructure; sets out the rights and obligations of infrastructure managers and occupiers and owners of land when installing, operating and maintaining infrastructure. Schedule to the Act sets out a range of amendments to the Transport Act 1966 relating to the role of the Secretary of ICI and the Commissioner of Police - requiring protocols to be established for road maintenance, traffic control, marking, signage etc. Establishes provisions for vehicle weight regulations and a range of changes to the Transport Act relating to road management.	Infrastructure Cook Islands
2023	Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill	Combines existing solid waste related legislation into a single piece of legislation and fills gaps in said legislation. Instructs	Infrastructure Cook Islands

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
		how types of solid waste will be treated and requires Government services. Establishes an advance recovery and disposal fee scheme, introduces the ability to ban importation of selected products, and provides for the disposal of end-of-life vehicles.	
2023	Draft Advance Recovery and Disposal Fee Scheme	Proposes a sustainable financing mechanism and management system to establish circular economy for commodities (including end-of-life vehicles).	Infrastructure Cook Islands
2023	Draft Urban Planning / Development Policy	Sets a high-level direction for consistent and holistic development of the built environment that underlies environmental protection and meets social needs. Transport is a major objective area in the Policy.	Infrastructure Cook Islands lead
2018-2028	Climate Change Policy	Strengthens climate resilience to safeguard lives, livelihoods, and the Cook Islands' economic, infrastructural, cultural, and environmental assets,, while promoting sustainable development. A key objective is reducing emissions and increasing resilience. Transport is a lead contributor to emissions in the Cook Islands.	Climate Change Cook Islands
	Climate Change Country Programme	Its key objective is to outline the priorities that can be supported by the Green Climate Fund and other development partners, to progress the paradigm shift in the Cook Islands to achieve low emissions and climate resilience. It serves as a roadmap for coherent engagement with partners to maximise financial opportunities and ensure that resources are directed efficiently towards national climate and development priorities.	Climate Change Cook Islands
	Climate Change Adaptation Bill	Establishes the Climate Change Office, an Independent Commission to advise Government on climate change matters and outlines how the office can address climate change through strategies, policies, plans and climate finance, and how it can achieve outcomes through partnerships and collaboration, understanding the role of ecosystems for emissions reduction. Establishes a Climate Change Response Fund.	Climate Change Cook Islands

Year	Title	Purpose	Administered by
2016-2020	Road Safety Strategy	A five-year plan which outlines the road safety priorities and key activities that the road safety community will undertake to establish safer road systems in the Cook Islands. It's aligned to the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, as well as the action priorities identified in The World Health Organization Regional Action Plan for Violence and Injury Prevention in the Western Pacific (2016-2020).	Te Marae Ora
1984	Dangerous Goods Act	Makes provision for the packing, marking, handling, carriage, storage, and use of certain flammable, oxidising, and corrosive materials, and certain compressed, liquefied, dissolved, and other cases used to keep people safe.	Ministry for Transport
1998	Carriage of Goods Act	Makes provision for all transport of goods within the Cook Islands, if the transport is by land, water, air or a mix of these. It applies regardless of whether passengers are also being transported, as the primary focus is on the goods. It applies to air and water transport, even when the aircraft or ship is simultaneously engaged in international transport.	Ministry of Transport

2.1.2. Alignment with National Development Frameworks

The Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035 is guided by and contributes to, two major national frameworks, the National Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021 (NIIP), and the NSDA 2020+.

2.1.2.1. NIIP 2021

The NIIP outlines strategic infrastructure investments across twelve sectors over the next ten years. It provides a prioritisation framework to ensure that public investment aligns with national development priorities. The contribution of national investment most relevant to Land Transport include Roads and Bridges (6.9%) and Energy (7.0%) (especially renewable energy programmes).

2.1.2.2. NSDA 2020+

Te Ara Akapapa'anga Nui 2020+-the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ (NSDA 2020+) is the guiding document for sustainable development in the Cook Islands. The Land Transport Policy should work towards achieving the pertinent aspects relating to the NSDA 2020+. The National Vision, as set out in the NSDA is "Turanga Memeitaki no te katoatoa" or "Wellbeing for all".

The NSDA 2020+ defines wellbeing as a state of comfort, health and happiness. Comfort is fostered through education, secure housing, financial stability, and safe communities. Wellbeing with respect to health, encompasses psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Happiness is achieved through pristine environment, preservation of language and cultural heritage, spirituality - including connection to the environment, land and Papa'anga - work/life balance, community vitality, and the protection of rights and freedoms.

The NSDA 5 Year Score Card sets fifteen national development goal areas, with the new Land Transport Policy supporting the achievement of eight goal areas. While some goals and associated indicators are not directly relevant, the Land Transport Policy can still contribute to the broader objectives within each goal area.

Policy links to the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ are illustrated in table 1 below:

2.1.2.3. *The Land Transport Policy Links to the NSDA 2020+*

Goal #	Subject	Focus area	Policy Links
1.	Wellbeing for all	Looking after our employed people, our youth, our families, our elderly, our parents, and our children.	Create an attractive, safe, healthy and happy land transport environment. Update standards to provide provisions for the elderly, mobility challenged, and the young, across land transport infrastructure.
4.	Solid and Hazardous Waste	Increase recycling. Manage hazardous waste effectively.	Establish circular economy for vehicles.
6.	Connecting Nation through Infrastructure, Transport and ICT	Connect our nation and people. Build reliable and appropriate infrastructure. A physically connected nation.	Diversify transport modes and build the necessary infrastructure to achieve this. Reduce congestion and transport emissions.
7.	Health and Healthy Lifestyles	Reduce non-communicable disease. Promote healthier lifestyles through exercise and sports.	Build infrastructure measures that contribute to increased physical activity. Set standards to reduce air pollution from vehicles.
9.	Our Inclusiveness	Improve care of the infirm, elderly and disabled.	Build infrastructure measures that contribute to increased physical activity.

Goal #	Subject	Focus area	Policy Links
			Set standards to reduce air pollution from vehicles.
11.	Our Biodiversity and Natural Environment	Support healthy coral reefs. Protect areas. Improve water quality. Protect Biodiversity.	Incorporate green engineering into transport infrastructure development. Reduce car dependency to reduce the need for car infrastructure (car parks).
12.	Climate Change, Resilience, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	Reduce reliance on fossil fuels.	Build infrastructure and establish standards to facilitate the transition to low-carbon land transport, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
15.	Our Security; a Peaceful and Just Society	Reduce motor vehicle accidents. Improve public performance.	Use design and construction to improve road user behaviour. Use design and construction to prevent serious injury and death from road crashes. Improve efficiencies in the transport licensing system.

2.1.3. International Conventions

The policy development process identified the following international multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), to which the Cook Islands is a party, requiring pragmatic compliance with:

- Climate**
 - UN Framework on Climate Change Convention 1992 (UNFCCC).
 - The Paris Agreement (2015).
- Land**
 - Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region 1986 (SPREP or Noumea Convention).
- Ocean**
 - Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping, with Annexes I-IV (Protocol on Dumping).

2.1.3.1. *The MEA relevant to the Land Transport Policy:*

International Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs)	Implementation into National legislation	MEA Objectives
Basel Convention Ratified 29 June 2004	Prevention of Marine Pollution Act 1998	<p>The Convention aims to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of hazardous and other wastes, including their generation, transboundary movement, and management.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to land transport as it underpins policy objectives for the repatriation of end-of-life vehicles to recyclers.</p>
Noumea Dumping Protocol Ratified 29 November 1988		<p>The Protocol supports the previous Convention, specifically with preventing pollution in the South Pacific region by way of dumping.</p>

3. Current State

3.1. Strategic Framework: Guiding Principles, Sector Challenges and Objectives

3.1.1. Principles

3.1.2. Topic area objectives

3.1. Strategic Framework: Guiding Principles and Objectives

This section outlines the strategic framework that informed the structure of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035. It presents the guiding principles that shaped the policy's design, defines key focus areas, and establishes the strategic objective reflecting the desired future state of the land transport system.

3.1.1. Principles

Fifteen guiding principles were developed through stakeholder input, a review of national and international best practice, and alignment with overarching development goals. These include the NSDA 2020+, the NIIP and relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

The guiding principles are as follows:

Principle	Summary
Fit-for-purpose	Land Transport will be of an appropriate standard for its intended use over its lifespan, delivering value for money across whole of life costs. This includes an adequately funded land transport system and regulations.
Equity and Community Service	Transport systems will provide inclusive access for all users, with a focus on those with disabilities, the elderly, women, children and other vulnerable people. Land transport planning will consider the wider community's needs and interests.
Safety	System safety will be prioritised through appropriate design, social safeguards and management practices with regard to the safety of cyclists, pedestrians especially those with disabilities, women, children and the elderly.
Health	The land transport environment will support physical activity and protect human health. Transportation systems should be designed and operated in a way that protects the physical, mental and social well-being of all people and enhances the quality of life in communities.
Environmental Sustainability	Assets and resources will be managed in an environmentally sound way to protect and enhance natural environments and ecosystems. Land transport will contribute to national climate change and emission reduction targets.
Resilience	Land transport infrastructure will be designed to withstand climate change impacts and support emergency response and critical services. This includes protecting historical and archaeological sites, reducing noise pollution, and considering aesthetics in planning and design.
Integrated and Innovative	Land transport will take a whole-of-system approach, safely connecting infrastructure, services, people, and place. It will support innovative, locally grounded solutions that reflect Cook Islands values — from design and messaging to delivery. The sector will adopt emerging technologies to increase safety, efficiency, and environmental performance. A well-integrated transport structure will deliver coordinated, inclusive, and future-ready outcomes across all islands.
Transparency and Accountability	Transparent, evidence-based decision-making will guide land transport governance. Licensing, certification, sector regulation, permissions

Principle	Summary
	(permits), accreditation, inspection, compliance, financial audits and unfair practices will be addressed through clear rules and consistent enforcement. Disputes will be managed openly and fairly, with stakeholder engagement ensuring community needs are met.
Precautionary Principle	Proactive action will be taken to prevent environmental harm, even when scientific certainty is lacking. Consistent with the precautionary principle set out in the <i>1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development</i> , the Government will act to avoid or reduce risks to health and the environment without waiting for full scientific proof of harm.
Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change	The transport system will align with national and international climate change policies and projects. It will reduce emissions and adapt to climate impacts to protect lives, infrastructure, and ecosystems while supporting sustainable development.
Sustainable Development	The transport system will support long-term national development by balancing environmental, economic, social, and cultural goals. It will foster inclusive growth and help connect communities across the Cook Islands, now and for future generations.
Education and Awareness	Promote ongoing education and awareness relating to responsible and safe land transport practices, contributing to a culture of responsible road use and safety.
Data-driven Decision Making	Data and evidence-based approaches will be used to underpin and inform decision-making processes for all land transport policies and projects.
Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation for land transport policies and projects will help to identify successes, challenges and areas for improvement.
Cross-Sectoral Collaboration	MOT will promote collaboration across key government agencies and private sector stakeholders to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to land transport planning.

3.1.2. Topic Area Objectives

Building on the analysis of key issues across the four thematic areas, a set of topic area objectives was developed to guide the strategic direction for land transport reform in the Cook Islands. Initial objectives and descriptions were drafted during the early stages of policy development and refined through input from the MOT and key stakeholders.

The Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035 sets out high level Policy Objectives under each of the four Policy Pillars - Leadership and Governance, Sustainability and Climate Resilience, Road Safety and Pa Enua Land Transport. These objectives define the overarching vision for the sector.

This Technical Background Report presents the corresponding policy pillar Objectives, translating the high-level vision into more specific, actionable goals. Informed by evidence and consultation, these objectives provide practical guidance for

implementation planning, ensuring that long term aspirations are supported by clear, measurable direction across all islands.

Each thematic area has a dedicated policy objective developed from issue analysis. Initial objectives and descriptions were drafted in the early policy development phase and further refined by the MOT.

Topic Area	Objectives
Leadership and Governance	Establish a clear legislative and operational framework for land transport by strengthening public sector agencies roles, formalising leadership and governance, and improving coordination to deliver efficient, accountable, and nationally consistent services. That the land transport system achieves NSDA 2020+ Goal 15; to improve public performance by improving efficiencies in the transport licensing system. ¹
Sustainability and Climate Resilience	Promote affordable and accessible low-emission transport, reduce private vehicle dependency, and build a climate-resilient land transport system that protects people, infrastructure, and the environment.
Road Safety	Reduce road crash fatalities and injuries — and their wider social and economic impact — through access to data for evidence-based decision making for safer infrastructure, effective enforcement, and sustained public awareness
Pa Enea Access and Equity	Deliver tailored transport solutions and regulations that reflect the needs of the Pa Enea and ensure equitable access across all islands.

¹ Indicator 15.5 Average performance of government ministries (OPSC Annual Report to parliament). This indicator looks at the annual performance of Government ministries as assessed by the Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC). Government ministries must effectively work with civil society organisations, traditional leaders, and communities to achieve our national development goals.

