

An Approach to Prioritising Areas for Implementation

Final Report

Auckland Regional Council

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This report has been prepared on behalf of:



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1. Introduction

1.1 Brief and Methodology

SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd (SGS) was commissioned to draft an approach to prioritise areas for implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy. The project informs the review being undertaken of the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) by the Regional Growth Forum.

The Regional Growth Strategy identifies centres and corridors within the existing urban area as a key action to manage future growth. The RGS review has identified that most growth is not occurring in centres and corridors but these remain the key opportunities for intensification.

This study sets out an approach, informed by a set of objectives, for prioritising centres. The approach is needed to assist with focussing resources to fast track intensification and concentrate investment. The study is informed by the approaches to developing a centres hierarchy in recent metropolitan planning strategies in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth¹ and the suggestions for a classification of Auckland's centres and corridors.

The focus of this report is on proposing an approach to prioritising centres, not identifying the actual centres and corridors in the Auckland region.

1.2 Structure of this Report

The report is structured around the key steps in the project methodology.

- Section 2 Provides the background context to the study including the rationale for prioritising areas for implementation.
- Section 3 Provides a summary of the approaches in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth based on the case studies previously reviewed by SGS.
- Section 4 Outlines the approach to prioritising centres and corridors and an account of how this approach can be applied.

¹ *SGS Economics and Planning (2007) Establishing a Classification for Auckland's Centres, Auckland Regional Council.*

2 Background Context

2.1 Centres and Corridors Policies

Centres policies have evolved over many years as part of the strategic planning of many successful cities. Recent metropolitan planning strategies in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and South East Queensland in Australia and Auckland in NZ have included centres policies to varying levels. The strategies generally include objectives to concentrate a greater range of activities near to one another which makes it easier for people to go about their daily activities.

2.2 Why Focus Activities in Centres and Corridors?

There are many benefits from focussing housing and employment development in urban centres and corridors. Accommodating growth in centres and corridors is typically offered as an alternative to increased extensions to the extent of metropolitan regions, while protecting areas of detached housing and employment activities in established urban areas.

The benefits of focussing activities in centres and corridors include:

- Creating more competitive cities and regions;
- Creating more interesting places to live, work and invest;
- Optimising use of existing services and infrastructure;
- The ability to provide more efficient public transport services;
- Providing more opportunities for sustainable transport such as increased walking and cycling;
- Preserving the character of some places outside of centres and corridors;
- Protecting rural landscapes and production areas from urban encroachment; and
- Strengthening local economies.

2.3 Establishing a Classification for Auckland's Centres and Corridors

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy Concept plan (1999) shows a network of centres and corridors. These centres and corridors are key elements of the strategy. They are focal points for business and employment, housing and community services as well as being community meeting places. The centres are also important nodes connecting the Regional Land Transport Strategy framework which identifies the planned and future potential rapid transport network.

The location of centres and their activity within the region is strongly linked to access, with many centres being located on main roads or at the cross roads of main arterials. The larger centres are all located where there is a high level of public passenger transport access. Since the release of

the Growth Strategy, centres have been classified and prioritised in three separate reports and work is underway to refine the classification of these centres and corridors.

The previous report for the ARC (SGS Economics and Planning, 2007) provides an overview of approaches to developing a classification of centres. The case studies of Sydney, Melbourne and Perth have been the basis for providing recommendations on reviewing Auckland's approach to date.

At this stage, the existence of a fairly indiscriminant centres classification and the lack of agreement (and hence certainty) between various plans and governmental departments over the role of each centre and corridor and the sequencing of development in these areas stunts the development of a coherent and effective centres policy and undermines the implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy.

Recommendations to review the current classification include identifying:

- A strong CBD that serves the entire region; **Auckland CBD is clearly the dominant centre that should be continued to be supported. The CBD should be supported as a global hub for the region through strategic investment.**
- Three or four subregional CBDs (or cities) that serve populations of around 300,000² people;
- A series of subregional centres that support the subregional CBDs centres and service large local catchments;
- Specialised business areas that recognise and plan for improved services and accessibility in these growing employment areas;
- Corridors distinguishing between those appropriate for residential growth and those suited to employment activities; and
- A series of local centres to serve local populations for day-to-day needs should be recognised. Whilst these smaller centres have an important role to play, they are generally best planned and managed at the local level.

