

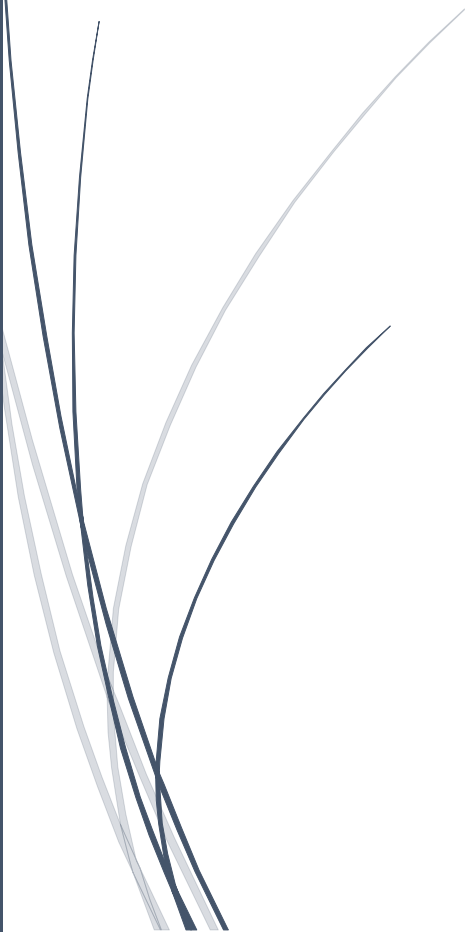


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Tūranga ki Wairoa Rail Feasibility Study

Tai Rāwhiti community perspective
inclusive of hapu and iwi

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The background to this report

Since 2014 the author has been meeting and discussing with many iwi and hapu throughout the region, the history, reinstatement and future of the Gisborne to Wairoa and beyond to Napier, Palmerston North rail line. Specifically, within the Tai Rāwhiti region on the East Coast of the North Island. It is known that the Gisborne to Wairoa rail line was mothballed by KiwiRail and the previous National Government due to major slippage in 2012 at the Gisborne end (Beach Loop).

The approval of the Provincial Growth Fund grant in July-August 2018, of \$600,000 administered under Tai Rāwhiti Rail Ltd, gave hope and revived interest universally in the Tai Rāwhiti region that the rail line could be repaired and freight could once more be transported as was the case prior to the 2012 washout.

Previous conversations and meetings held with hapu representatives from 2014 to 2017-18 were to ascertain the likely support to reinstate the rail line. Then, into the recent period of 2017-18, to apply for a feasibility grant to prepare a report setting out cost of repairs and freight options.

Always lurking behind many discussions and meetings with hapu, whanau and wider iwi was the hope of tourism opportunities and passenger services.

Options of rail line ownership into the future

The history of whanau, hapu land ownership is more strongly identified in the Tai Rāwhiti District than possibly throughout the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand. This gives rise to the thinking that ownership in group management or trust management is clearly an option when looking at the future sustainable options of rail infrastructure and its future place in the national transport grid.

This report does not set out to change the current ownership of rail transport in Aotearoa New Zealand but does offer the option that in an isolated region like Tai Rāwhiti District the option to operate and maintain the rail network is a naturally supported option which has merit.

The interviews and meetings undertaken by the author showed that throughout the whole region an enlivened interest to own and operate the rail line to provide both training and economic independence and to ensure that the operations of the rail network into and out of the region was controlled locally.