4. Issues Analysis

- 4.1. Leadership and Governance
- 4.2. Sustainability and Climate Resilience
- 4.3. Road Safety
- 4.4. Pa Enua Access and Equity

Based on the desktop analysis and stakeholder engagement phase of this work, four common themes emerged:

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Sustainability and Climate Resilience
3. Road Safety
4. Pa Enua Access and Equity

These themes are presented as Policy Pillars in the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035. These themes are referred to as Topic Areas in this Technical Background Report, to reflect the Report's analytical function.

This section provides a current state issues analysis aligned to each of the Topic Areas. The issues outlined in this section represent the most pressing challenges facing the land transport system as of April 2024.

While these issues are summarised in the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035, this Report offers further detail to inform the work of policymakers, legislative drafters, planners, and technical specialists seeking to understand the current landscape and rationale for reform.

4.1. Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance play crucial roles in the development and implementation of effective land transport policies, providing direction, coordination, and adaptability, to ensure an efficient, safe, accessible, and sustainable land transport system that supports economic growth and social development².

4.1.1. Roles and responsibilities

4.1.1.1. The land transport sector lacks cohesive policy and strategic planning to address current and emerging challenges. The existing legislative framework is fragmented, creating uncertainty around roles, responsibilities, and regulatory enforcement. This absence of a unified strategy has resulted in government agencies and key stakeholders operating without coordination. Limited inter-agency collaboration has been identified as a barrier to effective land transport licensing and enforcement, hindering efforts to eliminate unlicensed (rogue) operators.

4.1.1.2. The Transport Act has undergone 26 amendments in Parliament, introducing various changes to sections on safety helmet requirements, speed regulations, annual license fees, traffic signs, language, parking controls, speed measuring devices, traffic control measures, minor offences, disqualifications, and penalties for drink driving and

² Webb, J. (2024). *Review of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy Draft*. Prepared for the Ministry of Transport, Cook Islands. 22 March 2024.

causing death. However, these amendments have not been consolidated into one single, cohesive piece of legislation, which poses significant risks, including legal complexity, compliance challenges, enforcement difficulties, and accountability issues. The fragmented regulatory framework also leads to implementation inefficiencies, oversight risks, uncertainty for stakeholders, barriers to innovation, and delayed policy responses. There is a compelling case to streamline the regulatory framework, enhance clarity and consistency, facilitate compliance, and promote efficient enforcement.

4.1.1.3. Pursuant to the Transport Licensing Act 1967 (Licensing Act), the Transport Licensing Authority (TLA) safeguards transport service operators from excessive competition while ensuring service quality standards. The TLA grants licenses for passenger services, taxicab services and rental services, issues number plates for licensed vehicles, and maintains a register containing operator business details, driver information, fleet composition, and vehicle statuses. The Licensing Act outlines key considerations for granting licences, including the necessity and desirability of proposed services in the public interest, and allows for the ability to impose conditions on licences such as fleet size limits for passenger and rental vehicle operators.

4.1.1.4. The MOT Land Transport Division, established in 2020 under the Public Service Commission Act 2009, serves as a regulatory body, operating under the framework of the 2018 Government Agency Restructuring Policy. The Land Transport Division acts on behalf of the Secretary of Transport as the Secretary of the Licensing Authority (TLA), and is responsible for the administration of transport services licensing, stakeholder engagement, compliance, monitoring, inspection of licensed vehicles, policy development, research and road safety awareness programmes relating to the land transport sector.

4.1.1.5. During consultation, TLA members expressed a desire to enhance purpose in the legislation, so it might focus on the development of a safe, sustainable and efficient land transport system, with an emphasis on collaboration amongst agencies and promoting mode shift behaviour change.

4.1.1.6. The Transport Licensing Act 1967 states that the TLA is to consist of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, who is the Chairman, and two other members appointed by the Minister of Police. However, the Transport Act 1966 separately establishes the position of Registrar of Motor Vehicles, also appointed by the Minister of Police, leading to role ambiguity. Greater clarity in the Transport Licensing Act 1967 is needed to define TLA membership, especially the role of the Chairman.

4.1.1.7. The Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986 regulates motor vehicle dealers and their staff, ensuring consumer protection through licensing and disciplinary measures, while reforming vehicle sales contracts. It is administered by the Registrar of Motor Vehicle

Dealers and the Motor Vehicle Dealers Licensing Authority. The Authority membership is the Secretary of Transport for the Ministry of Transport, who is also the Registrar of Motor Vehicle Dealers.

4.1.1.8. The Schedule to the Infrastructure Act sets out a range of amendments to the Transport Act 1966, addressing the roles of the Secretary of ICI and the Commissioner of Police. It mandates protocols to be established for road maintenance, traffic control, marking and signage, and vehicle weight regulations. Although the Infrastructure Act was passed in 2019, these amendments have not been consolidated into the Transport Act, nor appear to be fully operationalised yet. This lack of consolidation may lead to confusion among stakeholders and enforcement agencies, and a review may be necessary to reflect the evolving transport regulatory role of the Land Transport Authority and the Ministry of Transport.

4.1.2. Funding and Financing

The enabling of TLA operations and Land Transport Authority functions since 1995, have been low priority as opposed to increasing capital budget for infrastructure such as roads. There is appetite to utilise licensing fees to fund road maintenance, enforcement, and road safety strategy implementation - a sentiment echoed in Pa Enea consultation. However, government budget constraints create competing priorities. The MOT advocates for prioritising land transport regulatory and enforcement functions across the Police, TLA and MOT, to achieve meaningful impact.

4.1.3. Licensing and Registration

The fragmented legislative framework has resulted in a confusing and inefficient licensing, registration, compliance, and monitoring system.

4.1.4. Access to Data

4.1.4.1 The Police contract the BCI on behalf of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles (in this instance, the Commissioner of Police) to process and manage all vehicle registration and deregistration, vehicle ownership changes, annual licences, and driver licensing.

4.1.4.2 Although the TLA is the sole entity authorised to approve licences and registrations under the Transport Licensing Act 1967, the Secretary of Transport, as the Secretary of the TLA, must formally request access to vehicle registration and annual licence data from Police. This restriction limits immediate access to critical data, affecting the TLA's ability to make informed licensing decisions. Furthermore, access to motor vehicle registration data is essential for enforcement, particularly for vehicle inspections carried out by Police on behalf of the TLA.

4.1.4.3 Deregistration also requires approval of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles; however, a lack of processes and guidelines has resulted in insufficient and inaccurate data on the actual number of vehicles in operation per island. Although the TLA has a

register of approved licensed transport operators, anomalies exist - applications for renewal, new licenses, and fleet additions often lack corresponding deregistration records, and some licensed vehicles were already approved by BCI before TLA consent.

4.1.4.4 The National Census of Population and Dwellings 2023 serves as an alternative source of information, but only captures data on privately owned vehicles, limiting its usefulness.

4.1.4.5 Tracking energy-efficient motor vehicles presents additional challenges. Vehicle imports were only recently reclassified according to customs tariff at the subheading level, to reflect categories such as fully electric vehicles. Similarly, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles register has only recently begun recording data on electric vehicles.

4.1.4.6 This lack of data impacts the ability for the TLA to make sound policy decisions, particularly when assessing license applications. The TLA makes decisions on requests for new and annual renewal applications for licensed passenger services, taxicab services and rental services, ensuring that new proposals are economic viable, meet public demand, and maintain competition safeguards while upholding service quality standards.

4.1.4.7 The TLA seeks a more detailed picture of motor vehicles on the islands, yet gathering this information proves far more difficult compared to readily available tourism sector data. The lack of comprehensive data presents risks related to regulatory oversight, compliance and strategic planning.

4.1.5. Licensing regime

4.1.5.1 Stakeholders raised several concerns regarding inefficiencies in the current licensing framework, particularly relating to license types and fee structure.

4.1.5.2 Annual vehicle license renewals occur simultaneously in April, resulting in lengthy wait times at BCI, especially for late renewals.

4.1.5.3 Long-standing transport service operators find the transport licensing process to be tedious and repetitive, as they must provide the same information yearly. Instead, they propose a once-off submission with annual electronic updates. While the MOT accepts electronically transmitted information, some operators still prefer in-person renewals. License certificates, along with their accompanying terms and conditions, generally require collection from MOT.

4.1.5.4 The process for payment of license fees is just as cumbersome. While MOT allows for online payments by applicants for advertisements to renew or apply for licenses, the process of payment to Police for transport licensing is still a manual process. The Government's online Financial Management Information System (FMIS) launched in 2022 to unify accounting systems, could streamline online payment processes.

4.1.5.5 Currently, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and private businesses including private school buses and community service vehicles, are not required to have passenger licenses. The MOT and Aitutaki public consultations have expressed concern regarding the safety of passengers, especially young school children travelling on these unlicensed passenger vehicles and have called for the extension of licensing to all passenger services.

4.1.5.6 There is no licensing framework for vehicle-sharing business (Lime, Uber, car-sharing etc). Without regulations in place, there is a concern for safety and fairness as these businesses operate without oversight³. The Transport Licensing Act 1967 definitions need to be updated to accommodate ride-sharing platforms. At least one business in Rarotonga is in the process of developing a smart platform for the ordering of licensed transport services, advertising for drivers online.

4.1.5.7 The current licensing fee structure for motorcycles is seen by key stakeholders as inequitable and outdated.

- Motorcycles (100cc and above) incur a \$62 license fee.
- Cars (up to 2600cc) are charged \$38, while cars over 2600c pay \$47.

Originally, higher motorcycle fees were designed to deter purchases of faster motorcycles. However, modern motorcycles that are imported now routinely exceed 100cc (majority are 125cc), giving consumers little choice. This pricing structure disproportionately affects lower-income individuals, who often rely on motorcycles for affordability.

4.1.5.8 There is a significant decline in registered ownership of motorcycles relative to cars between 2016 - 2021 (see Figures 1 and 2). This may be due to the introduction of the Transport Amendment Act 2020, which made helmet use compulsory when driving or riding on a motorcycle - with the exclusion of quad bikes.

4.1.5.9 Stakeholders, including Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, noted a regulatory gap pertaining to service fees for transport operators, particularly for taxis. The Licensing Act does not grant the TLA the power to set price controls for taxi operators or any other licensed transport operator. The Transport Licensing Bill explanatory note states that the purpose of this legislation is to establish a licensing system for persons operating a transport service, to provide competition safeguards for the operators, while providing control of service standards, albeit not explicitly addressing pricing regulations.4.1.5.10 The Control of Prices Act 1966 assigns the Price Tribunal the authority to:

³ Webb, J. (2024). *Review of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy Draft*. Prepared for the Ministry of Transport, Cook Islands. 22 March 2024.

- Fix prices for goods and services.
- Investigate complaints regarding trade practices and pricing.

4.1.5.11 There appears to be an overlap between the Transport Licensing Act and the Control of Prices Act regarding service standards. However, only the Control of Prices Act is specific about fixed prices as a function. This indicates a potential discrepancy in the regulatory framework, where the Control of Prices Act appears to have more explicit price-fixing provisions than the Transport Licensing Act.

4.1.6. Compliance and monitoring

4.1.6.1 Although the explanatory notes to the Transport Licensing Bill refer to the Police and Registrar of Motor Vehicles having the same powers applied for offences under the Transport Licensing Act, in practice, there remains significant confusion between the Police and MOT.

4.1.6.2 The Land Transport Authority under MOT the resourcing to monitor licensed service providers and ensure compliance with TLA terms and conditions. Key oversight gaps include:

- Vehicle maintenance standards.
- Use of licensed vehicles and TLA approved drivers.
- Use of vehicles on endorsed routes.
- Prohibition of smoking in vehicles.
- Safety and operational standards.
- Staff dress code.
- Customer service practices.

4.1.6.3 Stakeholders and MOT report a need for more oversight and monitoring of warrant of fitness service providers. This is a notable risk, especially for tourism in the Pa Enua where WOF operators are limited (e.g., Aitutaki). It is also difficult to enforce the warrants of fitness in the Pa Enua, beyond Aitutaki, as there are no Police-accredited garages and mechanics in those islands. The Warrant of Fitness (WOF) process has also been identified as a costly and time-consuming process for businesses. Some stakeholders have proposed extending WOF periods for new vehicles, arguing that a six-month WOF cycle is unnecessary in the Cook Islands, where vehicles in the Pa Enua travel at low speeds and short distances. To ensure feasibility of WOF accreditation and standards, a recommendation has been made for existing work done by CLO and Police to be shared with MOT, as these are regulatory transport activities.

4.1.7.4 The concept of compulsory private insurance was explored with stakeholders with intent to improve passenger and driver safety and vehicle quality on the road - particularly in Rarotonga. Although not popular with stakeholders due to affordability

concerns, it is noted that passenger service vehicles and government vehicles are already required to have insurance.

4.1.6.4 The stakeholder dialogues identified that alcohol continues to be served on VIP transfer services and party buses despite requiring a liquor license, and that to date, no applications for liquor license on VIP transfer services and party buses have been submitted to the Liquor Licensing Authority (LLA). Past applications to the LLA, and current dialogues, confirm the LLA do not want to change this requirement, so this may in fact be an enforcement and/or awareness issue. Addressing this issue through enhanced enforcement and awareness campaigns promote public safety, fairness among businesses and regulatory compliance within the transport sector.

