WAKA KOTAHI
NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	RiverLink Interim Project Alliance Agreement (IPAA) Signing
Date	24 April 2023
Briefing number	BRI-2753

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	**Position**	**Direct line**	**Cell phone**	**1st contact**
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Action taken by Office of the Minister

- ☐ **Noted**
- ☐ **Seen by Minister**
- ☐ **Agreed**
- ☐ **Feedback provided**
- ☐ **Forwarded to**
- ☐ **Needs change [please specify]**
- ☐ **Withdrawn**
- ☐ **Overtaken by events**

24 April 2023

Hon Michael Wood – Minister of Transport

RiverLink Interim Project Alliance Agreement (IPAA) Signing

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with information about the RiverLink programme, prior to the Interim Project Alliance Agreement (IPAA) signing at the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday 2 May, from 8:20am to 9:20am.

Project funding and costs

2. Section 9(2)(j)

3.

Melling Transport Improvements

4. Key features of the Melling Transport Improvements include:

- A new road bridge and grade separated interchange at Melling.
- A new public transport hub by shifting the current Melling train station south to be co-located with a new bus hub, park and ride facilities
- A new pedestrian and cycle bridge over Te Awa Kairangi, linking Lower Hutt city centre to the new public transport hub.
- A new cycle path north from Bridge Street, extending the Petone to Melling portion of Te Ara Tupua along the rail corridor to the new public transport hub.
- Other new and upgraded walking and cycling facilities linking the transport hub to the river, and along the river corridor from Ewen Bridge up to Kennedy Good Bridge.

Flood protection

5. The height of the stop banks will be increased by one metre to strengthen flood defences and improve resilience.

6. The river channel will be widened to 90 metres giving more room for it to flow naturally. A wide channel will help a higher volume of water to pass during floods.

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7. The new Belmont wetland will help filter stormwater before it flows into the river. It also includes shallow and deep habitats to support indigenous plants that will improve water quality.

8. While improving Lower Hutt's flood defences, this project will also protect the ecological health of the river by creating more space for the river itself, more fish habitats, with a mix of pools, fast-flowing shallow water, vegetation, rocks, and undercut banks - all the things that short-fin eel (tuna), trout, whitebait (inanga) and common bully (toitoi) need to thrive.

City Revitalisation

9. Hutt City Council is investing in new roads, a pedestrian bridge over the river, and a development site that connects with the new river edge.

10. There will be a range of street-level improvements, for example creating pedestrian pathways and outdoor dining areas, improved lighting and street-based markets. Our vision also includes a riverbank park and the purchase of properties to support further development.

Mana whenua

11. As mana whenua of Te Awa Kairangi and surrounding lands, Taranaki Whānui and Ngāti Toa are crucial to the ongoing success of the RiverLink programme. We share three special objectives: Ora Tāngata, Ora Taiao, and Ora Wairua – wellbeing of people, the natural environment and of spirit.

12. The traditional cultural narrative of the Tupua, Ngake and Whātaitai, who created the river will be seen in design of built features and local history highlighted throughout the programme.

13. Prosperity for people will be created through employment, business and training opportunities as part of the delivery phase.

Project benefits

14. Key benefits of the RiverLink programme include:

    - 83 percent reduction in deaths and serious injuries.
    - improvement in travel time reliability on SH2.
    - 30 percent increase in rail trips by 2031.
    - significant growth in cycling trips and better travel options.
    - better transport resilience, with a 60 percent reduction in events affecting SH2.
    - the proposed cycleway infrastructure links in with Te Ara Tupua and completes the missing connection of what will become a primary cycle route between Wellington, Lower Hutt and the wider Hutt Valley with links to the Hutt River Trail.
    - The flood protection works will deliver an increase in protection to a 1 in 440-year event, and safeguard residents from future flood events that could affect up to 3,000 homes, five schools and 600 businesses, with the potential to cause an estimated $1.1 billion worth of damage.

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- City revitalisation benefits include turning Lower Hutt into a true 'river city', aiming to stimulate redevelopment and identify new opportunities for recreational, social and cultural activities.

- Beyond flood protection and transport upgrades, RiverLink aims to encourage urban growth and build the foundations of a modern, energetic city that looks to the future.

Project context

15. RiverLink is a partnership of five, with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council and iwi mana whenua Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika (Taranaki Whānui) and Ngāti Toa Rangatira (Ngāti Toa), all working together to transform central Lower Hutt.