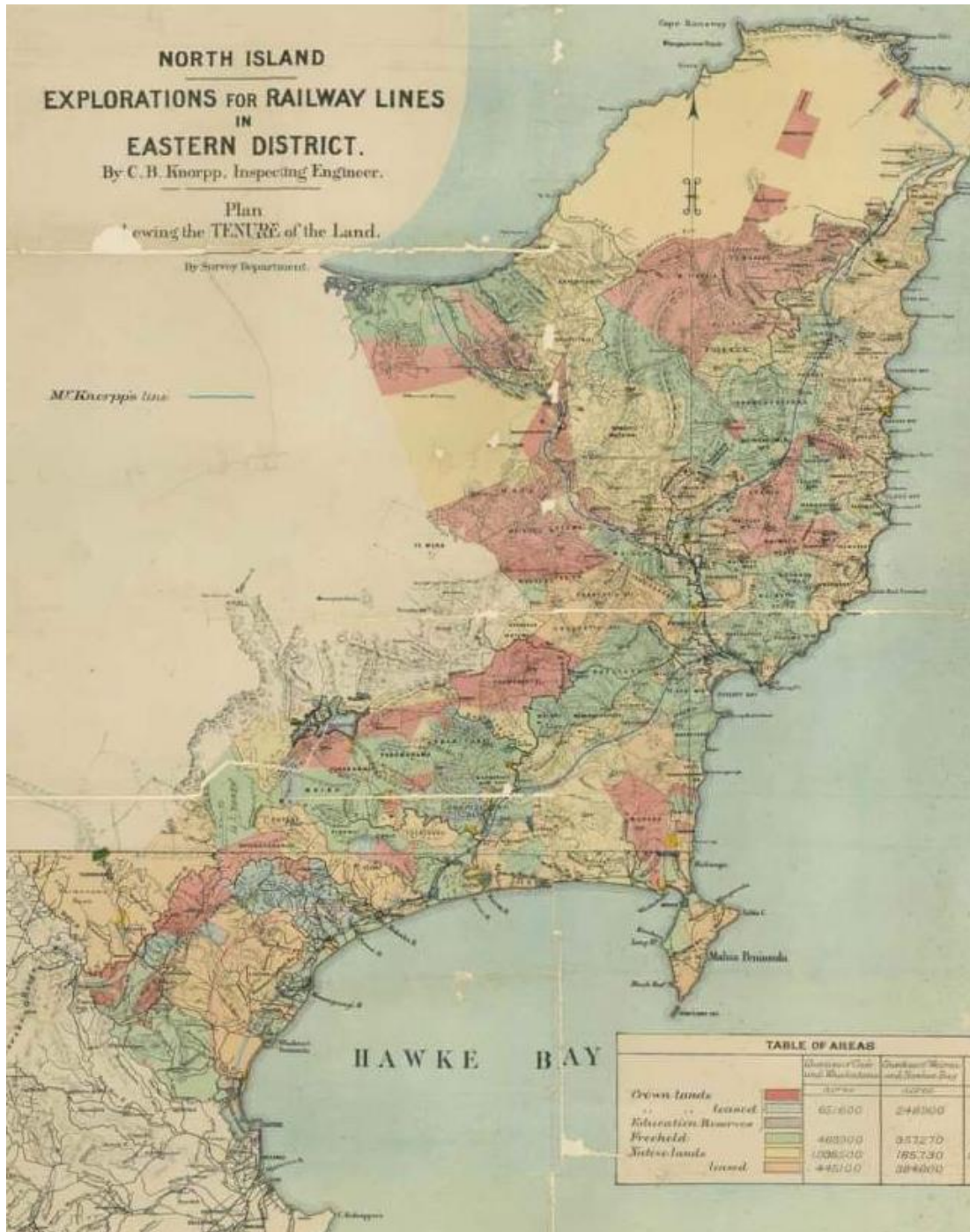
This option requires more work that could not be progressed inside this report; suffice to advance that given the Treaty settlements for iwi now in its advanced stage of completion, and a more liberal thinking of how to efficiently use land assets with major ownership in whanau, hapu and iwi control, the likelihood of rail line assets managed by hapu and or iwi becomes a natural extension.

All the meetings and discussions during the compilation of this report centered on the rights of kinship ties to the land by whakapapa and the natural desire to retain and grow the land and everything on it, including the existing rail line from Tūranga - Gisborne through the ancestral lands onward to Wairoa and through to Napier and Palmerston North. An interesting observation was the knowledge still retained in the whanau and hapu of the original railway network built north to Matawai, but discontinued and demolished in the 1950s. These snippets of information continued up the east coast highway, or SH35, or Ngati Porou highway commonly known within the rohe of

Ngati Porou from Kaiti in Tūranga - Gisborne to the top of the East Coast, or Potikirua or Hicks Bay. The SH35 continues around to Opotiki through Whanau A Panui lands.

The survey of land held in whanau and hapu ownership from 1890 to 1900 tracks a path through this land from Hawke's Bay or Kahungunu iwi owned land north through iwi of Tūranga - Gisborne and onward up to Potikirua or Hicks Bay. The original survey for railway acquisitions under the public works regime was within hapu owned lands and without a detailed assessment it appears it is still in their ownership today with a majority of the forestry growing within.

Survey of land held in whanau and hapu ownership from 1890 to 1900



Source: Survey Department. New Zealand Government

The Tūranga ki Wairoa rail line – Future use

The many conversations held very strongly to retention of the railway and “lets fix it up” if the government or Kiwirail isn’t going to or “we are sick and tired of waiting”. The message was very strong throughout the Tai Rāwhiti District regardless of how far they were living in proximity to the rail line. It was both interesting and heartening to hear this korero and the stories attached to the rail line that supports the retention and why the needs of the whanau and hapu living close to the rail line are supported by whanau and hapu living away within the district.