4.1.6.5 Despite amendments to the Transport Act regarding helmet use, monitoring and enforcement by the Police of helmet standards remains low. Helmets that do not meet standards set out in the Transport Amendment Act 2005, are imported into the Cook Islands and worn by motorcyclists. The Transport Act 2020 amendments have created more confusion around helmet wearing and have subsequently complicated its monitoring. For example, although a bicycle refers also to e-bikes, only e-bike riders in this category are required to wear helmets, and quad bike drivers do not require helmets at all if travelling at speeds less than 40km/h.

4.2. Sustainability and Climate Resilience

4.2.1. Emissions and Cleaner Mobility

4.2.1.1 Land transport accounts for 39% of transport emissions in the Cook Islands⁴. Congestion and high car usage pose potential public health risks, especially for those who live by the Ara Tapu. Carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, particles, volatile organic compounds, and sulphur dioxide from vehicle fumes are serious health and environmental hazards.

4.2.1.2 The Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) Policy 2018-2028 promotes a low carbon development approach, that includes monitoring electric vehicle uptake and charging infrastructure, as part of efforts to reduce transport-related emissions.

4.2.1.3 Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) and the National Environment Service (NES) are progressing the development of national emissions standards and have outlined the intention to include transport emissions standards in upcoming national policy frameworks.

4.2.1.4 Despite ongoing efforts, there is not systematic monitoring of land transport pollution, including noise pollution or emissions tracking. A critical gap exists in emissions data collection due to the departure of the specialist responsible, leaving no trained personnel currently managing this area.

4.2.1.5 CCCI is exploring fleet-wide transition to other modes of non-emission energy, aligned with the current goal of net zero emissions by 2040 (NSDA 2020+) - starting with Government fleet procurement, followed by rental fleet, then passenger, and private vehicles. Fleet conversion to electric vehicles could potentially be slow to progress due to the comparably high capital purchase cost, while also doing nothing to reduce other trade-offs such as congestion, road noise, vehicle crashes and vehicle end-of-life management. Second-hand electric vehicles can often have a reduced battery range and high replacement costs.

4.2.1.6 In 2018 the Cook Islands introduced a tax incentive for imported electric vehicles less than 10 years old. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) has an action in the Economic Development Strategy and Economic Recovery Roadmap Review 2022, to consider the potential range of policy options that could further incentivise low carbon transport. This action is on hold pending appointment of a policy lead.

4.2.1.7 Electric vehicle battery recycling is a new issue arising due to the limited expansion of the circular economy. While some companies accept used batteries, a

⁴ Government of the Cook Islands. 2020. Cook Islands Technology Needs Assessment Reporting Mitigation Technologies. Office of the Prime Minister.

small economy like the Cook Islands may find it difficult to export end-of-life lithium batteries to recycling companies. The Advance Recovery and Disposal Fee (ARDF) Scheme commencing in 2024, establishes a revolving fund and management scheme to send recovered materials away for recycling and safe disposal. However, ICI is finding it difficult to identify a receiver for current recyclables due to low national supply volumes.

4.2.1.8 Almost all electric vehicle owners charge at home with minimal use of public charging stations. Future charging infrastructure planning station installation should align with research findings⁵

4.2.2. Number of vehicles

4.2.2.1 Stakeholder consultation highlighted the perception of excessive vehicle numbers, suggesting that the Cook Islands, especially Rarotonga, is a car or motor vehicle-centric society. The Cook Islands has no standardised measure for what constitutes ‘too many’ vehicles. Addressing this data gap is crucial to inform policy decision making.

4.2.2.2 Congestion can trigger risk-taking behaviour, stress, and affect the wellbeing of the public. Vehicle-centrism leads to large investments in costly vehicle infrastructure such as roads and carparks.

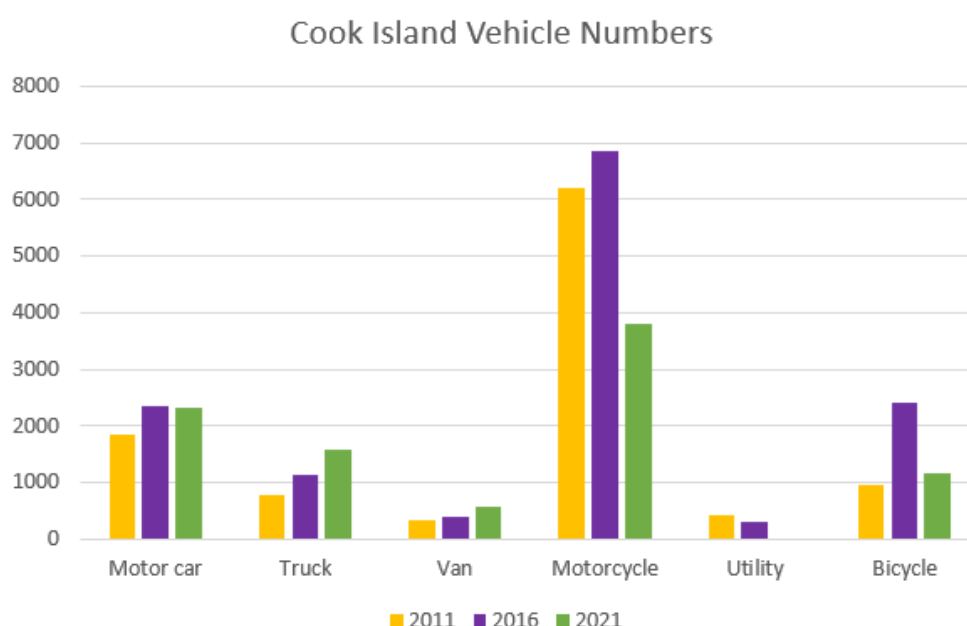
4.2.2.3 According to census data, private vehicle ownership, including bicycles, is 0.63 per capita across the Cook Islands and 0.67 for Rarotonga. Motorised vehicle registration is 0.59 per person for the country and Rarotonga⁶.

4.2.2.4 According to 2017 global data, the Cook Islands ranked 18th highest in the world for registered vehicles per 1,000 people, with a rate of 698.0. By comparison, Fiji recorded 120.6, Samoa 122.8, Singapore 163.4, and New Zealand 783.3¹. This high vehicle density reflects long-standing trends in motorisation and limited modal alternatives, particularly in Rarotonga²³.

⁵ Green et al, 2013.

⁶ Cook Islands Government 2021.

Figure 1. Private Vehicles Owned by Private Households



Source: Cook Islands Census of Population and Dwellings, Statistics Office, MFEM

Figure 2. Census Data

Year	2011	2016	2021
Resident Population	14974	14802	14987
Motor car	1857	2351	2308
Truck	776	1129	1587
Van	343	387	582
Motorcycle	6187	6857	3788
Utility	432	297	
Bicycle	963	2404	1153
Total vehicles	10558	13425	9418
Total Motorised	9595	11021	8265
People/vehicle	0.71	0.91	0.63
People/motor vehicle	0.64	0.74	0.55

4.2.2.5 Census data shows that trucks and van ownership have increased (noting that utility vehicles are likely absorbed into these figures) and overall private vehicle ownership has reduced since the 2016 census. Motorcycle ownership has reduced markedly in recent years, which suggests that it is the presence of more four wheeled vehicles on the road that could cause the perception of road congestion. Several factors likely influence this shift, as noted earlier, the licensing fee structure is significantly higher for motorcycles than for cars, potentially discouraging ownership. In addition, the introduction of compulsory helmet wearing laws may have further reduced the appeal of motorcycle use, particularly for short-distance travel where convenience was previously prioritised over safety.

4.2.2.6 There are few incentives for alternative transport options such as walking, cycling and public transport. Without incentives, individuals may continue to rely heavily on private vehicles, exacerbating traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and road safety hazards.

4.2.2.7 There is currently no control on the number of vehicles imported into the Cook Islands, despite there being no end-of-life management in place (until 2024) and the rising issues associated with dumping vehicles discussed later in this document. During stakeholder dialogues, a question on whether quotas or restrictions on imported vehicles would limit the number of vehicles, was posed.

4.2.2.8 The increasing cost of fuel, exacerbated by global supply chain disruptions following Covid 19 and the war in Ukraine, has significantly increased import costs. This extends to vehicles which has raised the cost of vehicle purchasing in-country. To address this, the commercial sector has called for a reduction in levies on the import of vehicles older than 10 years, as some older vehicles can last longer than 10 years if well maintained such as buses. This needs to be balanced with the desire for cleaner mobility and a reduction in the number of end-of-life vehicles.

4.2.3. Climate Resilience

4.2.3.1 Although the Cook Islands produces minimal greenhouse gases; it faces high climate risks due to geographical and topographical vulnerabilities. The erosion of coastlines throughout the Cook Islands from rising sea levels threatens ecosystems, food and water security, public health, infrastructure and economic development.⁷

4.2.3.2 Endeavours to build resilient infrastructure are seen as an essential component of sustainable development and a key measure of the Cook Islands Climate Change Policy 2018-28. Any climate risk analysis conducted for existing infrastructure and future infrastructure developments, must consider impacts on land transport and the movement of people, goods and services, notably sea level rise, which could submerge coastal roads.

4.2.3.3 In Rarotonga, the Ara Metua does not form a complete island loop, leaving limited escape routes for coastal residents seeking safety shelters or higher ground.

4.2.3.4 Climate adaptation planning has been slow to date, however, but recent government-led policy and regulatory initiatives aim to address climate resilience including:

4.2.3.5 The ICI Urban Development Policy currently being drafted, which promotes environmentally responsible infrastructure while addressing social needs.

⁷ Government of the Cook Islands (2018). *Cook Islands Climate Change Policy 2018–2028*, Office of the Prime Minister - Climate Change Cook Islands, p. 9.

4.2.3.6 The Climate Change Cook Islands - Climate Change Policy 2018-28, which prioritises emissions reduction and resilience-building.

4.2.3.7 The Climate Change Adaptation Bill currently being drafted, which establishes the Climate Change Office as an Independent Commission to advise Government on climate change matters and includes strategies for the office to address climate change through strategies, policies, plans and climate finance. It aims to achieve these outcomes through partnerships and cooperation, whilst understanding the role of ecosystems for emissions reduction and establishing a Climate Change Response Fund.

4.2.4. Public Transport

Despite broad statements supporting sustainable transport in high-level policy documents, no clear actions or commitments have been outlined.

4.2.5. The NSDA 2020+

4.2.5.1 The Evidence document, a separate document to the NSDA 2020+, recognises the need to rethink mobility in Rarotonga and incentivising low-impact transport options like public transport to reduce carbon emissions and practically meet international goals⁸ The document states that by 2025, Rarotonga will have strategies in place for lowering CO₂ emissions such as incentivising the use of public transport. The NSDA five-year plan, however, does not make any reference to public transport. Under Goal 6, the plan commits to promoting regular and reliable transport, but this is only for domestic air and shipping services. Overall, the five-year plan focuses on inter-island transport only.

4.2.5.2 The NSDA 2020+ one-hundred-year vision makes pledge statements about sustainable transport. These are “creating sustainable transport systems that support economic, social, cultural wellbeing and environment”, and “reduce the need for motor traffic, create community structures conducive to healthy and sustainable transport”⁹. The document also says that the Cook Islands will endeavour to make transport choices that conserve natural resources where possible.

4.2.5.3 The Cook Islands Technology Needs Assessment Report recognises the need for electric powered public transport and modal shifts to active and transit-based mobility.

⁸ Cook Islands Government, 2021b.

⁹ Cook Islands Government. 2021a. National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+. Cook Islands Government. Accessed 28/08/2021 <https://www.pmooffice.gov.ck/wpcontent/uploads/2021/08/Turanga-Meitaki-no-toku-oraanga-100-mataiti.pdf>

However, no direct action has been taken to prioritise public transport sector development¹⁰.

4.2.5.3 There is no government investment into public transport. The school bus service was originally operated by the Government until the country filed for bankruptcy in 1996, forcing many services into the private sector. Cooks Buses are not subsidised; there are services provided by private institutions in Rarotonga and there are some services in the Pa Enua funded by the local governments. Without government support, there is a risk of accessibility limitation, and reduced reliability and affordability of public transport, particularly in underserved areas. Additionally, the reliance on private operators may result in fragmented services, unlicensed transport service operators, inconsistent coverage and insufficient incentives for improving and expanding public transport networks.

4.2.5.4 The privately owned bus service in Rarotonga operates on a clockwise schedule from 7am to 10pm from Monday to Saturday. This means any person who lives on the north and east side of the island must take the longer way around the island to get to work in Avarua. The anticlockwise service starts at 8.30am with the last service ending at 5.20pm from Monday to Friday, and earlier finish of 1.30pm on Saturdays. There is currently no Sunday service.

4.2.5.5 Frequent delays after initial runs and a lack of inland routes (Ara Metua) reduce bus accessibility. These limiting factors discourage local patronage in Rarotonga. The OECD/ITF (2014) highlights key transit convenience factors such as waiting and walking in crowded conditions, over-exertive walking, and the reliability of travel schedules, as the most important for public transport convenience.

