



## A Twelve-Step Plan to End Oil Addiction

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*This is a guest post from Tim Jones of the Sustainable Energy Forum in New Zealand.*

With the price of petrol hitting NZ\$2 per litre, the Sustainable Energy Forum has proposed twelve steps for New Zealand to end its increasingly self-destructive addiction to oil.

Our addiction to oil has been bad for us for a long time. We've paid a high price for it in terms of high greenhouse gas emissions and cities choked by cars. But now we can't afford our regular fix any more. So here's what we need to do to conquer our addiction. It won't be easy, but it will be worthwhile — and besides, we don't really have a choice.

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### The Twelve Steps:

1. Stop deluding ourselves. The era of cheap, readily-available oil has ended. Prices may fluctuate, but the underlying trend is up, up, up. We have to get used to using less.
2. Demand that politicians take the issue seriously. Make it an election issue. Don't take 'we've got everything under control' as an answer.
3. Stop building new roads. They're a monumental waste of money, time and effort. They encourage, rather than ease, congestion, and besides, the growth in car travel that's used to justify them isn't going to happen anyway.
4. Divert that money and effort into measures that address the challenges of oil depletion and climate change.
5. Make a major investment in public transport. It needs to be better, faster, more comfortable, more regular, and more predictable. It needs to cater for everyone, not just peak-hour commuters — though they need a better service as well.
6. Make a major investment in broadband internet to allow more people to work from home, and change tax and business practices that discourage working from home. The more car trips we can avoid, the better.
7. Electrify transport where possible. New Zealand is well placed to use renewable electricity for transport. We should be electrifying commuter rail where it is not already electric, using light rail (trams) in cities, and looking at electrification of the main trunk line. On the other end of the scale, electric bikes and scooters can make a big difference in our cities. And electric cars show promise, though there's a lot of questions to be answered yet.
8. Don't use cars unless there's no alternative. Take the bus. Take the train. Switch to a scooter.

9. Deal with other aspects of our oil dependence. Agriculture, for example, is highly dependent on oil. We're going to need to change the way we grow and distribute food. Let's get to work on that now, not wait until supermarket shelves start to empty.

10. Stockpile or manufacture vital products currently imported from overseas. When oil runs short, will that still be possible? Let's take stock now and work out what we may need to start stockpiling or making in New Zealand.

11. Think local. Ending our oil addiction isn't just up to central government, though it can play its part. Communities can work together to make themselves more resilient. Join or start a Transition Towns group in your local area.

12. Accept reality. The age of cheap oil is over. It's not coming back. As individuals and as a nation, we have to adapt.



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