



Hamilton Regional Office

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MEDIA RELEASE

Transit Waikato state highway forecast highlights safety

Safety improvements are planned to start this year for the Mangatawhiri area on SH2 Transit New Zealand announced today when it released its 10-year State Highway Forecast.

The East Taupo Arterial, a planned eastern bypass of Taupo, has been pushed up the priority list to begin in the 06/07 year. This was possible because of the design and other work being undertaken by the Taupo District Council and the joint funding package developed by the two organisations said Transit's Waikato regional manager Chris Allen. Transit's share of the bypass cost is \$15 million.

The announcement today by Transit did not include the additional \$500 million of special land transport funding announced by the Government on 23 June. Transit Chairperson David Stubbs has indicated that as well as enabling an earlier start on some Auckland projects the additional funding was likely to accelerate the development of Waikato Expressway projects, said Mr Allen.

Mr Allen noted that good progress had been made to date on construction of the Waikato Expressway with the Rangiriri to South of Ohinewai section and the Huntly internal bypass recently completed. The very expensive and challenging section between Mercer and Longswamp is currently under construction and due to be finished in 2006, while the median barrier between Longswamp and Rangiriri was opened this week. It connects to the barrier that is already in place on the Rangiriri to South of Ohinewai section and will result in full barrier or median protection from the foot of the Bombays to Ohinewai.

The forecast also outlines the replacement of several bridges in Coromandel as part of Project Peninsula under which a number of organisations are working together on integrated flood protection measures. Transit will improve the waterway capacity under the Te Puru Stream and the Tararu Stream bridges.

Transit plans to spend \$1.3 million over the next two years on providing more road information in the wider Waikato area especially forewarning of traffic delays for southbound traffic on the Bombay Hills. Work will continue on improving road information for snow and ice-affected areas and the provision of more weather stations. Information will also be provided for flood-prone sections of SH25.

Safety continues to be a major focus with plans to investigate and improve 'out of context' sections of state highway, remove or protect roadside hazards, further develop the provision of stock effluent disposal facilities and improve walking and cycling facilities. It is planned to spend \$5.5million over the next two years on route safety improvements on SH1 between Piare and Tokoroa and Tokoroa and Taupo.

On SH2 between Pokeno and Mangatarata it is proposed to implement major safety improvements. In addition to the works at Mangatawhiri, development work will continue at Maramarua. While the four-lane Maramarua Expressway is a long-term activity, improvement to some of the intersections together with passing lanes and traffic management improvement, will be undertaken in the meantime to improve safety and provide more

frequent passing opportunities.

It is also hoped to start work on the \$33 million SH1 Avalon Drive Bypass in 05/06. This project will relieve congestion through Hamilton's western suburbs.

The three-year plan includes:

- Hamilton intersection improvements at SH1/Morrinsville Road, SH1/Hillcrest Road, SH1 Kahikatea Drive/Ohaupo Road and SH1 Greenwood Street/Killarney Road
- a series of six new passing lanes on SH1, SH2, SH3 and SH25A. Additional passing lanes are provided for in the forecast depending on progress with other projects and the availability of regional funding
- two new stock effluent facilities at Putaruru and Te Kuiti
- planning and design for three future sections of the Waikato Expressway between Cambridge and Mercer – the Cambridge Bypass, Nagarauawahia Bypass and Rangiriri Bypass.

Expenditure in the Waikato outlined in the forecast for the 05/06 year is \$117 million while for the full 10 years it is planned to spend \$1.7 billion in the region. Of this a total of \$130 million is expected to come from regional distribution funding – the additional regional funding from the increase in petrol tax from 1 April 2005.

“Maintaining the current levels of service on the state highway in this area is also a key function for us, especially with our high levels of freight traffic. Almost half of the 10-year funding will be spent on maintenance and operations. This includes in addition to the provision of road information and safety projects already outlined, maintaining and improving skid resistance with the aim of further reducing wet-weather crashes and a seismic retrofitting programme for a small number of bridges.”

Transit's forecast this year is split into a one-year works' programme to which Transit was fully committed, a three-year plan with the best estimates of time and cost, and the balance of the 10-year forecast provided an indication of priorities but was less certain, he said.

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