4.2.5.6 The bus service is socially associated with expatriate workers and tourists, discouraging local patronage.

4.2.5.7 Some accessibility issues raised include buses with steep steps, making it difficult for the elderly or mobility impaired to board. These buses cannot board wheelchairs or prams as the accessway and middle space between seats are not wide enough.

4.2.5.8 Public buses are largely inaccessible for wheelchairs and prams, isolating the elderly and the young.

4.2.5.9 Bus stops, largely village-owned and maintained, have no lighting, accumulate litter, have structural deterioration, and some have become a place to consume

¹⁰ Government of the Cook Islands. 2020. Cook Islands Technology Needs Assessment Reporting Mitigation Technologies. Office of the Prime Minister.

alcohol. Encouraging villages to develop innovative and creative solutions for bus stops and safety infrastructure could improve public transport appeal and functionality.

4.2.5.10 Public transport in the Pa Enua is virtually non-existent, apart from some school bus services. The absence of public transport in the Pa Enua, compounded by limited land area and roads, and declining populations, poses significant challenges for sustainable transport accessibility and mobility in these remote communities.

4.2.6. Impact of vehicles on infrastructure and the living environment

4.2.6.1 Key stakeholders want new standards and licensing fees to reflect vehicle weight, size and use. The standards are to reduce emissions and damage to roads, improve wellbeing for residents close to the roads, and capture modes not currently captured in legislation.

4.2.6.2 Noise pollution from vehicles - especially modified mufflers on motorcycles - has been widely criticised on social media as a public nuisance. The lack of national standards for regulating road and vehicle noise exposes residents to its harmful effects, impacting quality of life and overall wellbeing.

4.2.6.3 Section 81 of the Transport Act imposes vehicle dimension restrictions, limiting width to 8 feet, length to 30 feet, and height to 14 feet. It is reportedly difficult to find buses that meet the length requirement so this may affect the ability for bus operators to meet compliance, remain viable as a business, and operate in a way which provides positive benefits.

4.2.6.4 Additionally, the vehicle size restriction creates an issue for passenger service operators providing party bus services, as they too reportedly find it difficult to procure vehicles that fit into the permitted size dimensions. Regulations should serve as enabling measures that facilitate positive outcomes. In this case, party buses provide safe travel for people who are consuming alcohol, reducing risk of crashes and death or serious injury from drink driving.

4.2.6.5 Vehicle congestion occurs in Rarotonga Monday to Friday between 7am to 8am and 4pm to 5pm, as traffic moves slowly to and from Avarua. During these peak periods, delays in merging onto the road causes stress and encourages risk-taking behaviour, negatively impacting wellbeing.

4.2.6.6 Roads and car parks are costly to build and maintain, often occupying valuable land that could otherwise be used as greenspace, natural forest, or for people. Chipseal roads cost NZ\$900,000 per kilometre, while hot mix roads cost NZ\$1.2 million per kilometre for an approximately 8-metre-wide strip. Carparks and roads are also infrastructure that are utilised for only a short period of time. For example, carparks for half a day or when there is an event during peak travel time.

4.2.6.7 Economically and socially disadvantaged people especially, need diverse mobility options. These can include walking and cycling for locally, public transport for longer trips, and cars (sharing platforms and taxi travel) when necessary.

4.2.6.8 There are accessibility issues across infrastructure and services. Footpaths are disconnected and there aren't many accessible vehicles available in the car rental market.

4.2.6.9 Roads in the Cook Islands, especially in Rarotonga, have long been criticised for their poor condition and for being the cause of vehicular damage. There is over 125km of road in Rarotonga according to ICI.

4.2.6.10 The Ara Tapu (main road) spans 32km, with approximately 50% (15km) upgraded since 2012. However, most of the Ara Metua (back road), crossroads (links between the Ara Metua and Ara Tapu), and intake roads, are still in bad condition featuring potholes, uneven surfaces and narrow stretches. By extrapolation, 110km of road in Rarotonga is still yet to be upgraded.¹¹

4.2.6.11 Two-way traffic can become difficult on the Ara Metua and crossroads in Rarotonga, as they differ in width from 5 to 10 metres, adding to the difficulty in providing alternative transport such as walking and cycling. Road widening initiatives can be difficult and costly as they are subject to landowner negotiation and compensation. Ideally, 10 metres would become the standard measure for a roading corridor, with 8.4 metres for the road width and 1.6 for cycling and pedestrians.

4.2.6.12 Long stretches of roadside lack trees or shelter. Elderly bus patrons have made comments about waiting in hot weather conditions for buses. Walking and cycling needs to be considered during summer months as potentially unappealing to patrons.

4.2.7. Heavy Vehicles

4.2.7.1 There is broad consensus that heavy and overloaded trucks are causing significant damage to Rarotonga's roading infrastructure. The recent installation of two weigh bridges will help assess the extent of this issue, providing essential data for policy and enforcement measures.

4.2.7.2 Heavy vehicle operators see their role as facilitating and supporting economic growth as they move goods around the island, particularly construction and material transport. Also noted was the wider public service that these operators provide such as grave digging, community projects and emergency services. They stressed the need for greater road safety awareness, inter-agency collaboration, transparency, and practical implementation and support for enforcement of the licensing framework. They also call

¹¹ Data supplied by ICI

for improved road design that is resilient to climate change. Operators noted that additional costs would be passed onto customers.

4.2.7.3 The heavy vehicles amendments to the Transport Act in the 2019 Infrastructure Act Schedule, do not appear to have been enacted. These could be reviewed and updated in consultation with the heavy vehicle operators to ensure enactment. Understanding the optimal weight and size of vehicles suitable for the Rarotongan and Pa Enua roads, will be key to determining the appropriate policy response. Heavy vehicle definitions and categories in the Transport Act are outdated and should be reviewed in consultation with Ministry of Transport, Police, ICI and Heavy Vehicle Operators.

4.2.7.4 Stakeholders also expressed concerns over the import levy structure, particularly for heavier vehicles over 10 years old. Currently a 100% levy is imposed on such vehicles, despite their long operational lifespan when properly maintained. A reassessment of the import levy structure is necessary to strike a balance between revenue generation and ensuring the timely renewal of the vehicle fleet to mitigate safety and environmental risks associated with ageing vehicles.

4.2.8. End-of-life management

4.2.8.1 Old and decaying vehicles are stored at homes, on vacant land, and at mechanics yards. The Cook Islands General Transport is the only business that processes vehicles for export, to recyclers. However, not every car owner will, or can, pay for the disposal service. The baling machine has also been out of order for long stretches of time due to difficulty in finding replacement parts. The presence of old and decaying vehicles poses risks to public health, and unauthorised vehicle dumping on vacant lands causes safety and environmental concern as these vehicles may leak hazardous fluids, emit pollutants, and serve as breeding grounds for pests and disease.

4.2.8.2 Without a complete picture of the number of de-registered vehicles, it is hard to attain accurate data on the number of vehicles stored on any one of the islands. In September 2022, a community project to remove end-of-life vehicles saw 115 motor vehicles and 15 motorbikes removed from one village in Rarotonga (Titikaveka). This underscores the need for broader data collection efforts to track and monitor issues such as these.

4.2.8.3 An Advanced Recovery Disposal Scheme (ARDF) is to be established under the Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill in 2024. The ARDF places a recovery and disposal cost on imported products to ensure proper end-of-life management, advancing circular economy for vehicles.

4.3. Road Safety

4.3.1. Road Safety Leadership

4.3.1.1 The current transport legislative framework does not mandate road safety awareness initiatives or allocate funding for such programmes within the agencies responsible for administering the Act. At present, the minimum requirements are limited to public notices, such as transport license application announcements and gazette notices as seen in the Transport Acts. There are also billboards commissioned by Te Marae Ora and the Road Safety Council.

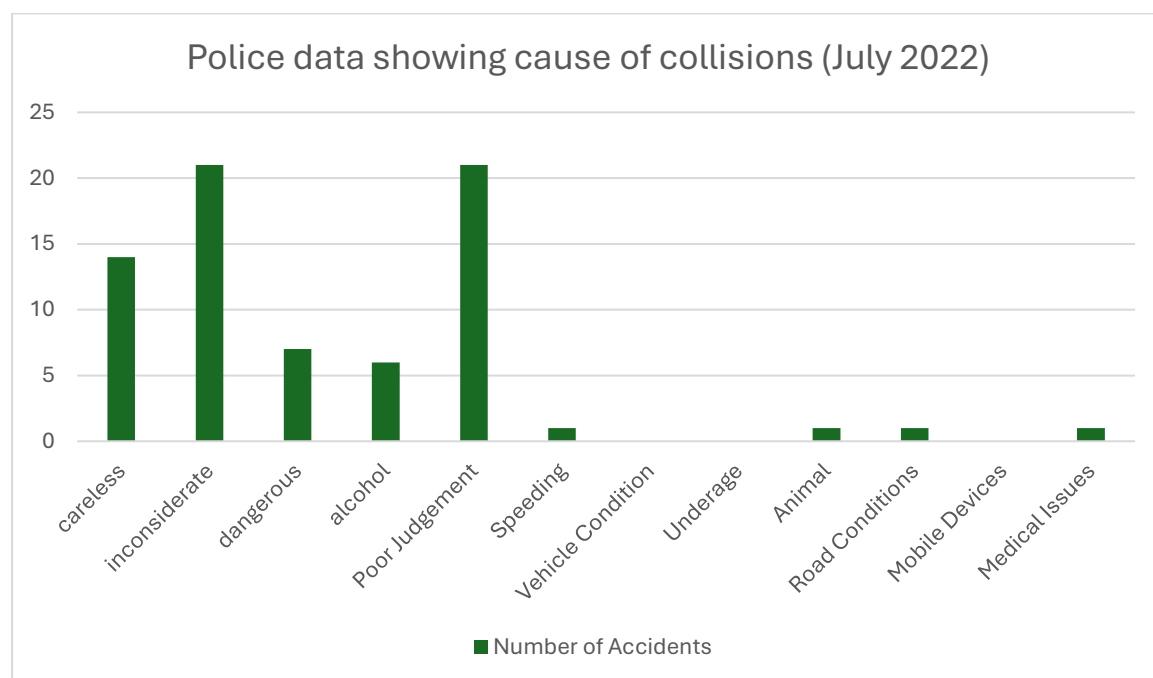
4.3.1.2 There is ongoing uncertainty regarding leadership in road safety efforts in the Cook Islands. The Road Safety Council, officially chaired by the Secretary of Health, includes Police, MOT, ICI, Chamber of Commerce and other agencies such as road safety advocates. The Council (through Te Marae Ora) initiated the development of a Road Safety Strategy 2016- 2020. The Council has had ad hoc meetings, but there seems to be some confusion over strategy implementation. As a result, leadership has largely defaulted to NGO's, with, administrative support from ICI.

4.3.2. Road Safety Awareness

4.3.2.1 While speed and driving under the influence of alcohol are key causes for motor vehicle crashes, police data shows that poor judgement, inconsiderate and careless driving are the top causes of motor-vehicle crashes. See Figure 3 below for July 2022 motor vehicle collisions:¹²

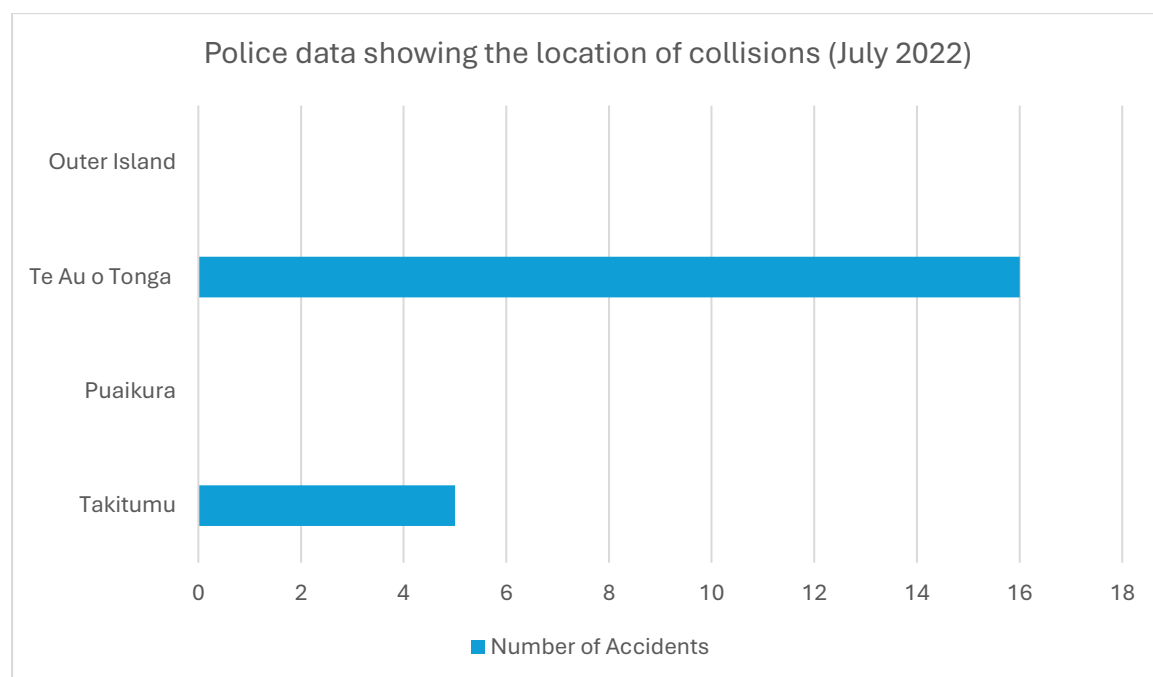
¹² Access to specific figures or comprehensive analysis is limited by data availability. Further details and context will be required for more thorough assessment and targeted interventions.