The story of the return of the WW2 Maori Battalion, C Company stopping the train at Muriwai to let their men from there off to enter their marae to mourn their lost whanaunga with their hapu is still talked about as if it was yesterday.

These stories serve to keep the association of whanau, hapu and iwi closely tied to the land and its uses and naturally the rail line and its future. After all, the land is still theirs with a rail line on top, goes the saying, our rail line too!

Iwi economic growth is growing quickly and sustainably within the Tai Rāwhiti District post Treaty settlements of the 1990 – 2010 with a final settlement of the Te aitanga A Mahaki of inland north west of Tūranga – Gisborne to happen shortly.

In recent months the hapu land owners within the Tūranga – Gisborne flats, both sides of the Waipaoa river and north-west towards Te Karaka and Mangatu, are with their own investment and government assistance (PGF), amalgamating lands totaling over 8,000-10,000 ha into management structures to grow high valued horticulture crops such as gold kiwifruit, apples and macadamia trees to name a few. This activity is led by whanau and hapu leadership. Many interviewed were excited and happy at their prospects and their futures, it bodes well for the rail line and its future. The investment into Cool Stores at Muriwai and those been planned within the new hapu management trusts is underway and should be taken into account by the feasibility study underway by BERL. The key component is the local people controlling their own resources to sustain their developments into the next 100 years and beyond. These developments are focused on their own whanau and hapu lands within Tūranga – Gisborne and Ngati Porou on the coast.

Tourism by whanau and hapu

Tourism has been touted throughout Tai Rawhiti for many decades and at times during many discussions on our marae we have included tourism by our own whanau and hapu folk with enthusiasm and something tangible in our futures for our young folk. While meeting those involved in marae tourism and seeking their opinions as to the role the rail line may play in bringing tourists regularly into Tai Rāwhiti; I received messages of we have been waiting patiently but have to get onward with upgrading our marae to receive these likely visitors. Those discussions centred around how many train loads of visitors would come to our part of the world? How do we get involved in ensuring they would come to Tai Rāwhiti? Do we need to be operating the trains into Tūranga – Gisborne, including setting up companies to market our region to these tourism train operators?

Both whanau and hapu in Tūranga – Gisborne were excited with the possibility that tourism companies using trains that are tailored to higher paying tariff guests that stay longer than three

nights would enjoy a marae stay experience along with all the attractions on offer. However, there were concerns expressed around the other industry impacts of logging operations at the Port and the likely impacts including safety for tourists and environmental impacts associated with the current port operations and the ports expansion plans. Hapu and iwi in Tūranga are opposed to this future expansion.

Summarised points

1. Whanau, hapu and iwi are both supporting the reinstatement of the Tūranga – Gisborne ki Wairoa rail line and how to gain future ownership if government and Kiwirail fail.
2. That the renewed interest galvanised by this BERL feasibility study is now motivating whanau and hapu to develop infrastructure like cool store investment nearby the rail line and or partnership with those building close proximity to the rail line.
3. The 1890 survey of land owned by whanau and hapu for the proposed rail line from the south into Tai Rāwhiti District demonstrates the linking of the current day owners of land alongside the rail line to the stakeholder opinions existing in whanau and hapu.
4. Whanau and hapu land ownership is growing into land management regimes such as whanau trusts to grow high valued horticulture crops, such as gold kiwifruit and apples.
5. The future use of the railway line requires major economic expansion and following the post Treaty settlement phase whanau hapu and iwi can demonstrate major investment into their lands and infrastructure to provide this economic thrust.
6. This report writer wishes to emphasis the local control aspects from the land ownership into land management trusts to produce high valued produce for export using rail line transport.
7. Tourism is a long held vision for many whanau living beside their marae and local Māori townships, and many are now upgrading their infrastructure, including roads, marae buildings and local housing. The likelihood of rail tourism is adding a dimension of planning in particular within the Tūranga – Gisborne zones.
8. The journey from 2014 to this current activity of feasibility of the rail line by BERL is now reaching a conclusion of expectation and a foundation to build upon the reinstatement of Tūranga ki Wairoa rail line.

Summary of whanau, hapu supporters in this report

Ngati Konohi, Ngati Oneone, Ngati Wakaraara, Ngati Hau, Ngati Ira, Whanau a Iwi, Ruataupare, Whanau a Rua, Nga hapu o Waipiro, Uepohatu, Rauru Marae, Puatai, Wahoterangi, Tuere, Tuwhakairiora, Ngati Porou, Hauti, Hinerupe, Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, Rangiwaho, Kahungunu ki Wairoa, Rongomaiwahine.

Nga mihinui,
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