



Submission Form

Proposed variations to the Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2015-2021 (RLTPs)

Attention: Otago Southland RLTP consultation

Otago Regional Council

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- Submissions made about plan provisions relating to both Otago and Southland will be taken to be made on both the Otago and the Southland RLTPs.
- For plan provisions relating to only one region, submissions will be taken to be made on only the RLTP of that region.

Name of organisation: Real Journeys Limited

I **wish** to speak in support of my submission in person (delete one option).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Black".

Signature of submitter:

Date: 29 January 2018

Note: Hearing locations and dates have yet to be confirmed but are likely to take place between 13th and 27th February 2018.

My submission is:

Real Journeys Limited Back Ground Info:

In 1954 Les and Olive Hutchins began operating the Manapouri-Doubtful Sound Tourist Company, running four day excursions to and from Doubtful Sound. In 1966 Les and Olive acquired Fiordland Travel Ltd, with its Te Anau Glow-worm Caves and Milford Track Lake Transport operation and began trading as Fiordland Travel Limited. Continued expansion followed with the purchase of the vintage steamship "TSS Earnslaw" in Queenstown in 1969 and with the establishment of cruises in Milford Sound in 1970.

Since 2002 Fiordland Travel Ltd has operated all its tourism excursions under the 'Real Journeys' brand and in 2006 changed its company name to Real Journeys Limited. In 2013 Real Journeys launched the Go Orange brand; purchased Cardrona Alpine Resort and the 155 hectare property at Walter Peak which Real Journeys previously leased. Then in 2015 Real Journeys purchased the International Antarctic Centre in Christchurch and in 2016 Real Journeys took over 100% ownership of Queenstown Rafting and purchased Kiwi Discovery which are now operated under the Go Orange brand.

Real Journeys (RJs) remains a private, family owned company and is now the largest tourism operator in the region with operational bases in Christchurch, Milford Sound, Te Anau, Manapouri, Queenstown, Wanaka and Stewart Island. The company operates 23 vessels (19 RJs) and approximately 50 coaches across the group; Real Journeys' employs 540 staff during the peak summer months and in excess of 1000 staff across the group; and 950,000 passengers travelled with Real journeys in the last 12 months, and 1.4 million across the Group.

Submission:

General comments:

The coach tours, shuttle buses and courtesy coaches operated by companies such as Real Journeys / Go Orange need to be adequately recognised in Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2015-2021 (RLTPs) because these vehicle operations significantly reduce traffic congestion especially in and around Queenstown and on SH6a, SH6, SH97 and SH94.

Most of the recent tourism growth across Otago and Southland which is stressing our infrastructure is in good part the result of growth in visitor arrivals out of China. For the last few years China has been our fastest growing visitor market. Over the last 20 years, Chinese visitors have grown at a staggering 18% p.a. from barely over 12,000 Chinese visitors to New Zealand in

1996, to over 400,000 in 2017 and China is now New Zealand's second-largest international tourism market. The current predictions are for Chinese visitor numbers to more than double from 2017 to 2023 to around 913,000 visitors.

This market is also undergoing a very rapid shift away from travelling in coaches towards Free Independent Travellers (FIT) (non-tour) where now more than half of Chinese visitors are travelling around NZ in rental vehicles – refer graph below. That is until the 2013-14 summer the majority of Chinese visitors travelled around NZ on touring coaches usually with 22 to 50 passengers per vehicle.



When the Chinese visitors first started travelling more as FITs in 2013-14 they usually travelled in mini buses (Toyota Hiace) or people carriers such as Toyota Previas' carrying approximately 6 persons per vehicle. Now Chinese visitors are travelling in Toyota RAV4s or Toyota Highlanders often in convoys with as few as 2 persons per vehicle. In other words, Otago and Southland roads around the tourism "hot spots" are being hit by a double whammy with the increase in Chinese visitors and the move away from coach touring to FIT.

In this context operators such as Real Journeys who endeavour to get visitors to travel via coach rather than rental car should be valued and acknowledged in this planning framework. Real Journeys, along with the majority of Milford Sound cruise operators, works very hard and will continue to work hard to get visitors to travel to and from Milford Sound via coach rather than

rental vehicle. Real Journeys has demonstrated considerable success in this for many years and in recent years quite surprisingly, (as it is the most expensive Milford Sound coach–cruise-coach product on the market) one of our most successful products is our nature coach-nature cruise-coach product ex Queenstown where up to three 60 seater coaches travel to and from Milford every day in, busy periods, up from only one coach three or four years ago.

One particular concern to Real Journeys is that the traffic congestion especially in and around Queenstown which is slowing down traffic speed and making the coach journey between Queenstown and Milford Sound or Manapouri longer, and pushing our coach drivers to the limit of their driver log book hours. If the travel delays caused by traffic congestion are not addressed this will compromise our ability to operate coach tours ex Queenstown and to and from Milford Sound / Manapouri which in turn, will exacerbate traffic congestion by putting more rental vehicles on the road.