Figure 3: Police data showing the cause of motor vehicle collisions for July 2022



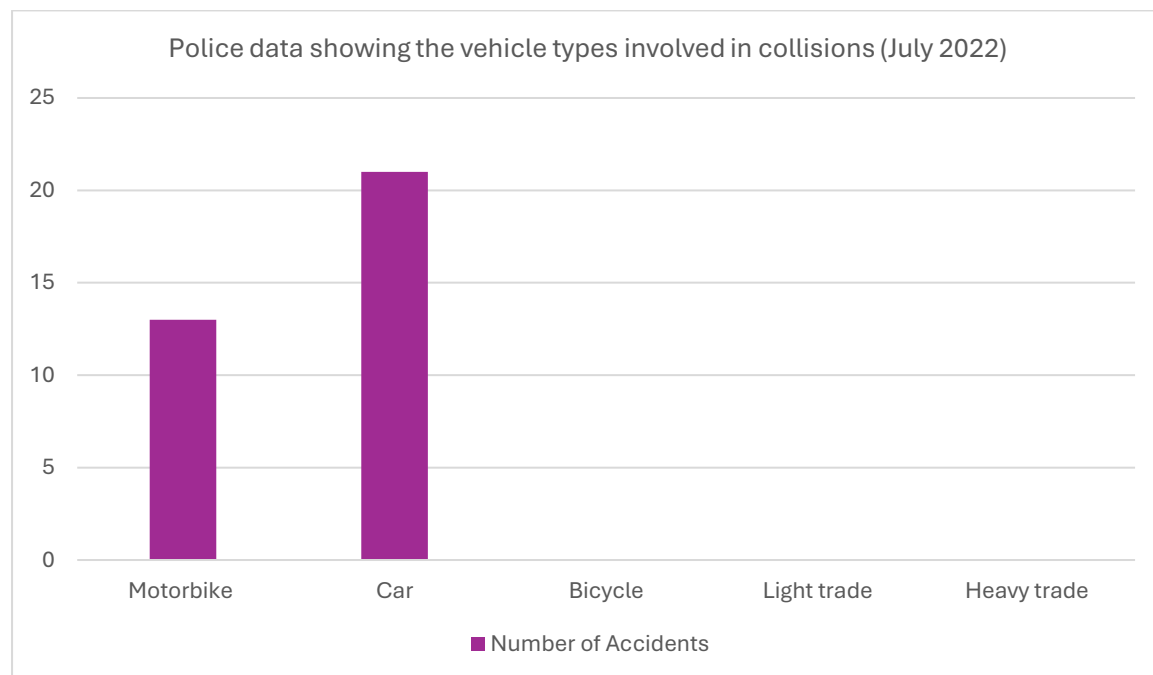
4.3.2.2 Men make up 82% of road fatalities since 2015. The most fatal crashes occur in the Te Au O Tonga of Rarotonga¹³. Cars and motorbikes are often the only vehicles involved in collisions. See Figures 4 and 5 below for July motor vehicle collisions.

Figure 4: Police data showing the location of motor vehicle collisions for July 2022



¹³ Police motor vehicle crash data, 2022.

Figure 5: Police data showing the vehicle types involved in motor vehicle collisions for July 2022



4.3.2.3 Stakeholder dialogues have highlighted a lack of road safety awareness. In Rarotonga, anecdotal examples include driver confusion regarding give-way protocols at roundabouts and emergency vehicles. Other frequently observed risky behaviour includes riding along the edge of the wrong side of the road, instead of waiting for a gap in traffic to pull out into the correct lane.

4.3.2.4 Congestion at peak travel times (between 7am and 8am and 4pm to 5pm) can cause people to practice risky behaviour such as pulling out in front of oncoming traffic to get into a gap in the direction they want to go.

4.3.2.5 Access to schools in Rarotonga, especially Avarua school, is a known issue, causing traffic congestion due to drivers attempting to drive their children to the school down a crossroad and having to wait for a gap in the continuous traffic to turn in. Drivers are stopping to allow drivers to pull into or out of the road that leads to the school, creating further congestion.

4.3.2.6 Some businesses with carparks do not have entry/ exit signage to ensure a seamless flow of vehicles, which then causes traffic confusion. Without designated entry and exit points, vehicles attempt to turn in and parallel park facing other vehicles.

4.3.2.7 Electric bicycles and scooters can exceed 30km/hr, necessitating clear regulations on their use on footpaths, cycle lanes and roads, as well as speed limits to prevent issues experienced overseas. The European Union has a maximum permitted electric bicycle speed of 45km/hr.

4.3.2.8 Roadside maintenance groups safety can be at risk while undertaking work and cause risk to passing motorists of being struck by rocks or debris unearthed by grasscutters or blowers.

4.3.2.9 Road rules, police presence and common sense are not curbing motor vehicle crashes or risky behaviour. This suggests a need for a more comprehensive approach to road safety that addresses underlying factors contributing to risky behaviour, such as driver attitudes and road infrastructure.

4.3.2.10 Road Safety awareness needs to include consideration of the heavy and big vehicles moving around the Islands. Overhanging vegetation, sagging power lines, narrow road widths and obstruction on the shoulders are of concern for the bigger vehicles as well as poor street lighting. The people who clean up the road sweep the stones off the road into the shoulder where cyclists and walkers need to go which is dangerous. Other obstructions include signs and vehicles parked on the shoulder, roadkill and spills or loads falling off motor vehicles. Also noted were hazards caused by communities undertaking fund-raising activities, sports requiring the use of roads, and road maintenance workers.

4.4. Pa Enua Access and Equity

The Pa Enua is very different to Rarotonga. Populations are much smaller with fewer vehicles travelling on the road, and there is a reliance on boat transportation, especially in the Northern Group.

Key issues from the Pa Enua consultation are summarised in this section and cover issues common to both the Southern and Northern Groups, as well as issues specific to each Group. Common issues across the Pa Enua include:

4.4.1. Leadership and Governance

A need for Police, ICI, MOT and Island Governments to collaborate on infrastructure such as road maintenance, signage, marking and street lighting. It was recognised that improving roads leads to more speeding which in turn requires a collective approach to improved road safety awareness, monitoring and enforcement. A call was made for more promotion of the relationship between ICI (road manager) and Island Governments under the Infrastructure Act 2019.

4.4.2. Funding and Financing

Licensing fees and a percentage of fuel tax should be managed by the Island Governments and dedicated to Pa Enua land transport matters such as infrastructure, road safety and training. It was also noted that if funding is redirected, it should not be at the expense of other revenue for things like education and health.

4.4.3. Road Safety

4.4.3.1 There is need for community road safety programmes, basic driving lessons and driver licensing testing as well as drink driving awareness.

4.4.3.2 There is support for police monitoring and enforcement, but this also requires adequate resourcing and budget for police in Pa Enua.

4.4.3.3 Rentals to tourists need to be managed carefully to ensure tourist safety such as consideration of types and condition vehicles. For example, many tourists do not know how to drive a manual and many of the older vehicles in the Pa Enua are manual. If renting private vehicles these should be licensed with insurance and vehicle condition checks before and after renting to protect both renter and renter. The same applies to passenger services. This is more relevant to the Southern Group but if Northern Group islands wish to increase options for tourism, then this issue becomes pertinent for them.

4.4.3.4 Helmets should be optional in the Pa Enua but the general feedback was it would be best practice for tourists to wear helmets, especially for insurance purposes. There was recognition that with improved roads and increased speed allowances, people are much more vulnerable if not wearing a helmet.

4.4.4. Licensing and Compliance

4.4.4.1 Several issues were common to the Pa Enua, contributing to many private vehicles on these islands being unlicensed and with no current warrant of fitness (WOF), especially in the Northern Group.

4.4.4.2 It can take months before vehicle registration stickers are provided after annual fees have been paid to BCI. There is a general lack of awareness of the deregistration process and people can end up paying a backlog of fees due to not deregistering when vehicles have been decommissioned while waiting for parts, servicing and/or WOFs. Frustration with the current licensing system is contributing to the lack of annual licensing and subsequently poor data on vehicles on the island. This is a key reason for the request for the licensing process and deregistration and funding for land transport to be managed by the Island Governments together with the on-island police.

4.4.4.3 The lack of certified WOF mechanics is a common theme across the Pa Enua and there was a call for training for vehicle servicing, WOF certification, maintenance and operation of heavy machinery and roading infrastructure. There was also a call for more flexible WOF requirements taking into consideration Pa Enua circumstances, noting the disparity between transport licensing requirements mandating a WOF and the absence of accredited WOF providers.

4.4.4.4 There was support for a training programme through CITTI with outreach to the Pa Enua, and regular access to certified mechanics through a mobile service (same as in the Northern Group), and online via video to support on island mechanics.

4.4.5. Infrastructure

4.4.5.1 As noted earlier, there was a general theme regarding the need for more coordination with island governments around road management. Without effective coordination mechanisms in place, there is a heightened likelihood of disjointed planning, inefficient resource allocation and delays in addressing critical infrastructure needs.

4.4.5.2 There were mixed reactions to the idea of road tar sealing as there was concern about ongoing maintenance and increased speeding. For example, Mangaia has very hilly and rugged terrain and as such, requires special consideration for roading needs, so tar sealing has been deemed unsuitable. In other Islands, regular maintenance of coral/sand roads will suffice, although it was noted that longer stretches of straight road often encourage speeding. The varying infrastructure needs across different islands underscores the importance of a tailored approach that considers local conditions to mitigate risks and ensure sustainable development in the Pa Enua.

4.4.5.3 The presence of heavy vehicles in the Pa Enua significantly impacts roading. It was proposed that if transporting heavy machinery around the islands it should be compulsory to import a transporter to reduce the impact on roads.

4.4.5.4 Where practical, it was suggested that more equipment on islands should be provided to crush coral/aggregate for road maintenance and ensure requisite training to support this initiative. This promotes self-sufficiency in managing roading infrastructure, albeit still requiring monitoring to prevent ecological degradation.

4.4.6. Insurance

Stakeholder feedback supported the idea of private insurance being optional due to affordability concerns. Additionally, stakeholders noted that awareness was needed on insurance options so individuals can make informed decisions. Mandating insurance could potentially leave people financially vulnerable in the event of accidents or unforeseen circumstances. It was noted that Banks require vehicles to be insured for the duration of a loan, but once the debt is repaid, insurance payments often cease to continue. It is also compulsory for freighted vehicles to the Pa Enua to be insured.

4.4.7. Support when visiting Rarotonga

Private travel costs are significant. Pa Enua visitors often rely on family, taxis or public transport. Public Transport is particularly problematic if visiting for hospital appointments or workshops due to the limited services. Travelling outside of bus

service schedules is also problematic. A proposed solution is a subsidised on-demand shuttle service for Pa Enea visitors (e.g. Uber using apps).

4.4.8. Sustainability and end-of-life vehicles

4.4.8.1 Removing end-of-life vehicles is a common theme for the Pa Enea. The practice of allowing second-hand, older vehicles from Rarotonga to be imported to the Pa Enea for affordability reasons, has created a problem as these vehicles often only have a life span of 1-2 years. Although the practice is to import the same make and models and strip the vehicles and use the parts to the best of their ability, the vehicles generally end up being buried or sitting in storage/ on vacant land, as there is currently no removal system.

4.4.8.2 The concept of more electric vehicles was supported in principle, especially given the cost of fuel, but not before there is a reliable energy source and trained mechanics to service these vehicles. Storage and removal of end-of-life batteries are of concern, noting the make and model of electric vehicles need to be suitable for the Pa Enea environment. It was suggested that the Government trial electric vehicles in the Pa Enea to assess suitability prior to purchase.

4.4.8.3 The Advance Recovery Disposal Fee Policy (ARDF) and the proposed Solid and Hazardous Waste Legislation should go some way in alleviating this issue long term, but agencies and island governments need to work together to explore short to medium term solutions - such as imposing import restrictions and/ or conditions on older vehicles (makes, models, vehicle quality etc). There needs to be considerable effort made in raising awareness of the proposed Bill and Policy as there is currently minimal understanding of its implications for the Pa Enea.

4.4.9. Issues Specific to the Southern Group

4.4.9.1 The post covid response is that private individuals are renting their vehicles to accommodate the return of tourism, but the risk of incorrect licensing for these vehicles is a concern. A request was made to look at temporary licensing for these services and recognise that there needs to be a level playing field for all operators - both full and part-time, private and commercial - with a request to prioritise using licensed operators ahead of temporary licensed operators.

