



**Northern Gateway Toll Road
Tolling motorcyclists
Consultation report
February 2010**

22 February 2010

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1 Executive summary

The Northern Gateway Toll Road (NGTR) opened in January 2009 and is New Zealand's first fully electronic toll road. The NGTR extends the Northern Motorway (SH1) 7.5km further north from Orewa to Puhoi. The NGTR provides improved and consistent travel times, safer travel and a straighter road with improved passing opportunities.

To use the toll road, cars and light vehicles less than 3.5 tonnes pay \$2 each way and trucks and heavy vehicles over 3.5 tonnes pay \$4 each way. Up until now, motorcyclists have not been charged to use the NGTR.

The NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) is considering whether to charge a toll to motorcyclists using the road. Charging motorcyclists a toll will mean that all users of the road will pay a toll and that this might be fairer to everyone. The appropriate toll is likely to be up to \$2 each way.

To determine public opinion on whether motorcyclists should be charged a toll if they choose to use the toll road the NZTA has carried out a public consultation programme including an associated hearing of submissions. The proposition put to the public was that motorcyclists equally benefit from the shorter travel time, safer motorway and fuel cost savings and therefore should pay the same tolls as other motorists.

Consultation with the public started on Monday 2 November and ended on Friday 27 November 2009. Print advertisements notifying the consultation process were published in newspapers and magazines between Monday 2 November and Tuesday 17 November 2009.

The purpose of the consultation was:

- To meet the consultation requirements of the NZTA as a public road controlling authority under section 18 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003.
- To ensure the public were fully informed and to encourage them to make a submission; and
- To identify and understand community views, opinions, issues and concerns in relation to tolling motorcyclists on the NGTR.

During the consultation the public were asked the following questions:

- Do you think motorcyclists benefit from using the safer, quicker route of the NGTR?
- Do you think motorcyclists should pay a toll to use the NGTR, the same as other motorists? (as set out in the consultation brochure - refer Appendix A)

The consultation process was carried out through two main types of engagement with various groups:

- Public consultation through advertising in local and national newspapers and specialised motorcycle magazines

- Mail out of a brochure and comments form to all key groups as outlined in the Land Transport Management Act 2003 No 118, including regional councils, Maori and affected communities.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the methodology and outcomes of the consultation which took place to determine the public's view on whether motorcyclists should pay a toll to use the NGTR.

2 Overview of consultation process

2.1 Consultation requirements

The NZTA is the public road controlling authority responsible for state highways, including the NGTR. The NGTR opened on 25 January 2009 and extends SH1 7.5km further north from Orewa to Puhoi. It is New Zealand's first fully electronic toll road and was built to provide a straighter, quicker route between Auckland and Northland.

Within the first six months of opening, the toll road was the preferred route north with almost 2 million trips made. During this period around 25,000 of these trips were made by motorcyclists, which is around one percent of all traffic. In comparison, around 700,000 vehicles chose to take the free route via Orewa during the same period.

To enable early completion and opening of the toll road so motorists could enjoy the benefits now, the NZTA borrowed half of the construction costs. The revenue that is collected from tolling is used to repay this debt, rather than for maintaining the road from wear and tear. When the debt has been repaid, the toll will be removed.

Charging motorcyclists to use the road will contribute to repaying the debt. It will mean that all users of the road will pay a toll and that this might be fairer to everyone. The toll is likely to be up to \$2 each way. The toll collection system has been designed to be used by all road users and can capture information from all legal registration plates.

The NZTA carried out this consultation programme to gather feedback on whether motorcyclists should be charged a toll if they choose to use the toll road. After considering the results from this consultation, the NZTA will then make a decision on whether to toll motorcycles and if so, the appropriate toll. This decision is expected to be made in March 2010. Following that decision, the process for setting a new toll tariff for motorcycles may be implemented.

2.2 Consultation requirements under the LTMA

The NZTA must consult in accordance with sections 18, 18A and 18G of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA):

Section 18 lists the parties that must be consulted.

Section 18 A(1)(a) requires the public road controlling authorities to carry out consultation in accordance with the Consultation Principles outlined in Part 1 of Schedule 2.

Section 18 A(1)(b) requires the public road controlling authority to use the Special Consultative Procedure outlined in Part 2 of Schedule 2.

Section 18 G sets out requirements for consultation with Maori.

2.3 Consultation process

The consultation process inviting the public to make a submission started on Monday 2 November and ended on Friday 27 November 2009.