16. The NZUP Melling Transport Improvements are a key element of the Waka Kotahi endorsed multi-modal strategy for SH2 Ngauranga to Te Marua, including increasing capacity on rail, increasing resilience and reliability of travel, and increasing mode shift to rail and active modes. The grade separated Melling Interchange is core to that strategy.

17. The Road to Zero and Vision Zero Safety Infrastructure Programme is investing in a series of safety improvements on SH2 in the greater Wellington region. Melling Transport Improvements removes the deficient Melling interchange contributing to and aligning with the Safety Infrastructure Programme.

18. Removing and replacing the existing Melling bridge is also critical to the flood protection works as it currently creates a pinch point in the river corridor. This is in alignment with the Hutt Valley Flood Management Plan being delivered by Greater Wellington Regional Council.

19. Final resource consents were granted, and Notices of Requirement confirmed for RiverLink from the Environment Court in November 2022.

20. With the approval of Joint Ministers, RiverLink released its Request for Proposal (RFP) to the public on 13 October 2022 and began the procurement process to find a suitable delivery alliance. Three alliance teams submitted to the process, with a final preferred proponent being confirmed in late March 2023.

21. The IPAA negotiations have been concluded with the preferred Alliance, and a mana whenua blessing of the Alliance was held on 17 April 2023 at Te Tatau o Te Pō Marae.

22. Signing the IPAA is a crucial milestone for the programme. With the delivery alliance coming on board, it demonstrates a continued positive momentum for the New Zealand Upgrade Programme, and RiverLink, as we finalise detailed design and costs for the programme.

23. As well as a strong example of partnering with iwi mana whenua, it is also an example of central-local government collaboration to deliver maximum community benefit.

24. It is expected this IPAA stage will take six months, and we will be able to agree a Project Alliance Agreement (PAA) by October 2023, and begin main construction works. RiverLink is expected to be completed in 2027.

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Key messages

25. Key messages of the RiverLink programme include:

- Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai is home to over 110,000 people and its population is rising.
- As the second largest city in the Wellington Region, investment in critical infrastructure is needed to unlock future urban and economic growth, help meet our carbon reduction plans through better transport choices and make the city more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- RiverLink is a transformational set of projects that will help us achieve those goals by substantially increasing the flood protection level of the river corridor, delivering better and more integrated transport options, and enabling a revitalisation of the Lower Hutt City centre.
- Removing and replacing the current Melling bridge will allow the river corridor to be widened and stop banks raised, removing a crucial pinch point in delivering flood protection works. Increasing resilience is also key, with the current connections to State Highway 2 suffering from multiple flooding events every year.
- Creating a grade separated interchange over SH2 will improve resilience and allow general traffic and freight to flow more efficiently through the corridor and make the surrounding area safer and more accessible to cyclists and pedestrians.
- The new public transport hub created by shifting the train station further south will allow us to better integrate public transport and active modes, and a new pedestrian bridge linking the city centre will make those options more accessible for everyone.
- Mode shift will be enabled by RiverLink, and it will give people a reason to leave their cars at home and take up more active transport options like walking and cycling. It will improve peoples' health and connect them more safely with jobs, schools, essential services, and recreation.
- The critical element to achieving these objectives has been the partnership approach taken by Hutt City Council, Waka Kotahi, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Taranaki Whānui and Ngāti Toa, all working together.

Ministerial Contract Signing

26. The event will be located at the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce, Level 3/15 Daly Street, Hutt Central, Lower Hutt 5010.

27. A welcome from mana whenua, speeches, and a contract signing ceremony will take place.

Key attendees to acknowledge

28. The key attendees invited for the RiverLink – Interim Project Alliance Agreement Signing include the following:

- Mana whenua partners Taranaki Whānui and Ngāti Toa
- Mayor Campbell Barry, Hutt City Council

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- Greater Wellington Regional Council Chair, Daran Ponter
- Local Councillors and MPs
- Section 9(2)(a), AECOM
- Section 9(2)(a), Fletcher Construction
- RiverLink Board Members and programme team

Media

29. We expect some local and national media interest.

30. Recent media has been supportive of the programme however some stakeholders believe greater investment is needed in actives modes to achieve mode shift targets and carbon reduction goals.

It is recommended that you:

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing.

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Emma Speight

Director Regional Relationships, Greater Wellington and Top of the South

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Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport

Date: 2023

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