This classification would need to be informed by a more detailed analysis of the existing characteristics and future potential roles of centres and corridors across the region. Once the classification was established, appropriate employment and housing targets could be set for each centre and corridor and frequently monitored.

The criteria for identifying strategic centres and corridors identified from the case studies can be simply described as:

- Geographic positioning;
- Overall trip generation;
- Number of jobs;
- Market catchment size (ie global, national, regional, local);
- Diversity of activities such as commercial, retail, civic, medical, education, research, cultural, entertainment, recreation, industrial and residential;
- Transport infrastructure and services; and

² This population does not relate to the population of the various TLA's. Rather it is indicative of the population sub-regional CBDs should aim to serve (i.e. sub-regional catchment)

- Capacity for change (development, infrastructure, institutional and economic opportunity).

A description of these criteria is included at Appendix 1.

2.4 Why Prioritise Centres and Corridors?

At present there are 52 centres and corridors identified in the Auckland Region as defined by the Auckland Regional Council's Regional Policy Statement (2005, see Schedule 1 in Appendix 2). In addition to these locations, there are also centres that will be developed in future urban release areas.

Whilst all centres and corridors undoubtedly play an important role in achieving the objectives set out in the Regional Growth Strategy, the Regional Growth Forum is seeking to identify areas to focus resources in the next period of implementation

These locations would be the focus of planning, infrastructure coordination and investment to achieve the agreed targets for employment and housing. The locations would be catalysts for redevelopment to meet multiple objectives and would act as demonstration projects setting examples of how the objectives in the RGS can be achieved.

3 Overview of Case Studies

In order to inform the establishment of a classification for centres in Auckland, the centres and corridors policies and initiatives in recent Metropolitan Planning Strategies for Sydney (2005), Melbourne (2002) and Perth (2004) were reviewed. These strategies were developed and published by the each respective State government with various levels of coordination between the equivalent planning agencies and other related portfolios. Further details on the case studies are provided in Appendix 1 of *Establishing a Classification for Auckland's Centres*, prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for Auckland Regional Council (2007)

Each of the strategies identified strategic centres (such as regional cities, transit cities, major centres, activity centres, specialised centres, industrial centres) and corridors (economic, renewal, enterprise, activity, transport) in which State Governments would take an **active interest in planning and development**. The premise of this approach was that the State recognised that these places have a key role in accommodating and contributing to future economic and housing growth and achieving sustainable development. In this way, the typology of centres has informed the level of priority given to each centre and the actions implemented.

The case studies highlighted a mix of approaches to identifying a typology of places driven by the vision for a sustainable city. The typology of places also informs the associated dwelling and job targets and initiatives to increase jobs and housing in centres. The approach to centres policy and identifying a centres hierarchy in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth metropolitan planning policies is summarised in Table 2.

Importantly, the level of intervention and the priority applied to centres was strongly related to the typology, or hierarchy of centres. In Melbourne activity centres were officially given varying degrees of policy priority relating to their level in the centres hierarchy. In addition, both the level and type of intervention was driven by the barriers to change specific to each location (SGS Economics and Planning, 2001).

Table 1. Summary of Criteria for Prioritising Strategic Centres

Centres	Sydney	Melbourne	Perth
Strategic Centres	27 <i>Including</i> 1 Global City 4 Regional Cities 10 Specialised 11 Major Centres Enterprise Corridors	115 <i>Including</i> 1 Central District 25 Principal Centres (9 transit cities) 10 Specialised 82 Major Centres	83 (+ specialised /industrial areas) <i>Including</i> 1 CBD 8 Strategic Regional 14 Regional 60 District Specialised Centres Industrial areas
Other	400 local	900 neighbourhood	Neighbourhood and local
Criteria			
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel patterns and trip generation 2. Geographic positioning 3. Access to transport infrastructure 4. Access to labour markets 5. Critical mass of employment 6. Office and retail presence 7. Presence of civic, cultural and recreational activities 8. Presence of special uses 9. Capacity for additional development 10. Levels of road traffic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High trip generators 2. Geographic positioning 3. Access to public transport 4. Diversity and intensity of use 5. Catchment size 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retail floorspace and type 2. Density of employment 3. Accessibility 4. Number of journeys generated 5. Origin and destination stations
Focus for planning and funding	Regional Cities	Transit Cities	Mixed use demonstration projects. Rail corridor investment.