The consultation process was carried out through two main types of engagement with various groups:

1. Public consultation through advertising in local and national newspapers and specialised motorcycle magazines.
2. Mail out of a brochure and comments form to all key groups as outlined in the Land Transport Management Act 2003 No 118, including regional councils, Maori and affected communities.

2.3.1 Consultation brochure

A four page brochure was prepared to provide an overview of the consultation process and to give instruction about how to make a submission. The brochure also included a submission comments form.

The following parties outlined in section 18 of the Land Transport Management Act were sent a copy of the information brochure:

- affected regional councils
- affected territorial authority
- affected approved public organisations
- the Agency (NZTA)
- the Commissioner (NZ Police)
- affected District Health Boards
- ACC
- NZ Historic Places Trust
- NZ Railways Corporation
- representative groups of land transport users and providers (including representative groups of coastal shipping users and providers)
- affected communities
- Maori of the region

- public in the region

A complete distribution list is included in Appendix B.

The general public could download a copy of the brochure from:
www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/motorcyclist-consultation

A copy of the consultation brochure is included in Appendix A.

2.3.2 Public advertising

An advertising campaign ran to target audiences with a specific focus on people who own and ride motorcycles in Auckland and Northland and regular road users likely to use the toll road. Advertising in motorcycle trade magazines targeted motorcyclists and enthusiasts directly. Key regional areas included Auckland, Rodney, Warkworth, Whangarei and the Far North.

Print advertisements ran in regional and national newspapers between Monday 2 November and Tuesday 17 November 2009. These included the NZ Herald, Northern Advocate, Rodney Times and eight Auckland suburban newspapers.

The print advertisements contained information about the consultation process, how to make a submission, the closing date for submissions and who to contact for more information. The material was supplied as four colour, 14 x 3 advertisements.

The same advertising information appeared twice in the November edition of the NZ Motorcycle Trader and News. The material was supplied as a four colour, quarter page advertisement.

A copy of the advertising schedule is included in Appendix C and print advertisements are included in Appendix D.

2.3.3 Consultation website

The NGTR website (www.tollroad.govt.nz) and the NZTA consultation website (www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation) provided information on tolling, the consultation process and the submission and hearing process. The consultation brochure and submission comments form were also available to download. The primary function of the website was as an information tool. There was not a function to enable submissions to be submitted online.

2.3.4 Media articles

There was one newspaper article published in the NZ Herald during the consultation period 'Agency looks at toll for bikers.' This was not generated by a formal media release. A copy of the article is in Appendix E.

2.3.5 Consultation toll free number

The NGTR contact centre toll free number (0800 40 20 20) was used as a contact number during the public consultation. The number was manned seven days a week, each day from 8am until 6pm. The contact centre dealt with queries from the public on the consultation process and requests for submission material.

2.3.6 Consultation fax number

The consultation had a dedicated fax number (09 307 3936) during the consultation process. Members of the public could fax a submission to this fax number.

2.3.7 Consultation email address

The consultation had a dedicated email address (motorcyclistconsultation@nzta.govt.nz) in operation during the consultation process. Members of the public could submit queries, provide feedback and make a submission via this email address.

2.3.8 Consultation private bag

The consultation had a dedicated private bag (Private Bag 47 792, Ponsonby) in operation during the consultation process. Members of the public could post a submission to this private bag.

2.4 Submission process

There was a four week submission period enabling submitters to provide their comments by mail, email and fax. On receipt of the submission, a postcard was issued to provide written acknowledgement of the submission.

2.5 Hearing process

The hearing panel were presented with copies of all submissions received. The panel also received a summary analysis report of the submissions. A hearing session took place on Monday 21 December 2009 at the North Harbour Function Centre in Albany, Auckland. During the hearing session, the panel recorded all key points that were additional to the submitter's written submission. A summary report on these points is included in Appendix G.

3 Summary of submissions

This section of the report provides a summary of all submissions received during the submission period, from Monday 2 November until Friday 27 November 2009.

3.1 Number of submissions received

The following table shows the number of submissions received and how each submitter responded to the two questions asked as part of the consultation.

