



Strategic Environmental Assessment and Regional Transport Planning: Opportunities in New Zealand

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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- A well-established impact assessment tool to:
 - “systematically assess the environmental effects and consequences of a proposed strategic action”*
- *Focus on policies, plans and programmes*
- *Widely used internationally, particularly in Europe where it has been mandated since 2004*
- *Follows the same principles as all forms of impact assessment but at a different scale*
- *Especially valuable for assessing longer-term and cumulative impacts often overlooked by project level impact assessment*

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- Key elements of SEA:
 - Establishing a baseline
 - Identifying objectives / targets
 - Scoping issues and impacts
 - Developing alternatives and scenarios
 - Forecasting of impacts
 - Developing mitigation measures
 - Monitoring (Indicators)

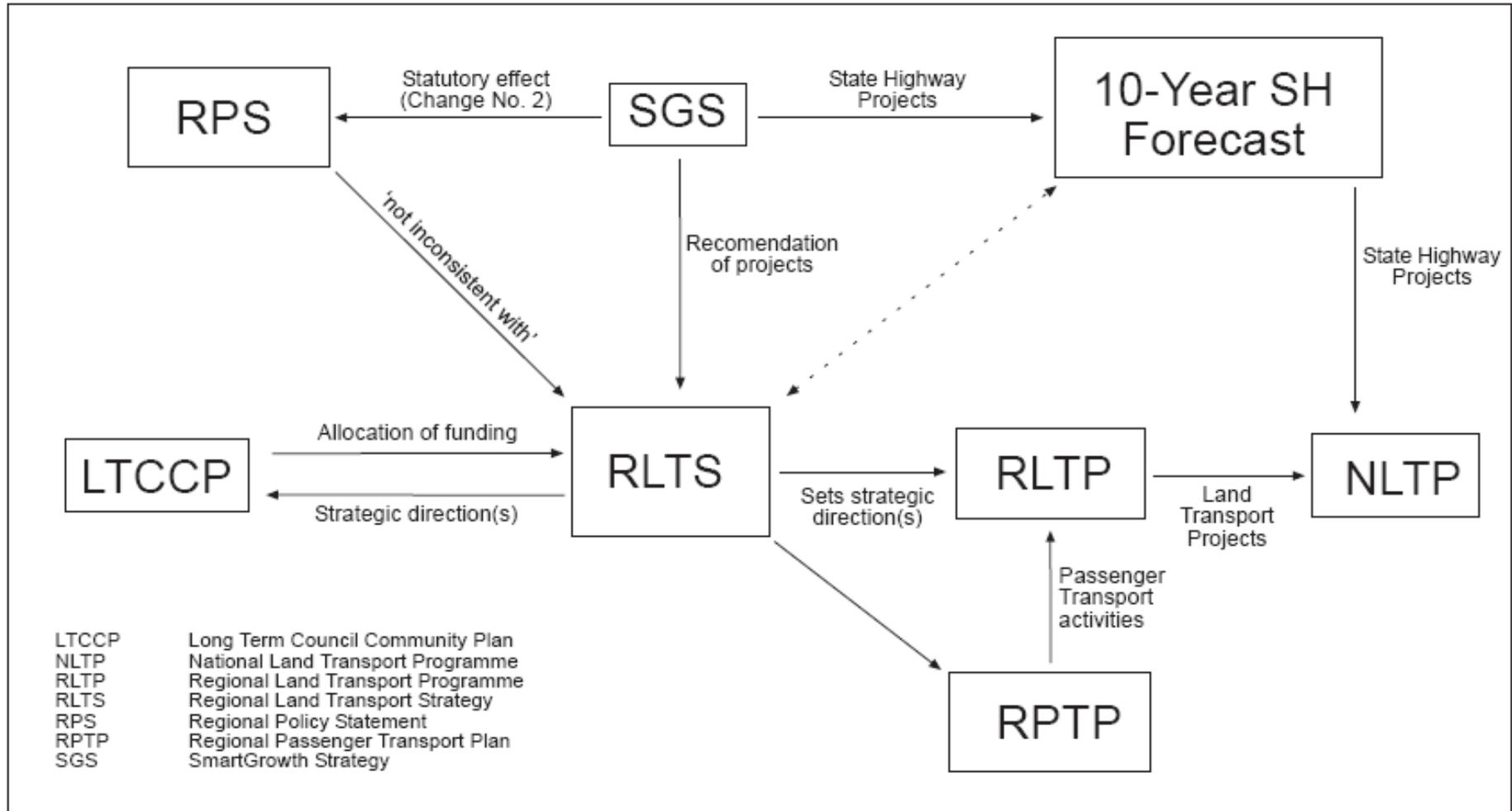
SEA in New Zealand...

- No widespread formal use
- Not mentioned in legislation but possibilities under RMA, LGA and LTMA
- Core requirements for regional land transport strategies:
 - (a) ensure that the regional land transport strategy—*
 - (i) contributes to the aim of achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system; and*
 - (e) ensuring environmental sustainability*
 - (iv) avoids, to the extent reasonable in the circumstances, adverse effects on the environment; and*
- *Research examined whether SEA could be useful to achieve these aims*

Research approach...