Source: various

Once the typology (hierarchy) was identified, each of the case studies engaged in a variety of actions and initiatives to ensure that the objectives of prioritisation were met. These actions included implementation and management groups, physical structure planning and a series of more fine-grained legal and fiscal implementation tools tailored to meet the specific barriers to intensification in each centre, some example being:

- The establishment of ‘taskforce’ agencies responsible developing centre strategies for the State government;
- The establishment of infrastructure implementation groups to co-ordinate infrastructure development with land-use proposals
- Sub-regional planning strategies to illustrate the role of centres in overall metropolitan development;
- Land use and structure plans for identified strategic centres and corridors;
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as tool to increase investment within defined areas (using a voluntary levy); and
- Priority Development Zones (PDZs) to allow faster development approvals in priority areas

Notwithstanding the typology, each city has identified key locations for investment. For example:

- Sydney is focusing on the three Regional Cities in addition to the inner city redevelopment of Redfern / Waterloo and East Darling Harbour (Barangaroo), as well as two new Growth areas;
- Melbourne has identified Dandenong as its key Transit City for investment, together with the redevelopment of inner city Docklands and five new Growth areas; and
- Perth has identified Murdoch for redevelopment, together with significant inner city redevelopment and development associated with the new Southern Rail Line.

4 An Approach to Prioritising Areas for Implementation

4.1 Objectives

The overseas examples have indicated that even once a clear typology or classification of centres has been agreed, it is not helpful, or indeed possible, to focus on all opportunities at the same time. There is clear benefit in identifying areas for priority attention and investment which allows for greater alignment of action and a 'whole of government' approach.

There may be a number of reasons why a centre or corridor may warrant priority status for implementation, such as the opportunity to:

- progress desired change within a 'short timeframe';
- realise the catalyst effect that the centre or corridor could have;
- address social and economic regeneration opportunity (or potential);
- realise the individual role the centre or corridor makes to the regional economy; and/or
- maximise existing or proposed infrastructure investments³

Setting objectives is an important step, as areas can be prioritised for many purposes. It is acknowledged that not all areas identified as a priority for implementation will address the five objectives listed above. The overall aim is to select a range of centres and/or corridors that collectively, address all of the objectives.

The five objectives are further clarified through the list of key questions listed in Table 2. These key questions will form the basis of discussions about which centres/corridors would be the focus over the short term to work towards the Regional Growth Strategy growth concept. The key questions provide further clarification of the objectives and the outcomes that are being sought. Also, the objectives are integrated and some of the key questions overlap, for example capacity for change or stakeholder support.

³ Source: ARC (email communication, 27/03/2007)

Table 2. Objectives and Key Questions for Prioritising Areas for Implementation.

Objective	Key Questions
To progress desired change within a 'short timeframe'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a strategic vision for the area to guide implementation efforts? • Is there existing potential/capacity in the area? (e.g. infrastructure, community willingness for change, political will) • Does current zoning enable sufficient intensification or would large scale plan changes be required? • Is there potential from strategic sites in centres and business areas? • Is desired progress achievable within the next 5 years? • Is there private sector development interest/demand? • Is there central government interest and/or investment in the area?
To realise the catalyst effect that the centre or corridor could have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there local government and infrastructure provider support and commitment (e.g. through funding allocation and alignment)? • Is there potential to demonstrate sustainable, quality residential and business intensification in centres? • Is there untapped potential for the existing centre or corridor? • Have there been any recent or proposed major projects undertaken by local government that include intensification or redevelopment?
To address social and economic regeneration opportunity (or potential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there opportunity or demand for community renewal projects which integrate affordable housing with community building? (e.g. in partnership with Housing New Zealand) • Is there commitment or interest to invest in the area from central government (education, health, social development) to achieve a range of social outcomes?
To realise the individual role the centre or corridor makes to the regional economy and greater self containment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the centre or corridor have an important or specialised economic role that contributes to the regional economy (i.e. does the centre have a strategic role within the hierarchy of centres). • Would intensification aid or hinder its economic performance • Does the centre support self containment and complement the role of the CBD?
To maximise existing or proposed infrastructure investments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the full potential for maximising public transport and land use realised? • Is there existing or future public transport capacity to the centre or corridor and/or can accessibility be improved easily? • Is there current capacity, (or potential for upgrades) of, stormwater, wastewater, social infrastructure, public open space? • Is there available vacant land, vacant potential land, brownfield sites for development?