Table 1 – Submissions summary

Question	Yes	No	Total number of submissions
Do you think motorcyclists benefit from using the safer, quicker route of the NGTR?	134 (66%)	68 (34%)	202
Do you think motorcyclists should pay a toll to use the NGTR, the same as other motorists?	65 (32%)	137 (68%)	202

3.2 Number of submitters wishing to be heard

23 submitters requested to be heard in support of their written submission. Of these, seven submitters verbally presented their submission to the panel members. The other submitters who had originally requested a hearing decided not to appear. The hearing process is discussed in Section 4.

3.3 Types of submitters

The majority of submissions came from individual members of the public from various parts of Auckland. There were also several submissions from people in the Far North and Whangarei.

As well as the individual submissions, ten submitters submitted on behalf of an organisation. These included Auckland City Council, the Automobile Association, Orewa Residents and Ratepayers Association, the Road Transport Forum, Waitakere City Council, NZ Police and the Bikers' Rights Organisation New Zealand.

3.4 Written submission analysis

The following gives a summary of the responses from written submissions received during the consultation period. The complete analysis spreadsheet is included in Appendix F.

Do you think motorcyclists benefit from using the safer, quicker route of the NGTR?

Response **yes**

- Faster and more direct route
- More economical
- More environmentally friendly
- Safer route
- Cuts out hilly, windy section of road
- Less stressful
- No bends or narrowing road
- Improved road surface
- Reduced number of road works
- Reduced congestion
- No overtaking
- Reduced number of accidents so prevents the cost of accidents
- Old route is overcrowded
- Two lanes so improved passing opportunities

Response **no**

- Other route is more scenic
- Other route is cheaper
- Most motorcyclists ride for leisure and not to get somewhere faster so prefer to take the old route
- Other route a more challenging and interesting ride
- Tolling will drive motorcyclists to the other route, which is dangerous

- No benefits as motorcyclists can overtake easily on old route
- Other route is safer because lots of traffic now use the NGTR
- NGTR can be dangerous due to high winds between hills and when coming out of tunnel
- Timing is practically the same on both routes

Do you think motorcyclists should pay a toll to use the NGTR, the same as other motorists?

Response **yes**

- User pays
- Fairness
- Motorcycles benefit from the safer quicker, more economical and environmentally friendly road
- Should only be tolled \$1
- Should be tolled \$2, the same as everyone else
- Most cars only carry two passengers so only fair that motorcycles are tolled
- Increased revenue can be put towards maintaining the high quality road
- Debt will be repaid quicker
- Other route is still available for those motorcyclists who don't want to pay
- When driven at speed, motorcycles still contribute to road surface damage

Response **no**

- Unable to read number plate as it is too small. The cost to install different cameras outweighs revenue gathered from additional tolls
- Motorcyclists in more danger on other congested route. If NGTR is safer, then it should not be tolled
- Wear and tear – less damage to the road surface
- Payment inconvenience
- Should only pay 2/5 of road toll
- Motorcycles have minimal weight
- Should increase tolls on other vehicle types if you are to toll motorcycles to make it fair

- Only two passengers on a motorcycle so the toll should be less than a car
- Why should large truck pay \$4, cars \$2 and motorcycle \$2? Fairer to toll motorcycles \$1
- Congestion – motorcyclists should be encouraged as they free up road space
- Environmental – motorcycles should be encouraged as they have less emissions compared to cars and trucks
- Concentrate on improving the payment system before charging tolls to motorcyclists
- Costs to collect toll outweighs revenue
- Already paying more in ACC levies
- Congestion at cash payment machines during organised rides
- NZTA should have introduced tolls when the road opened as it looks unprofessional to introduce at this stage
- Effort to toll motorcyclists is not worth the small amount of additional revenue
- Should implement text payment first
- Common practice in Australia and European countries to exempt motorcyclists from tolls
- Economics - the Rodney area is opened up for riding and visiting cafes, markets etc, which provides money for the region. If tolled, this revenue will stop as motorcyclists stop using the road

4 Hearing of submissions

The hearing session was held at the North Harbour Function Centre in Albany on Monday 21 December from 8am until 2pm. The panel members noted down all points raised that were additional to the submitters' written submission. A summary report on these points is included in Appendix G.

