

Submission on the draft National Infrastructure Plan

August 2025

Introduction

The Aggregate and Quarry Association (AQA) is the industry body representing construction material companies which produce an estimated 48 million tonnes of aggregate and quarried materials consumed in New Zealand each year.

Funded by its members, the AQA has a mandate to increase understanding of the need for aggregates to New Zealanders, improve our industry and users' technical knowledge of aggregates, and assist in developing a highly skilled workforce within a safe and sustainable work environment.

We make the following submission in relation to the [draft National Infrastructure Plan](#) (the Plan).

General comments

We generally support the Plan and recommendations contained within it.

We agree that existing assets are not being used to their full potential and often left to degrade due to short-term budget constraints, leading to costly reactive maintenance and reduced asset lifespans.

We support a whole-of-life asset management approach that prioritises maintenance and optimisation, before considering new builds.

We also believe that the use of digital tools, predictive analytics and advanced asset management technologies are essential to improving infrastructure efficiency and performance.

There is far too much focus on “shiny new things” (new builds) and not enough focus on maintaining existing infrastructure. The poor state of our roads is an obvious example with maintenance being deferred year after year while we spend record sums on new roads.

Insufficient time is spent on genuine bottom up and top-down planning for infrastructure projects. Too often supply chain issues are not considered, including availability of aggregates, availability of labour, and other development occurring at the same time. An example of this is the two largest tunnelling projects in New Zealand's history (Central Interceptor and City Rail Link) being constructed at the same time putting unnecessary pressure on the supply chain, labour, and specialised equipment.

Construction cost pressures are increasing due to rising input costs, boom-bust cycles, and the increasing complexity of the projects we are undertaking, many of which are occurring in existing urban areas. In order to address this, it is critical that planning is enabling, proximate quarry resources are protected to supply vital construction materials, and quarry land is returned as an asset to the community on completion of quarrying.

Recommendation 9 – Clear the way for infrastructure

We agree that integrated land use and infrastructure planning can help ensure that new and existing infrastructure is well used, and its negative effects are managed. Spatial planning needs to also include infrastructure supporting activities such as quarrying activities.

Quarry materials are not universally available and can only be sourced from where they are located (locationally constrained due to geology). Without a consenting pathway that provides for adequate access to resources at workable locations, there is the real risk of losing access to such proximate resources.

Section 7.2. Land transport

Opportunities exist for innovative road designs that utilise available local materials, contractors and workforce. Standard specifications and designs, including a reluctance to consider rigid pavement options such as concrete and asphalt have led to unnecessary added cost and delivery delays.

The 'Review of State Highway Pavement Delivery' report was communicated to the New Zealand Pavement Industry by NZTA/Waka Kotahi in March 2020. The report made a number of recommendations relevant to the Plan including, but not limited to:

- 1) NZTA review of the NZ Guide to align performance expectations relative to Reliability Factor and Pavement Design Risks to better define pavement types most suited for sustainable transportation routes.
- 2) Strategically, give importance to leadership for sustainable pavement industry through training, R&D, partnerships, economic aggregate availability, and personnel talent and construction capability.
- 3) Address and refine technical matters of concerns from this review which are implied to influence integrity in design, aggregates, construction practices and conformance testing.

The recommendations of this review should be included in the Plan for Land Transport.

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