4.2 Testing and Review

Identifying priority areas will require quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 52 centres and corridors identified in the Regional Plan Change 6 (2005) and some discussion and analytical work based on the objectives and key questions outlined in this report. It is safe to assume that some clear patterns will begin to emerge and a series of identifiable and distinctive ranges become apparent. This analysis will include a process of testing and review in order to establish an appropriate set of priorities.

Once developed, the draft list of centres should be further tested and reviewed by stakeholders (i.e. local authorities, the development sector, relevant business groups, infrastructure providers, and local communities) to ensure that all of the issues are captured prior to being finalised and adopted.

4.3 Actions and Initiatives⁴

Once both the typology and priority centres have been identified, actions and initiatives to ensure that the objectives of prioritisation are met will need to be developed. These actions and initiatives may include:

- The formation of implementation and management groups, such as taskforce or special purpose agencies, charged with the responsibility of carrying out urban development in priority centres identified, based on agreed visions.
- The possible formation of public/private partnerships, particularly for strategic sites acquired by the public sector. Often the public sector lacks the funds necessary for redevelopment of strategic sites, and requires private capital to deliver the project, whilst the private sector is often in need of sites to redevelop⁵.
- The development of physical structure plans and development frameworks to guide the redevelopment process to a desired vision and work towards achieving set employment and/or housing targets.
- The development and formalisation of fine-grained legal and fiscal implementation tools such as fast-tracked development approvals to provide incentive for development in priority centres.

The level of intervention and the strength to which the above actions and initiatives should be applied strongly relate to developed typology, or hierarchy of centres. Centres at the top of the hierarchy should be provided with the highest degree of policy support and intervention.

⁴ For a more comprehensive and detailed account of actions and initiatives see *SGS Economics and Planning (2006) Intensification of Centres and Business Areas*

⁵ *ibid*

In addition, both the level and type of intervention should be driven by the barriers to change specific to each location. In this light, actions and initiatives should be tailored to each priority centre.

4.4 Other Centres

Priority areas are recognised as those centres/corridors where the Auckland Regional Council take the lead in planning for in the short term to implement the RGS, in partnership with the local authority and government. Over the next few years, efforts in planning, investment and project infrastructure delivery would be focused on ensuring a small number of priority areas. Over time, additional areas will also be the focus of regional planning and investment activities.

Beyond the initial priority areas, there are other locations that will continue to play an important role in accommodating future growth and change within the region and achieving the objectives of the RGS. It is important that local planning efforts continue to address the growth challenges faced in these locations.

The ARC will continue to provide policy and research support to assist local strategic planning and economic development initiatives. The ARC could also provide additional guidance on the application of the centres and corridors hierarchy and strategic and statutory planning tools to encourage intensification in centres and corridors.

Local planning authorities will continue to undertake strategic planning and policy development to pursue plan changes that enhance the environmental, social and economic aspects of centres in line with the Regional Growth Strategy.

5 Summary and Recommendations

This report has provided an overview of approaches to setting priorities for strategic planning and investment in areas such as centres and corridors at the regional level.

Prioritising strategic centres is an important component of the review of the Auckland Growth Concept. In addition, prioritising centres is regarded as an essential step to progress the Growth Concept, to realize the potential catalyst effects particular centres can have on the region, to identify and address social and economic regeneration opportunities and to maximize existing and proposed infrastructure investments.

This study has identified an approach to prioritising centres and corridors, as informed by case studies of the three Australian cities of Sydney Melbourne and Perth. The approach undertaken in these cities suggests that a clear typology of centres is a necessary step for prioritizing centres. Work is underway to address this matter in Auckland.