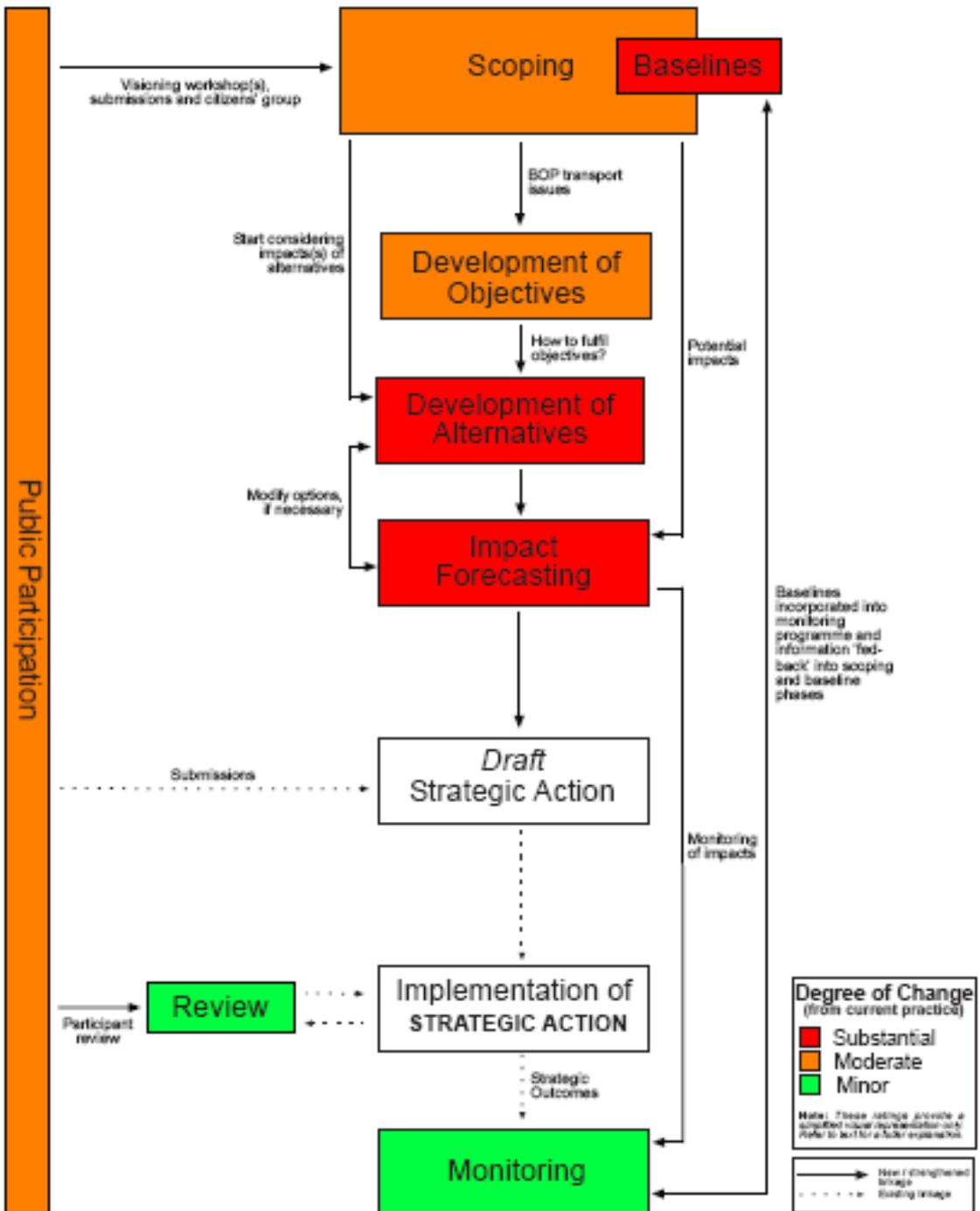
- In-depth case study of transport planning practice in the Bay of Plenty region.
 - Thirty-seven SEA evaluation criteria were developed from the SEA literature
- Evaluation of current practice using document analysis and key interviews
- Four main processes were examined:
 - the Regional Land Transport Strategy process;
 - the Long Term Community Council Plan process;
 - the Regional Policy Statement process
 - the SmartGrowth Strategy process.

Complex array of processes...



Key findings...

“...all of the main procedural elements of SEA were present to some degree, but overall, the quality and frequency of the elements observed did not constitute the use of SEA, *per se.*”



A revised regional transport planning process...

Key benefits...

- A wider consideration of transport options
- A more explicit consideration of the environmental consequences of transport decisions
- An increased consideration of the cumulative and long-term impacts of transport decisions
- An increased level of integration between processes and organisations
- A more robust and transparent planning process
- An increased level of stakeholder and community participation
- A greater consideration of the sustainability implications of transport decisions

Looking ahead...

- Isolated examples of SEA approaches in RLTS development e.g. Wellington
- SEA also being used in other areas e.g. Emissions Trading Scheme
- Regulatory Impact Statement requirement provides an opportunity for an SEA approach
 - Function recently shifted from MED to Treasury
 - Definition of 'environment'
- Likely to become an increasingly utilised tool in New Zealand
 - Developing capability could be an issue

Further applications...

- Very useful for areas where a long-term, strategic outlook is required:
 - Electricity generation
 - Energy management
 - Freshwater management
 - Conservation planning
 - Tourism planning
 - District and regional growth management

Questions and comments