

Northland Transportation – Questions and Answers (FAQs)

Questions	Answers
What is the Northland Transportation Alliance?	The Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) is a collaboration between local government and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to deliver joined up services for roading and transportation in Northland. The NTA goes live on 1 July 2016.
Why is the NTA being established?	<p>The NTA will co-ordinate staff and resources to benefit all Northland road users.</p> <p>By combining our staff and resources Northland can improve consistency of services and efficiencies of scale eg specialist skills and purchasing power.</p> <p>The NTA will deliver financial benefits of at least \$18m over ten years.</p> <p>Expenditure across Northland's roading and transportation amounts to over \$86 million per year (not including State Highways). That works out as nearly \$600 for every person living in Northland.</p>
How many staff are affected and where will they be located?	Over fifty staff of the Councils (the Far North District Council, Kaipara District Council, Whangarei District Council and the Northland Regional Council) and NZTA's regional personnel will be working together within the Transportation Alliance, some of which will be co-located in Whangarei.
Is this the start of a slippery-slope towards amalgamation?	<p>No.</p> <p>Each Council will retain their own democratic representation and decision making about their transport networks. All councils are required by the Local Government Act to deliver services in the most cost effective manner, and it's sensible to work together to improve the management of the councils' annual \$86 million transport investment.</p> <p>Each council still owns their transport assets and is independently responsible for their funding, setting the levels of service and making all the operating decisions, in consultation with their local communities.</p> <p>Each council will remain responsible for the funding of their transport network, and there won't be any cross-subsidisation between networks.</p>
Who will I talk to about issues with my local roads?	The customer services centres of each council will remain the main contact points for residents and road users. However, there will be streamlining of some backroom customer services to provide greater efficiencies.
What's the benefit for staffing – will they just become smaller fish in a bigger pond?	<p>There's a growing shortage of skilled transport management staff across the country, so it's becoming more difficult for remote rural areas to compete in recruiting and retaining good staff.</p> <p>Many of the existing transport staff in each council are spread thinly so spend their days multi-tasking, fire-fighting and without back-up if they go on leave. This new arrangement should make sure we have a greater focus on the important strategic decisions and forward planning.</p> <p>The NTA will provide a larger team environment where areas of specialisation can be developed and where there are increased opportunities for career development.</p>

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We already seem to be struggling to maintain our rural roads – how will this make it any better?	This new arrangement will help each council to stretch their dollars further, as we make better decisions about maintaining and renewing our transport assets. We will also gain savings by coordinating our work programmes to smooth out the peaks and troughs so we aren't competing for contractors with neighbouring councils. As time goes by we may find other opportunities for savings in things like the way we procure and manage contact services.
Does it mean we'll have one roading contractor across Northland?	Initially there won't be any changes to our existing service delivery arrangements, but in the future we will consider any opportunities to collaborate. The councils already use standardised contract documents and specifications, and as other regions have found, there can be good savings from a combined approach to contract procurement (purchasing of services) or service delivery. Collaborating to create larger contract areas can enable the contractors to pass on savings from better investment in equipment and staff, better utilisation of their resources, and the application of greater levels of specialisation.
NZTA	<p>The NZTA operate the State Highway network that provides most of the connectivity between the districts of the region, and to the Auckland region. They have huge expertise in transport planning and management, so we can learn a lot by working more closely together.</p> <p>The NZTA have been working to increase their staff presence in Northland to provide better customer service, improve information flow, and make more timely and efficient management decisions.</p> <p>The new arrangements will build an even stronger regional approach, especially to transport planning, managing safety and route resilience programmes, and providing an integrated 'one-network' approach (one-stop shop).</p>
Northland Regional Council	<p>The Northland Regional Council has important responsibilities in coordinating the Regional Land Transport Programme, public transport and road safety initiatives.</p> <p>The NRC transport staff are already co-located with the Whangarei District Council and NZTA staff, so the addition of Kaipara and Far North District Council transport staff will provide stronger regional understanding and collaboration.</p>
Potential risks or downsides that have been considered	<p><i>Managing the cultural differences of staff working closely together from a variety of parent organisations.</i> We believe we will turn any differences in approaches into opportunities to find 'best practice' and as a driver for innovation.</p> <p><i>Reduced contact by the staff co-located in the NTA with their colleagues at their parent organisations.</i> Most staff co-located at the NTA will have close contact with their colleagues who remain at the parent offices (including customer services and road inspection staff). They will also continue to have frequent interactions with other council departments.</p> <p><i>The movement of jobs from Kaikohe and Dargaville to Whangarei will affect the local economies.</i> There will be some roles that move to become co-located as part of the NTA, although some Kaipara District Council staff already live in Whangarei and commute to Dargaville. This movement needs to be viewed in the context of what is best for the region and the greater ability to attract and retain good staff to the NTA. Any employees who are co-located at the NTA will still remain as</p>

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	<p>employees of their parent councils).</p> <p><i>The effects on other council departments (especially infrastructure) of transport roles being co-located to the NTA.</i> The NTA will allow the transportation professionals to further develop their skills. They will still have the ability to engage with other departments.</p> <p><i>Loss of skills at the consultant companies that provide professional services to councils, other public sector organisations and the private sector.</i> Local and national consultants will always be required for specialist skills that we don't have within the Council organisations, but a key part of this initiative is definitely aimed at the opportunity to develop skills within the NTA instead of buying them in from consultants.</p> <p><i>Reduction in competition in the contractor market, if there is a future move to collaborating in service delivery.</i> The regional approach to 'purchasing' contractor services will provide greater ability to manage a competitive market for these services. For example, in some parts of the country this has been addressed by specifying minimum levels of sub-contractor content within the contract.</p>