The application of the approach to prioritizing centres and corridors is broadly based on an understanding of the size, location, function of the centres. The approach requires consideration of objectives and key questions outlined in this report, which are:

- To progress desired change within a 'short timeframe'
- To realise the catalyst effect that the centre or corridor could have
- To address social and economic regeneration opportunity (or potential)
- To realise the individual role the centre or corridor makes to the regional economy and greater self containment
- To maximise existing or proposed infrastructure investments.

Appendix 1: Draft Criteria for Classification of Centres and Corridors

Criterion	Description	Suggested Application
<i>Geographic Positioning</i>	<p>The changing shape of cities and the spread of the population are the main factors that determine the size and location of strategic centres.</p> <p>Strategic centres tend to be spread evenly across a region, allowing each to play important roles as major employment and community nodes for surrounding regional and sub-regional populations.</p> <p>Encouraging a fairer distribution of employment growth across the region, focussed in strategic centres can improve access to employment and reduce spatial inequalities.</p>	<p>This criteria is closely related to the typology and the catchment sizes of centres.</p> <p>The typology current list of centres should be mapped. For each centre an indicative boundary should be delineated so that further analysis (following steps) can be undertaken. This delineation must correspond to appropriate data collection boundaries.</p> <p>When prioritising centres, it may be desirable to include centres from across the region.</p> <p>The geographic location of priority centres may also be an important consideration with regards to social equity objectives.</p>
<i>Overall Trip Generation</i>	<p>Travel patterns and trip generation are strong indicators of the levels of activities in centres and their relative significance.</p> <p>Strategic centres generate a high volume of trips usually as a result of the diverse land use mix within them. Generally centres marked by high employment densities, large retail floorspace capacity and presence of education, civic, cultural and recreational facilities will generate a large amount of traffic.</p> <p>Overall trip generation serves as a good indicator of both the economic and social importance of a centre.</p>	<p>To determine overall trip generation Auckland should analyse trip data (from the NZ Statistics Journey to Work data and/or the Auckland Passenger Transport Model) and determine the frequency of trips made from each centre (as specified by the centre boundary which may vary from 2km for a subregional CBD to 400m for a local centre).</p> <p>Frequency of trips should then ordered from highest to lowest from which a series of 'trip ranges' can be developed.</p> <p>This criteria would assist in understanding the economic, social and cultural role of centres and identifying places that could contribute to the regional economy and greater self containment.</p>
<i>Number of Jobs</i>	<p>Centres display higher employment densities than surrounding areas. Total employment numbers and densities determine the typology and according role and function within the typology of centres and corridors.</p> <p>Similarly, an examination of the types of employment present within centres and corridors will assist in formulating the specific role each centre plays within the region.</p> <p>Centres with higher employment densities are</p>	<p>Employment figures are most commonly obtained by recording the 'destination' trips from Journey to Work data. Net densities should be calculated by dividing total number of jobs by the total area of land zoned business/commercial/employment.</p> <p>This method should not be limited to existing centres, but applied across the whole region to identify emerging centres and/or specialised centres.</p>