4.4.9.2 It was noted that school buses are unlicensed. There was consensus amongst stakeholders that licensing needs to be made compulsory to ensure these vehicles meet safety standards and undergo regular inspection.

4.4.9.3 A smart platform to order Ubers and taxis would prove beneficial on the Southern Group Islands, for both tourists and residents, to reduce the rate of accidents related to drink driving.

4.4.9.4 Internet service is poor at present, so this will require innovation in the telecommunications infrastructure space.

4.4.10. Issues Specific to the Northern Group

4.4.10.1 Any land transport initiatives need to consider the strong intersection between land and maritime transport. Movement of people and goods relies on boats to transport people and goods across lagoons, between motu and airstrips. For example, an initiative to improve inter-motu travel using land and sea transport reviews tax payments by the Northern Group for road fuel, which is mostly used for maritime purposes.

4.4.10.2 The access and delivery of parts for vehicle maintenance in the Northern Group was a common theme, with a request to explore collaborative options between maritime, air transport and motor vehicle suppliers, to support a more efficient parts delivery system.

4.4.10.3 There is some support from a certified Rarotonga-based mechanic who visits the northern Pa Enua on rotation, and who provides online support for the workers maintaining the government vehicles. It was requested that this online system be extended to support private vehicle owners through a road worthy vehicle programme in collaboration with Police for Warrant of Fitness, CITTI and Island Government. The recommendation is for the motor vehicle warrant of fitness framework to include the verification of reliable brakes, lights, footrests, and mirrors as a minimum requirement. This could be tailored to suit low speed areas and roads exposed to sea salt corrosion, as well as small populations.

4.4.10.4 There are few tourists on the road, with the exception of government visitors who often use private or government vehicles for transport. (Government vehicles must be licensed). The limited presence of tourists in the Northern Group reduces the immediate demand for transportation services tailored to visitors, whilst simultaneously ensuring government vehicles are properly licensed, both crucial for compliance with regulations and maintaining safety standards.

4.4.10.5 It is important to raise awareness about purchasing vehicles privately online for shipment to the Northern Group. Many buyers have encountered registration issues, making it crucial to understand the process beforehand. The new owner is responsible for completing the change of ownership, while any outstanding annual licenses or deregistration fees remain the responsibility of the original owner. Buyers should exercise caution and thoroughly vet sellers to ensure a smooth transaction.

4.4.10.6 In Manihiki and Penrhyn it is common practice to tow trailers behind motorbikes to transport goods. It is gradually becoming the more common method of people transportation e.g. taking children to school. The current legislation pertaining to

trailers (Transport Act Sections 91-93) is outdated and needs be reviewed to allow for innovative solutions to the unavailability of alternative transport where speeds are low.

5. Future State and Policy Direction

5.1. Leadership and Governance Implementation Methods

5.2. Sustainability and Climate Resilience Implementation Methods

5.3. Road Safety Implementation Methods

5.4. Pa Enua Access and Equity Implementation Methods

To enable the delivery of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035, a series of implementation actions have been developed under each of the four policy pillars. These actions are designed to support the achievement of the policy objects and reflect operational, institutional and legislative priorities identified during the discovery phase.

While the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035 provides a high-level summary of these actions, this section of the Technical Background Report outlines the underpinning rationale, scope and considerations for implementation. Implementation actions can be found in the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035 Annex 1: Our Implementation Areas and Actions. The Policy provide detailed guidance for execution over the 10-year policy period.

The actions identified are intended to be progressed through existing government business planning processes, coordinated primarily by the MOT in collaboration with partner agencies, Island Governments and relevant authorities. Where appropriate, implementation aligns with national systems such as Tarai Vaka Process (TVP) and will be supported by donor coordination and capacity building efforts. Implementation actions are organised according to the four thematic areas of the Policy:

- Leadership and Governance
- Sustainability and Climate Resilience
- Road Safety
- Pa Enea Access and Equity

For each topic area, the following information is presented:

- Implementation Priorities - strategic focus areas identified through analysis and consultation.
- Key Actions - Specific activities required to achieve the objectives, including legislative reform, institutional strengthening and operational improvements.
- Lead and Support Agencies - Entities responsible for implementation, coordination and monitoring.
- Considerations for Delivery - Notes on sequencing, resourcing needs, phasing and potential delivery constraints.

The following pages outline the proposed implementation considerations for each of the four topic areas. Together these implementation elements form the technical foundation for implementation actions which will provide detailed guidance for execution over 10-year policy period.

5.1. Leadership and Governance Implementation Methods

5.1.1. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1.1.1 Amend the Licensing Act to provide for the Minister of Transport to be the controlling Minister rather than the Minister of Police - as per the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986. This would be consistent with MOT's function as the transport sectors regulatory authority established under the Public Service Commission Act 2009 (Section 6), which later established the Land Transport function in 2020.

5.1.1.2 It would also be consistent with the separation of roles implied in the Transport Act 1966 which provides for the Registrar of Motor Vehicles (who is the Chairman of the TLA) to administer the licensing and registration of vehicles and drivers under Parts II and III, while offences, rules of the road, and enforcement remains the responsibility of the Police under Parts IV, V and VI. This is an opportunity to make the role of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles as the Chairman of the TLA, clearer in the Transport Licensing Act 1967.

5.1.1.3 Pursuant to the above, amend the Transport Licensing Act 1967 to stipulate the role of the MOT as the Secretariat to the TLA, with a mandate to process the approval of licenses under the Act and control and manage all data relating to licencing, registration and deregistration of licensed transport vehicles.

5.1.1.4 Strengthen the capability of the TLA by amending the Transport Licensing Act 1967 to clarify its purpose which is to focus on a safe, sustainable and efficient land transport system, include an emphasis on collaboration amongst agencies, and promote mode shift and behaviour change.

5.1.1.5 Expand the TLA membership to consist of no less than 5 nor more than 7 members who are appointed by the Minister. The members of the TLA must collectively satisfy the criteria for qualification for appointment as a member. Further guidance for TLA members qualifications and disqualifications are provided in the 2019 amendments to the CIIC Act 1998 which could be adapted to accommodate the requirements of the TLA membership.

5.1.1.6 Include a term of reference for the TLA with clear requirements, roles and responsibilities for its members to help strengthen the above.

5.1.1.7 Review the Infrastructure Act 2019 Schedule changes to the Transport Act 1966 and ensure they are implemented and effectively communicated to other agencies.

5.1.1.8 Amend the Schedule to the Infrastructure Act 2019 which amends section 3 of the Transport Act by adding the Secretary of Transport to dialogues between the Secretary for ICI and Commissioner of Police establishing protocols relating to the placing, erection and removal of traffic signs and parking.

5.1.2. Funding and Financing

5.1.2.1 Noting that the Transport Amendment Act 1984-85 provides for licensing fees to maintain roads, further amendment may be made to direct fees for vehicles on each island to remain within that island's budgets for roads, licensing, enforcement and road safety application.

5.1.2.2 Review data on vehicle registrations and identify revenue that could be gained by each island in the future.

5.1.2.3 Regarding the retention of fees to Pa Enua islands where there are vehicles, those fees may be marginal with limited effect on land transport requirements. Data on vehicle registration and annual fees for vehicles on each island can be reviewed and revenue generation calculated and compared to their land transport costs.

5.1.2.4 MFEM could lead investigations into other options for generating funds for roading and footpath construction and maintenance to improve safety, as well as encourage more walking and cycling. Options such as developer contributions, fuel taxes, tourism levies, land transport rate introduction, and increasing licensing fees are some options used overseas. These need to be carefully considered to ensure that low-income users are not negatively affected.

5.1.3. Licensing and Registration

5.1.3.1 Review the definition of passenger service in the Transport Licensing Act so that any person driving passengers, including charitable services transporting people, are required to have a passenger service license.

5.1.3.2 Update the Transport Act 1966 and Amendments, and Licensing Act 1967 to allow for staggered annual motor vehicle license renewals throughout the year as opposed to the inflexible one-off date of prior to 31 March.

5.1.3.3 Provide for online renewals and enable one-stop-shop operations with the MOT for fee payments and the receipt of online application for Rarotonga licences as a first step. Streamline the annual renewal process to include only essential updates, ensuring efficiency and reducing unnecessary steps.

5.1.3.4 Amend the Transport Act 1966, Section 56 to insert a new subsection for e-bikes (and e-scooters) stipulating a max speed of 30km/hr or control power output. Create a register for e-scooters and e-bikes.

5.1.3.5 Amend the Licensing Act 1967 to provide for vehicle sharing businesses (Lime, Uber, car-sharing). Licensing Act definitions need to be updated to include provisions for such sharing platforms.

5.1.3.6 Investigate further the gap in regulation pertaining to the ability to control service fees for transport operators, particularly taxis. Undertake a joint initiative between the

relevant government agency and taxi operators to investigate imposing metering on taxis.

5.1.3.7 Review annual vehicle license fees to make the cost structure more equitable to encourage more uptake of motorcycles.

5.1.4. Compliance and Monitoring

5.1.4.1 Investigate an arrangement with Customs to monitor helmet importation and establish a new monitoring process of helmets in stores. For example, Customs check the imported helmets while Police continue checks of helmets already in use.

5.1.4.2 MOT is not empowered to regulate this activity, but they can raise awareness as well as mandate local helmet suppliers to restrict import to approved helmets only. This implementation would require further dialogue with Customs and Police regarding the monitoring of helmet imports.

5.1.4.3 Amend the Transport Act to transfer the responsibility from the Police to MOT for contracting and monitoring independent WOF service providers.

5.1.4.4 Place a register of warrant of fitness garages/mechanics under the Transport Act.

5.1.4.5 Warrant of fitness garages /mechanics be required to display accreditation and registration.

5.1.4.6 Amend the Transport Act section 79 (4) for WOFs to expire after 12 calendar months for Pa Enua-based vehicles, except for passenger services, taxicabs and rental services.

5.1.4.7 Ensure any land transport infrastructure is accessible to all levels of mobility.

5.1.4.8 Clarify the existing powers of Police under the Transport Act 1966, to issue fines under the Schedule of fines for offences, Transport Licensing Act 1967. This will include fines for operating unlicensed vehicles for rental services, passenger services and taxicab services.

5.1.4.9 In light of existing compulsory insurance in place for licensed transport operators and vehicles, investigate the merits of optional private vehicle insurance as opposed to compulsory private vehicle insurance. The benefits of such preventative measures to support licensing objectives and enhance safety needs to be balanced against the cost of living and household income in the Cook Islands, as requiring insurance could place additional financial strain on people. The benefits of such preventative measures to support licensing objectives and enhance safety, must be carefully balanced with economic realities in the Cook Islands. While requiring insurance can improve road safety and regulatory compliance, it may also impose additional financial burdens on household.

5.2. Sustainability and Climate Resilience Implementation Methods

5.2.1. Electric vehicles

5.2.1.1 Government to encourage or require lenders to take fuel economy into loan qualification calculations for electric vehicles (including e-bikes) and the Government to look at offering low interest electric vehicle loans¹⁴. Any subsidies need to be mindful they do not only benefit the wealthy who can already afford electric vehicles and do not exclude low-income individuals from accessing financing if stringent loan qualification criteria are implemented.

5.2.2. Number of Vehicles

5.2.2.1 Rather than control how many vehicles a single person may own, measures to discourage such as significantly increasing license fees for every additional vehicle, and incentives to encourage non-car mode use, may be seen as a more acceptable method of controlling vehicle ownership. The success of such measures depends on the availability and reliability of alternative transport options.

5.2.2.2 Additionally, traffic counting data can provide valuable insights into congestion trends by measuring traffic volume. ICI has conducted traffic counting in Rarotonga, and while traffic counting can inform land transport planning, this data should be supplemented with qualitative assessments and stakeholder feedback to develop comprehensive strategies for managing traffic congestion.

5.2.2.3 Car sharing is one niche market that could be targeted for reducing the need for car ownership and deploying electric and hybrid vehicles¹⁵. Car sharing removes the purchase, running and parking costs from individuals, and shared car stations (with electric chargers) can be placed strategically in communities. This could benefit the lower income users of the Pa Enua, and their ability to afford vehicles.

5.2.2.4 E-scooter and e-bike sharing platforms placed in communities and townships can be used for short trips to reduce motorised vehicle use. This could benefit the lower income users of the Pa Enua, and their ability to afford vehicles.

5.2.2.5 Awareness can motivate mode change by informing people of the benefits of public transport, the savings to be made, the environmental benefits and other

¹⁴ Green, H, Skerlos, S, Winebrake J. (2013). Increasing electric vehicle policy efficiency and effectiveness by reducing mainstream market bias. *Energy Policy*, 65 562 - 566.

¹⁵ Green, H, Skerlos, S, Winebrake J. (2013). Increasing electric vehicle policy efficiency and effectiveness by reducing mainstream market bias. *Energy Policy*, 65 562 - 566.

incentives that might be provided by a service such as free Wi-Fi and free fares times¹⁶.