4.1 Hearing panel

The hearing panel consisted of three members:

- Wayne McDonald, Regional Director for Auckland and Northland, NZ Transport Agency
- Brett Dooley, Manager Transport Registry Centre, NZ Transport Agency
- Chris Gasson, Regional Advisor for Auckland and Northland, NZ Transport Agency

4.2 Hearing panel's agenda

The hearing panel was presented with the following documents prior to the hearing:

- A copy of all written submissions
- Written submission analysis report – refer to Appendix F

4.3 Hearing analysis

Those submitters that were heard during the hearing process made the following comments:

- Motorcyclists feel like they are sponsoring a road designed for heavier vehicles
- No wear and tear
- Motorcycles only have two wheels
- There will be accidents and incidents
- Motorcyclists are happy to pay a toll if it is fair and equitable
- Should be based on user pays, so motorcyclists less than \$1
- Will accept \$2, as demanded by the AA, if cars are tolled \$5

- Global warming – the government should be encouraging transport that lessens the carbon footprint and reduces congestion
- Bikers Rights Organisation of New Zealand (BRONZ) has a mandate for motorcycle safety and the toll road is safer. The NZTA should be encouraging the use of safer routes
- Tolling motorcyclists would add to the non-payment structure – many motorcyclists would not open an account and it is too hard to stop and take off gear to pay at payment machines
- This proposal should be reviewed in another two years time

5 Conclusions

The opening of the NGTR was the culmination of over five years' planning and construction. During initial consultation on the NGTR, which took place in 2005, the NZTA (then Transit) noted that motorcycles won't be charged a toll. In addition, at opening the toll was set to zero to test how many motorcyclists would choose the toll road over the alternative. However, NZTA made it clear that this toll rate was subject to review.

The purpose of consulting with the public was therefore to gather information on the issue of whether motorcyclists should be charged a toll if they choose to use the toll road. The proposition was that motorcyclists receive the same benefits as other motorists and should therefore pay the same toll. These benefits include:

- Improved and consistent travel times;
- More direct and safer travel between Auckland and Northland;
- Bypasses normal congestion spots; and
- A straighter road with safer passing.

It is recognised that the consultation issue was particularly difficult to address. The reason for tolling the road was to advance its delivery ahead of what would have been possible using conventional funding. With the NGTR already delivered, there is no choice and the issue becomes one of principle.

The consultation material positioned this principle by asking submitters two questions. The first question was on whether or not motorcyclists received a benefit from using the road. The rationale for tolling of the NGTR supports tolling motorcycles if they receive a benefit from the roads early construction. Most submissions (two thirds) seemed to support the view that motorcyclists receive a benefit.

The second question asked whether motorcyclists should pay the same toll as other motorists. The questionnaire requested submitters to motivate their response to test public opinion on the proposition that motorcyclists receive the same benefits as motorists. While a small proportion of submitters did argue for/against applying the full toll, unfortunately the majority of comments were unrelated to the rationale for tolling. The consultation material explained that tolling is collected to repay only the construction debt. However, it is understandable that many submitters may not have recognised the consequence, meaning that wear and tear does not contribute to the calculation of tolls.

That said, the responses raised a number of valid concerns that NZTA might have to address going forward. For example, explaining what is being done to improve the toll system, why tolls require people to pay to use a safer road, why the cars vs. trucks tolls difference doesn't necessarily apply to motorcycles and why concessions and many other international toll roads mostly include a wear and tear component (i.e. meaning motorcyclists don't pay or pay a significantly lower toll than other motorists).

Since most submitters agreed that motorcyclists benefit from using the safer, quicker route, there seems to be public support for motorcyclists being tolled. The question then becomes how much?

The consultation material noted that the toll is likely to be the same as for other motorists, which is currently set at \$2 each way. One argument against this is that motorcyclists shouldn't be paying for a road that was designed and built for much heavier vehicles, i.e. their toll should be less. Some submissions also argued against the proposition that the benefits from using the toll road are the same for motorists and motorcyclists, although this view was rarely motivated. On the other hand, a significant number of submissions agreed that motorcycles should be charged the full toll on the basis of agreeing with the proposition, or supporting this on user pay and fairness principles.

Considering the focus of most submissions, it would be difficult to conclude whether there is majority public support for either a \$2 toll or a lesser value. What is clear is that motorcyclists, like other motorists, have the choice on whether to use the toll road. The feedback from the consultation demonstrated that most motorcyclists would choose the toll road over the alternative.

The question that NZTA would need to address is what toll for motorcyclists would be most fair to everyone. It is therefore proposed that NZTA develops a policy for tolling of motorcycles and sets the toll accordingly. In considering this NZTA should also consider whether motorcycles add less to congestion, are more environmentally friendly or should be encouraged to use the road, and whether these aspects contribute to the calculation of the toll.