Criterion	Description	Suggested Application
	<p>generally more significant due to their larger catchments.</p>	<p>Results should be ordered and ranges identified.</p> <p>This criteria would assist in understanding the economic role of centres and identifying places that could contribute to the regional economy and greater self containment.</p>
<p><i>Market Catchment Size</i></p> <p><i>(i.e. global, national, regional, local)</i></p>	<p>Catchments relate heavily to the transport networks, levels of State and private investment, infrastructure assets, geographic positioning, presence of regionally significant land uses (particularly social infrastructure such as), commuting times and the number and range of jobs in each of the centres.</p> <p>Catchments can also be indicative of specialisation in economic roles. Large centres cater for a catchment of several suburbs and attract activities that meet metropolitan needs. Large centres also help to promote self-containment within sub-regions.</p>	<p>Catchment size can be best determined through spatial representation of the 'origin' of trips to centres obtained from Journey to Work data.</p> <p>GIS systems can be used to represent this data in "spider diagrams".</p> <p>Market catchments can also be determined by reviewing the client base of firms within a centre. Retail catchment modelling and an understanding of export markets could inform this analysis.</p>
<p><i>Diversity of Activities</i></p> <p><i>(i.e. commercial, retail, civic, medical, education, research, cultural, entertainment, recreation, industrial and residential)</i></p>	<p>Assets such as civic services, sporting halls, libraries, hospitals and tertiary education have a regional role. In addition retail floorspace is a useful indicator for determining the regional significance of a centre. Centres with large retail floorspace capacities can accommodate a range of specialised shopping services that are not readily available in smaller local centres. Their size and mix of activities mean they serve a regional catchment. The presence of retail and office functions acts as a major attractor to the surrounding region and provides speciality goods and services that are not readily available in local centres. Diversity of activities will take lesser importance when identifying</p>	<p>Mapping the location and distribution of major health, education, recreational and cultural assets across the region will provide an indication of the clusters or groupings of activities in centres.</p> <p>Floorspace (sqm) for both office and retail uses should be gathered for each centre. It should then be ordered and grouped into ranges. It would also be beneficial to breakdown all commercial, retail, and civic and community uses into specific sectors in order to ascertain the role of each of the centres.</p> <p>This criteria would assist in understanding the role of centres in contributing towards greater self containment.</p>
<p><i>Transport Infrastructure and Services</i></p>	<p>Strategic centres benefit from superior access to transport infrastructure. This includes both road access and public transport, providing a high level of accessibility. Benefits are not solely attributed to the presence of transport infrastructure but also to the quality, frequency and capacity of the transport systems and the level of existing or potential integration with land uses. Generally, strategic centres are the focal points for multi-modal public transport or inter-regional road networks.</p> <p>Accessibility should also encompass environmental objectives and identify those</p>	<p>Identify focal points of transport and centres that are highly accessible.</p> <p>The Draft Passenger Network Plan (2006) has already defined a hierarchy of transport networks that aligns appropriate transport services to a hierarchy of centres. Rapid transit networks service major strategic centres.</p> <p>Locations that are major interchange points between services and modes should be identified.</p> <p>Current and proposed infrastructure</p>

Criterion	Description	Suggested Application
	<p>centres that can be accessed via by walking and cycling. In addition, some centres may have capacity in the public transport system (i.e. underutilisation). Such centres present themselves as suitable candidates for greater intensification. This also applies to capacity in services such as stormwater and waste services.</p>	<p>investment should be identified so that prioritisation can perhaps align with future plans and ensure that social, environmental and economic benefits of the proposed investments are realised across the centres.</p> <p>Detailed discussions with infrastructure and service agencies could identify locations with capacity for future growth.</p> <p>Accessibility mapping using GIS tools would aid in identifying locations with higher levels of public transport services across the region. These levels of accessibility would inform priorities for employment and residential intersection. It may also identify locations that may require future investment to improve opportunities available to local residents.</p>
<p><i>Capacity for Additional Development and Market Feasibility</i></p>	<p>The availability of appropriate sites for housing and employment in centres is one criterion for prioritising centres and corridors for renewal.</p> <p>The capacity for additional development also considers both the market feasibility of redevelopment and existing and future infrastructure capacity.</p> <p>This doesn't mean those centres without capacity should be disregarded – some centres may be well established and have little room to grow, however are still of strategic importance and require additional infrastructure investment. Importantly, whilst centres might have capacity for additional development, support from local government and the community are essential.</p>	<p>Undertake capacity/feasibility studies and developer surveys to identify those places with the greatest potential and/or market interest.</p> <p>Identify strategic government owned sites, redundant brownfield land, vacant land or sites currently proposed for redevelopment.</p> <p>Correlate these studies with future infrastructure programs and other relevant regional and local planning policies.</p> <p>Identify locations with government, community or development industry support for intensification.</p>

Appendix 2 References

ARC (2000) Urban Area Intensification Regional Practice and Resource Guide.

ARC (2006) Auckland Business Lands Strategy, October

ARTA (2006a) Draft Passenger Network Plan 2006 -2016, April.

ARTA (2006b) *Draft Sustainable Transport Plan 2006 – 2016* June

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