5.2.2.6 Awareness campaigns should have a focus on correcting the inaccurate perceptions of public transport and highlighting the normality of its use.

5.2.2.7 Promote international bus stop design standards so bus stops might be constructed with accessibility in mind and include safe bicycle/scooter storage. Such standards should consider the local context such as cultural preferences, environmental conditions, financial and infrastructure limitations and standardised designs that are appropriate and effective.

5.2.2.8 By constructing footpaths that are connected and accessible, people will be encouraged to walk more often to get to destinations and which also promotes physical exercise. Such infrastructure will contribute towards combating obesity and non-communicable disease, as well as create a more inclusive land transport system where the mobility impaired, parents with prams and the very young can safely navigate roadsides.

5.2.2.9 Properly placed pedestrian crossings at schools, shops and busy areas such as Muri Night market, connects origins and destinations in a safe way that prioritises the movement of people on foot over vehicular traffic.

5.2.2.10 Provision should be made for safety road bumps to slow drivers especially around school areas and areas prone to congestion like the Punanga Nui which are heavily populated tourist accommodation areas.

5.2.2.11 Investigate options to provide footpaths and cycle lanes where appropriate. Preferably cycle lanes need to be clearly separated, noting that the limited road width available to infrastructure managers restricts the ability to fit dedicated footpaths, drainage solutions and dedicated cycle lanes in the road corridor.

5.2.2.12 The Cook Islands is a hot tropical country. Shaded roadsides make it more comfortable to walk, cycle and use public transport and therefore should be part of implementing incentives to encourage sustainable modes. Care should be taken during planting endeavours to ensure tree placement does not impact on underground utilities. Species selection should be carried out to ensure appropriate tree selection. Incentivise villages to be innovative and creative in landscaping and planting, for example through beautification schemes.

5.2.2.13 Introduce car parking meters, structured in a way that provides access to services in Avarua township, but limits free parking to incentivise other mode use.

¹⁶ (Beirao and Cabral, 2007; Hong et al, 2019).

5.2.3. Public Transport

5.2.3.1 Government investment in public transport service and infrastructure provision through subsidisation.

5.2.3.2 Incentivise villages to be innovative and creative in developing bus stops and related infrastructure.

5.2.3.3 Undertake research to better understand the transport needs of residents such as their preferred destinations and travelling time(s).

5.2.3.4 Reduce demand on the roading network by exploring opportunities to provide mobile essential services to villages, reducing the need to travel in order to access such services. Examples include mobile banking, hair salon services etc.

5.2.3.5 Promote well-designed bus stops that consider accessibility for all levels of mobility and preventative measures for anti-social behaviour, alongside international best practice guidelines such recommended placement being 400m and 800m between each bus stop. All bus stops should be equipped with safe storage for bicycles and scooters to enable those who don't want to walk or would have to walk far, to cycle or scooter to the bus stop.

5.2.3.6 Bus service provision to increase operating efficiencies to provide more frequent express services during peak travel times more regularly throughout the week. Increase the service provision for both clockwise and anticlockwise schedules, particularly during early mornings and late afternoons, and introduce express services that would attract more people to use the bus services.

5.2.3.7 Investigate on-demand shuttle services for local connectivity as not everyone wants to circumnavigate the Island.

5.2.3.8 Provide unlimited fare subsidies/ free fares for children, retirees, and people with disabilities, and low-cost fares to large events.

5.2.3.9 Reduced or free school bus fares would make the bus service more attractive for parents to send children to school on the bus, reducing congestion problems outside schools. The added safety features such as pedestrian crossings may encourage parents to let their children catch the bus to and from school unsupervised.

5.2.3.10 Large scale events could have free or very low-cost fares applied to discourage individual car use and therefore reduce pressure on roads and land at the venue.

5.2.3.11 Having an accessible public transport service that caters for all levels of mobility can help families with the transport of loved ones. This will reduce the need to purchase vehicles that cater for wheelchair bound family members. This also extends to tourists and could even promote Rarotonga as more resourced island for people with physical disabilities.

5.2.3.12 Procure non-fossil fuel powered buses that are accessible and have air-conditioning. Buses are high-cost investments and so this may require a phased approach. Air conditioning improves the comfort for patrons during the hotter months.

5.2.3.13 Having buses that provide lowerable floors and wheelchair ramps as well as services operating on the Ara Metua, increases accessibility.

5.2.3.14 Lower emitting buses contribute to further reducing land transport emission. Auckland Transport are trialling hydrogen fuel cell buses which could be an option to explore in the Cook Islands, as well as electric buses which are currently being operated in China.

5.2.3.15 Free Wifi onboard is found to be useful in attracting ridership¹⁷. Certainly, in Rarotonga, mobile data is costly and therefore providing free Wifi could appeal to the public, in particular the youth, and contribute to incentivising their use of the bus service.

5.2.3.16 Promote workplace initiatives by encouraging senior managers to lead by example in their use of sustainable transport modes. In doing so, leaders remind people of sustainable transport benefits¹⁸ This may be achievable for Government agencies.

5.2.3.17 Encourage workplaces to provide bicycles for staff to use for personal and work-related errands and establish informal challenges to use sustainable transport modes.

5.2.4. Climate Resilience

5.2.5.1 MOT to support efforts to ensure that the land transport system is resilient to climate change and natural disasters by working in collaboration with other government agencies, including ICI, Climate Change Cook Islands and CIIC, specifically with regard to land transport data.

5.2.5. Vehicle standards and monitoring

5.2.6.1 Work with CCCI to investigate the establishment of air pollution standards for vehicles, and to prohibit the importation of high polluting vehicles. For example, setting a limit on importing vehicles based on carbon emissions.

5.2.6.2 Review and consolidate vehicle weight, dimension, engine size and emissions data to inform restrictions to be added to the Transport Act and review the annual vehicle license cost structure to reflect the vehicles impact on the road. Consider making a differentiation in fees between using vehicles to work on the roads (public

¹⁷ Hong, J, McArther, D.P, Livingston, M. 2019. Can accessing the internet while travelling encourage commuters to use public transport regardless of their attitude? Sustainability. 11 (12) 1 - 10

¹⁸ (Floating Mind, 2020).

good) and using them for cartage of load for private uses (e.g. carting concrete load to build a private house).

5.2.6.3 Consider including conditions in the MVD and Customs Tariffs Act regarding the above.

5.2.6.4 Promote existing regulations for excessive noise for motor vehicles and place under the Transport Act. Imported vehicles will have to meet these criteria. Vehicles will be monitored via warrant of fitness checks.

5.2.6.5 If the ARDF is introduced, the import restriction on aged vehicles could be lifted as the current reason for restriction was the high likelihood that older cars will end up as rubbish, sooner. Some new vehicles have been low quality so have deteriorated faster than older vehicles costing the buyer more in the long run. The quality of vehicles could instead be investigated to create standards for vehicle importation, preventing low quality vehicles from entering the country. However, there still needs to be more awareness raised around the ARDF and its implications on individuals and businesses.

5.2.6.6 The Land Transport Authority to be proactive in informing importers of pollution rating restrictions on vehicles.

5.3. Road Safety Implementation Methods

5.3.1 MOT to take a lead role in reviewing and streamlining the current road safety framework- enter discussions with Te Marae Ora and the Road Safety Council to determine the best way forward for road safety policy and regulation and include ICI in these discussions. Identify who should be conducting road safety awareness and resource the function.

5.3.2 Review and update the Road Safety Strategy (2016-2020) to address all the issues across road safety relating to land transport and assess roles with regard to reducing accidents (including the role of the TLA).

5.3.3 Use design and construction to prevent serious injury and death from road crashes. For example, upgrade the quality and location of streetlights.

5.3.4 Promote the adoption of international best practice for road design, signage and construction into legislation to improve driver conduct and road safety. Notably to address speed, entry/ exits to car parks, disability car parks, and bollards to prevent dangerous turns and enhance traffic management.

5.3.5 Amend the licensing system to place increasing financial burden and license requirements on those intending to own and drive faster vehicles such as motorcycles 125cc and higher, with a view to direct the market to lower speed vehicles.

5.3.6 Restrict speeds for e-bikes when travelling in specific areas such as on footpaths and the side of the road. If travelling at a specified speed such as 30km/hr, then the rider must cycle within the marked road lane for motor vehicles.

5.3.7 Reinforce the demerit system for drivers' licenses to deter reckless driving behaviour and promote greater adherence to road safety regulations.

5.3.8 Develop actions to reduce vehicle dependency by moving people to public and active transport modes to alleviate congestion problems and related road safety issues.

5.3.9 Review the Dog Registration Act 1986 to require all dogs to be tethered or kept within property boundaries as part of road safety initiatives.

5.3.10 Provide for the ability in Rarotonga, for traffic wardens established in the Transport Act Regulations 1992, to be formally integrated as traffic wardens by issuing General Instructions under the Police Act 2012.

5.3.11 Establish safety rules for roadside cleaning groups.

5.3.12 Incentivise villages to be innovative and creative in landscaping and maintaining the road environment including footpaths, cycle lanes, bus stops, car parking bays, and other related infrastructure.

5.4. Pa Enea Access and Equity Implementation Methods

5.4.1 Licensing fees and other funding should be directed to land transport in the Pa Enea for infrastructure including roads, signage, road markings and street lighting.

5.4.2 Provide for the licensing and WOF processing, deregistration, and funding for land transport to be managed by the Island Governments together with the on-island police. This should include awareness raising about these processes.

5.4.3 MOT, Police and Island Governments to investigate a fit-for-purpose Pa Enea WOF framework to meet Pa Enea contextual needs of low speeds and small populations, particularly in the Northern Group. This could include online support and provision for minimum WOF requirements.

5.4.4 Increase awareness of the relationship between ICI (road manager) and Island Governments under the Infrastructure Act 2019.

5.4.5 Develop a training programme for vehicle servicing and WOF certification to improve access to such services in the Pa Enea (e.g. develop a CITTI outreach programme to the Pa Enea). This could include training in vehicle mechanics, maintenance and operation of heavy machinery and roading infrastructure.

5.4.6 Conduct Pa Enea road safety awareness programmes in conjunction with Island Governments to ensure their appropriateness for each island.

- 5.4.7 Require private vehicle rentals in the Pa Enua to be insured and licensed where practicable with vehicle condition checks required before and after renting to protect both renter and rentee. Include helmet requirements for private motorcycle and e-bike rentals
- 5.4.8 Review import restrictions on older vehicles.
- 5.4.9 Investigate solutions for managing end-of-life vehicles.
- 5.4.10 Where applicable, develop long-term solutions for maintaining roads such as coral, rock and glass crushing machinery retained on islands.
- 5.4.11 Training for operating and servicing heavy machinery and roads maintenance.
- 5.4.12 Import conditions on heavy machinery to minimise road damage (such as mandating the use of a transporter to move such machinery on island).
- 5.4.13 Improve inter-agency coordination - ICI, Island Government, Police and MOT for Pa Enua land transport initiatives, particularly roading infrastructure, and take a wholistic approach to road safety awareness, monitoring and enforcement
- 5.4.14 Review licensing and monitoring framework for full and part-time operators, private and commercial operators and consider temporary passenger service licences for Pa Enua islands that provide tourism and passenger services (Atiu, Mauke and Aitutaki).
- 5.4.15 Require school buses to be licensed.
- 5.4.16 Provide support for police monitoring and enforcement through adequate resourcing and budget for police in the Pa Enua.
- 5.4.17 Review the practice of allowing second-hand, older vehicles to be imported to the Pa Enua.
- 5.4.18 Explore solutions for removing end-of-life vehicles from the islands and managing other vehicle waste such as electric vehicle batteries.
- 5.4.19 Explore collaborative options between maritime, air transport and motor vehicle suppliers to support a more efficient delivery of parts - especially to the Northern Group.
- 5.4.20 Review current legislation pertaining to trailers (Transport Act Section 91-93) to allow for innovative solutions where alternative transport is not available and speeds are low.
- 5.4.21 Consider subsidies for public transport and shuttles for Pa Enua visitors and students relocating to study in Rarotonga.

6. Stakeholder Engagement and Insights

- 6.1. Stakeholder Engagement
- 6.2. Roles and Responsibilities
- 6.3. Rarotonga Stakeholder
- 6.4. Pa Enua Stakeholder

6.1. Stakeholders Engagement

A critical component of the policy development process was the active engagement of stakeholders across all islands. This engagement ensured the policy was informed by a diverse range of perspectives, grounded in operational realities and aligned with the lived experiences of transport users and providers throughout Rarotonga and the Pa Enua.

Between February and August 2023, the MOT and Beca International Consultants conducted over 60 stakeholder engagements across Rarotonga and the Pa Enua. These included semi-structured interviews, agency meetings, sector focus groups and public consultations.

Stakeholders consulted included:

- Government ministries and agencies
- Island governments
- Passenger and rental service operators
- Heavy vehicle and construction operators
- Civil society organisations
- Community leaders and transport users

In Rarotonga, engagement focused on government coordination, regulatory issues and commercial service operations. In the Pa Enua, consultations were held in nine islands combining Island Government meetings with open public sessions to capture contextually specific needs and concerns.