This plan identifies attitudes and behaviour plus the nature of the land transport network itself as significant factors contributing to road trauma in Otago and Southland. We believe in this context it is appropriate to recognise that many tourists are driving in a fatigued state (jetlagged) and that they have no appreciation of how tiring it is driving on our southern roads. Recent research has found that driving after insufficient sleep is comparable to driving drunk. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1739867/pdf/v057p00649.pdf> It is likely that such driver fatigue leads to the many near misses and accidents, especially when overseas drivers default to driving on the right-hand side of the road when they loose focus. Accordingly more emphasis needs to be put into advising visitors not to pick up their rental vehicle on their arrival into NZ; taking appropriate breaks from driving and avoiding undertaking long and complex journeys such as driving from Queenstown to Milford Sound and return in one day.

Specific submission items:

Page 15 of draft under second yellow bullet point –states the “Southern Penguin Route” – this should read “Southern Scenic Route”.

Page 28 – Tourist Journeys: For decades the route from Te Anau to Dunedin and some cases on to Oamaru has been an important tourist route especially for coach touring, for tourists overnighting in Te Anau. Most of the coach tour business that overnights in Dunedin uses SH1 and SH94 when travelling to or from the Southern Lakes. The Southern Scenic Route is used primarily by FITs but the tour group business does not use this route as tour groups run to tight timeframes and the Southern Scenic Route is too time consuming.

Page 32-33 – Ports: The Stewart Island Ferry service and the “Foveaux Freighter” provide an essential transport link between Bluff and Oban and as such should be at least mentioned in the RLTPs.

Page 41 – Changing awareness and expectations of risk including climate change: Most of the focus in this document relates to coastal effects of climate change and overlooks the other likely impacts such as flooding which could have impacts inland. Specifically more frequent intense rainfalls events are expected to increase the likelihood of rivers flooding, landslides, erosion and flash flooding when urban drainage systems become overwhelmed. Also hotter summers may damage elements of transport infrastructure causing buckled railway lines and damaged roads, with associated disruption and repair costs. Both of these impacts could be significant for Otago and Southland. <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/climate-change/likely-impacts-of-climate-change/overview-of-likely-climate-change-impacts>

Page 52 – The opportunity to take a South Island–wide approach: Real Journeys suggests that the RTCs should be considering a boarder approach including working with Destination Queenstown and Venture Southland (Destination Fiordland) to shape the mode of travel adopted by overseas visitors when travelling around the region to address the poor journey experience for visitors in some parts of Otago and Southland and specifically the traffic congestion in and around Queenstown.

Page 54 – It should be noted that the promotion of self-driving by the tourism industry with respect to Campervans has been a necessary evil to increase the sectors productivity because there are insufficient hotel / motel beds in the Southern Lakes region to support the local Tourism Industry. Also Real Journeys supports the creation of more safe stopping areas and slow vehicle bays to improve road safety and the reliability of road journeys.

Page 59 & 60 – Real Journeys supports the proposed policies and in particular: *Supporting and enabling tourism and visitor travel.*

Page 61 – With respect to advocating for alternative funding mechanisms, beyond development contributions, to ensure those directly benefiting from tourism-oriented facilities, infrastructure and services associated with transport, contribute fairly to their funding; Real Journeys contends that the Government collects millions of dollars of GST from overseas visitors and more of this GST revenue should be directed to funding infrastructure and services associated with transport.

More thought needs to be taken regarding promoting touring routes within Otago and Southland. All too often we hear from visitors in Te Anau and Milford Sound that they do not

have enough time to travel across to Dunedin because they believe they must to travel to Dunedin via the Southern Scenic Route or travel to Dunedin via Queenstown.

Real Journeys supports cycling networks that offer a more enriching and pleasant experience than cycle trails which simply parallel state highways or other significant roads. That is any extensions to the regions cycle trails need to be more thoughtfully planned and offer users a worthwhile, enjoyable journey experience and include all the requisite infrastructure such as toilets.

Real Journeys is sceptical about the development and use of a South Island-wide model of tourism flows because the flow of visitors around the South Island is so variable and depends on so many factors.

Page 65 – Real Journeys supports the Priority One projects for Queenstown

Page 83 & 90 – Real Journeys supports the Maintenance and Operations of Local Roads – Southland, Activity Class 8, in particular maintenance of the Lower Hollyford Road and State Highways Improvements – Southland, Activity Class 13 especially Milford Rockfall/Avalanche Protection.

Page 95 - Real Journeys supports item number 24 of Road Safety Projects – Otago, Activity Class 2 - Road Safety.

Page 99 – Real Journeys supports item number 32 of Public Transport Services – Otago, Activity Class 4.