



# The Campaign For Better Transport

## Submission on the Stratford to Okahukura Line

The Campaign for Better Transport is opposed to the permanent closure of the Stratford to Okahukura railway line (SOL), and submits the following points:

1. The SOL would be required for freight movements between Wellington and Auckland in the event of closure of the main trunk line between Marton and Okahukura. Events such as land slips or volcanic activity around Ruapehu could necessitate this.
2. The SOL would be required for freight movements from Taranaki in the event of a line closure between Marton and Stratford.
3. Tourism is a future possibility for the line if it is reinstated to the standards required for passenger services. The last passenger excursion train ran as recently as January 2007, in order for tourists to travel to Whangamomona's "Republic Day" celebrations. With effective marketing, the SOL could become a popular scenic trip for tourists.
4. The cost of a full closure of the line (144km in length) has not been estimated. It would be premature to close the line without knowing the ongoing maintenance costs required to keep the corridor safe. There are 24 tunnels on the SOL, including a combined road-rail bridge over the Ongarue River. These bridges will become unsafe over time unless maintained.
5. It would be premature to close the line without knowing what alternative use the line would be put to.
6. If closed, the cost of reopening the SOL when necessary would be far greater than the cumulative cost of maintaining a basic level of safe operation.
7. Freight services originating from Stratford to points north of Okahukura currently have to go run via Marton, an additional distance of 246km. Permanent removal of the line would also permanently add hours to the journey times for these freight services necessitated by the additional distance and shunting at Marton. Reopening the SOL would immediately generate cost saving benefits to KiwiRail and its customers. Bear in mind that roading projects are often justified for travel time savings measured in minutes.
8. Large areas of logs to be felled are close to the line and coal deposits also exist in close proximity to the line.
9. Reinstating the SOL would create jobs and additional work. If roading projects can claim this as a benefit then so too should improvements to the rail network.
10. Nationwide freight volumes are predicted to grow by up to 70% by 2025. At a minimum, the preservation of the current rail network is vital for the KiwiRail to be able to participate in this growth.
11. It is vital that New Zealand preserves and expands freight transport modes that are less reliant on the combustion of fossil fuels. It seems likely that oil prices will continue to remain volatile in the short term and increase significantly in the medium to long term. Rail freight will be well placed to capitalize on high fuel prices due to much better fuel consumption on a tonne per kilometer basis than equivalent trucking methods. The Government needs to recognize this as a shareholder and for the New Zealand economy as a whole.



# *The Campaign For Better Transport*

## Submitter Contact Details

Cameron Pitches

Convenor

The Campaign for Better Transport Inc

Phone 027 288 9313

[cam@bettertransport.org.nz](mailto:cam@bettertransport.org.nz)

[www.bettertransport.org.nz](http://www.bettertransport.org.nz)