Thematic prompts guided the discussions, and the insights gathered during these consultations directly informed the problem identifications, objectives and implementation priorities outlined in this Technical Background Report. They also form a basis for ongoing collaboration during the implementation phase of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035.

The following section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the key agencies and authorities responsible for delivering and regulating land transport across the Cook Islands.

6.2. Roles and Responsibilities

The following table summarises the roles of the key agencies and Ministers responsible for Land Transport functions:

Agency	Role	Establishing legislation
Crown Law Office	<p>Civil litigation on behalf of the Ministries including certain matters in the land court where appropriate.</p> <p>Prosecutes serious and less serious offences.</p> <p>Provides advice and guidance to the Police in a wide range of cases and deals with High Court, the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council appeals.</p> <p>Provides advice on procurement, and reviews of contracts for Government Departments including Requests for Tenders made pursuant to the Procurement Policy and Government contracts.</p> <p>Involved in preparing legislation, managing oversight of legislative drafting across the Government.</p>	Crown Law Office Act 1980
Office of the Public Service Commissioner	Paramount law applying to the management of the Public Service Commissioner (subject to review and Cabinet approval) may approve re-structuring, transfer of functions between departments.	PSC Amendment Act 2016
	<p>Established MOT as the transport sector regulatory authority where this came into effect in 1995, later establishing the Land Transport function in 2020.</p> <p>The PSC Act provides the ability for the Secretary of Transport to be established as the head of agency in its current organisational structure endorsed by the Public Service Commissioner.</p>	PSC Act 2009, Section (6) (1) (a)(i)
Minister of Police	<p>Controlling Minister.</p> <p>Appoints two members of the Transport Licensing Authority (TLA) (Chair is Registrar of Motor Vehicles).</p> <p>Can declare certain services to be passenger or rental services.</p>	Transport Licensing Act 1967, Sections 3 & 13
	<p>Controlling Minister.</p> <p>Appoints the Registrar of Motor Vehicles.</p> <p>Parts IV - VIII - administered by Commissioner of Police.</p>	Transport Act 1966 Part II Transport Act 1966 Parts IV-VIII
Minister of Transport	<p>Controlling Minister.</p> <p>Can confirm or reverse the decision appealed against the Licensing Authority.</p> <p>Within 28 days of receiving the Annual Report, makes copies available to the news media.</p>	Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986
Secretary of MOT	<p>Registrar of Motor Vehicle Dealers.</p> <p>Sets up and maintains a register of motor vehicle dealers.</p> <p>Licensing Authority of Motor Vehicle Dealers and Salespersons</p> <p>Administer oaths as the Licensing Authority.</p>	Motor Vehicle Dealers Act 1986 Part I Section 5

Agency	Role	Establishing legislation
	Annual Report to the Minister summarising the disputes dealt with, and recommendations made for amendments to the Act.	
Registrar of Motor Vehicles	Appointed by Minister of Police	Transport Act 1966, Part II
	Annual licenses for motor vehicles	
	Register of motor vehicles	
	Licensing of drivers of motor [vehicles]	Transport Act 1966, Part III
Chief of Police/Commissioner of Police	General offences and disqualifications	Transport Act 1966, Part IV
	Rules of the road for vehicles generally	Transport Act 1966, Part V
	General provisions - speed, stopping, passing.	Transport Act 1966, Part VI
	Equipment	
	Motor vehicle inspection	
	Loading dimensions	
	Towing	
	Special provisions relating to motorcycles, power cycles, bicycles, horse traffic, heavy traffic and hire vehicles	
	Pedestrians	
Transport Licensing Authority, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles	<p>Chair is the Registrar of Motor Vehicles (as established by the Transport Act 1967).</p> <p>It is the Transport Act 1966 that creates this position where the Registrar of MV is charged with the administration of Part II and Part II of the Transport Act 1966.</p> <p>Approval authority for granting of licenses for passenger services, taxicab service, rental services.</p> <p>High commissioner can authorise exemptions. TLA can hold public sittings, hear evidence on applications.</p> <p>Act sets out criteria for determining applications, terms and conditions of licenses. S36 sets up and maintains a register of licensed motor vehicles (incl license plates, approved vehicle type, numbers approved and deregistration).</p> <p>TLA to have regard to policies of government and representations made by the Minister.</p>	Transport Act 1967 Part2 Transport Licensing Act 1967

Agency	Role	Establishing legislation
Secretary of Infrastructure Cook Islands Island Governments for Pa Enua	Road forming, altering, maintaining. Must develop protocols with the Commissioner of Police under Section 3 Transport Act 1966 about the operation of roads.	Infrastructure Act 2019, Section 6 Interpretation, infrastructure manager for roads Subpart 2 - Roles and functions of Secretary and Island Governments with regard to roads
	Monitoring and enforcement (road obstructions, accessway related).	Infrastructure Act 2019, Section 19 Obstructions on roads
Secretary of ICI	Road manager, Sign erector and regulator. Makes it a requirement for the road manager in consultation with Police to gazette notices for traffic signs standards to replace the Transport Act 2019 Amendment repealed Schedule 3.	Amendments to the Transport Act as directed under the Infrastructure Act 2019
BCI	Processes vehicle registration, deregistration, change of ownership and annual renewals. Administers on behalf of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, the database for Motor Vehicle Registrations.	MOU between Police and BCI
CIIC	To obtain permission from first before entering into any enduring agreement, negotiating the acquisition of land, offering compensation, or taking any other action that would or taking other action that would or might involve signification expenditure to the Crown in Section 61.	Infrastructure Act 2019
Financial Secretary	Principal Financial and Economic Advisor to the Government Head of Agency for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Act 1995-96
MFEM	Prioritisation and resource allocation through the crown annual budget process. Includes reallocation of transport sector revenue collected on behalf of the crown by Police, Ministry of Transport, Airport Authority and Ports Authority such as transport licensing fees, motor vehicle registrations, shipping licenses, aircraft licenses and such. Administration of the government procurement system. Administration of the government activity management system, designed to support and enhance government's commitment in planning, controlling and evaluating projects and activities.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Act 1995-96

6.3. Rarotonga Stakeholders

Cook Islands Ministry of Transport and Beca International Consultants Ltd facilitated a series of stakeholder dialogues between February - April 2023 to gain insight into land transport issues across the Cook Islands. These discussions have provided valuable information that will inform the Land Transport Policy.

The stakeholder groups and dates for discussion are set out in the table below.

Stakeholder Group	Date of Dialogue
Secretary of Transport	06 February 2023
MOT team	07 February 2023
Transport Minister	27 February 2023
Office of the Prime Minister - Central Policy & Planning Office (CPPO)	27 February 2023
Passenger Services Operators	28 February 2023
Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI)	30 February 2023
Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI)	01 March 2023
Rental Services Operators	01 March 2023
National Environment Service (NES)	02 March 2023
Police	03 March 2023
Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC)	03 March 2023
Bank of Cook Islands (BCI)	03 March 2023
Motor Vehicle Dealers (MVD)	03 March 2023
Taxi Association Members	16 March 2023
Ministry for Finance & Economic Management (MFEM) - Customs Division	20 March 2023
Transport Licensing Authority (TLA)	23 March 2023
MFEM Economic Planning Division	4 th April 2023
Pa Enua - Aitutaki, Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Penrhyn, Pukapuka and Nassau	27 June - 1 July 2023
Te Marae Ora - Ministry of Health	3 July 2023
Ex Pat Community Representatives	3 July 2023
Heavy Vehicle Operators	4 July 2023
Heavy Vehicle Operators	5 July 2023

6.4. Pa Enea Stakeholders

Cook Islands Ministry of Transport and Beca International Consultants Ltd facilitated a series of stakeholder dialogues in the Pa Enea between June - August 2023 to gain insight into land transport issues across the Cook Islands. These discussions have provided valuable information that will inform the Land Transport Policy 2023.

The Pa Enea stakeholder groups and dates for discussion are set out in the table below. The process followed was to meet with the Island Government first, followed by a Public Pa Enea	Date of Dialogue
Aitutaki Island Government and Public Meeting	27 June 2023
Mangaia Island Government and Public Meeting	29 June 2023
Atiu Island Government and Public Meeting	30 June 2023
Pukapuka Island Government	7 August 2023
Pukapuka Public Meeting	8 August 2023
Manihiki/Rakahanga Island Governments	9 August 2023
Manihiki/Rakahanga Public Meeting	10 August 2023
Penryhn/Tongareva Public Meetings combined with Island Government	11 August 2023
Mauke Island Government and Public Meeting	15 August 2023

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.2. Risk and Mitigation Framework

7.3. Monitoring Components and Timeline

7.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are a critical component of land transport reform. While this Technical Background Report does not establish the full monitoring and evaluation framework, it provides the technical foundation for how monitoring and evaluation will be structured and approached in the implementation phase of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025–2035.

The policy development process identified key challenges, strategic objectives, and implementation actions that informed the Cook Islands Land Transport Implementation Plan 2025. That Plan, developed by the MOT, incorporates mechanisms to track progress, measure effectiveness, and guide future policy adaptation and investment planning.

Monitoring and evaluation will serve four key functions:

- Assess implementation effectiveness of activities across all topic areas.
- Measure progress toward the Policy’s overarching and thematic objectives.
- Enable continuous improvement through evidence-based policy refinement.
- Support strategic planning, including cost-benefit assessments and risk mitigation over time.

Given the cross-sectoral nature of land transport, monitoring will extend beyond MOT activities. It will require coordinated data and reporting from multiple agencies with shared responsibilities across licensing, enforcement, infrastructure, environment, and finance. Monitoring and evaluation will also need to consider the evolving condition of the country’s transport systems, with particular attention to environmental impacts and the effects of climate change.

To ensure accountability and policy responsiveness over the 10-year horizon of the Land Transport Policy, the MOT has committed to:

- A mid-term policy review in 2029, within five years of adoption, to assess progress and adjust priorities or targets as needed.
- A full policy evaluation by 2034 to measure overall impact and inform development of the next policy cycle (2035-2045).

The Policy Cycle, including monitoring and evaluation as a continuous process, is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The Policy Cycle



7.2. Risk and Mitigation Framework

Successful implementation of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025–2035 will depend on anticipating and managing risks that could undermine delivery. This Report outlines the key strategic risks identified during the policy development process and the corresponding mitigation strategies recommended for inclusion in the implementation phase of the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025-2035.

The framework supports proactive planning and adaptive delivery by helping stakeholders manage uncertainty, protect public investment, and remain responsive to emerging challenges. Risks span legislative, institutional, financial, environmental, and capacity-related domains and require coordinated responses across sectors.

Risk Area	Description	Potential Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Strategy
Legislative Reform Delays	Delays in updating and consolidating land transport laws	Weak institutional accountability; regulatory fragmentation persists	Medium	Begin legal drafting early; use staged reforms; maintain interim regulations
Funding Constraints	Limited budget to deliver EV	Undermines delivery of core	High	Integrate into national budget;

	incentives, Pa Enua plans, or data systems	actions; reputational risk		engage development partners; prioritise actions with highest impact
Low Uptake of Sustainable Transport	EVs, cycling, and public transport adoption remains low	Emissions and mode-shift targets missed	Medium	Introduce targeted subsidies and infrastructure investment; run public awareness campaigns
Road Safety Leadership Gaps	No clear lead agency or weak enforcement of safety laws	Road deaths and injuries remain high	Medium	Formally assign MOT lead role; strengthen enforcement and safety education partnerships
Climate Impact on Roads	Cyclones or flooding damage road infrastructure	Loss of connectivity; high repair costs	High	Apply climate resilience standards to all new builds; audit vulnerable road assets
Pa Enua Capacity Constraints	Limited technical or staffing capacity in outer islands	Slow rollout of transport services and planning	High	Deliver mobile support teams; provide targeted training; allow phased implementation
Data Gaps and System Fragmentation	Inconsistent data on crashes, licensing, or emissions	Weak monitoring and poor decision-making	Medium	Develop integrated data systems; assign clear data responsibilities to MOT

7.3. Monitoring Framework

The following table outlines the proposed approach to monitoring and evaluating the Land Transport Policy. It sets out key timeframes, reporting mechanisms, and alignment with national planning and climate resilience frameworks to ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement.

Monitoring Component	Approach
Annual Monitoring	Integrate transport targets into MOT's Business Plans and Annual Reports. Monitor key indicators.
Mid-Term Policy Review 2029	Conduct formal Policy review within five years of adoption. Adjust priorities and targets as needed.
Full Policy Evaluation by 2034	Evaluate overall policy impact every five years. Align with NIIP 2021 review cycles where possible.

Policy adjustments by 2035	Update the policy for the next decade 2035-2045 based on evaluation.
Stakeholder Reporting	Facilitate regular forums and consultations to share updates and gather feedback.
Climate and Resilience Reporting	Track alignment with national climate goals via CCCI-led reporting and coordination.

This monitoring approach ensures that progress in the land transport sector is transparent, data-driven, and adaptable to change. It provides the foundation for future governance, investment, and system improvement efforts under the Cook Islands Land Transport Policy 2025–2035.