MINO-708 Meeting advice: Takaanini level crossings project

20 April 2023

Providing background information about the Takaanini Level Crossings project as part of Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth programme, in light of the concerns raised by local community about the consultation and engagement process to date, and the meeting invitation you received from Dr Anae Neru Leavasa, MP for Takanini and Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki, List MP based in Papakura.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

Programme information

- To support existing and future urban growth, a well-designed integrated transport network for Auckland is needed.
- Waka Kotahi and Auckland Transport (AT) are working together through the Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth Alliance to investigate, and route protect the strategic transport networks required over the next 30 plus years to support Auckland's future urban growth areas.
- The future urban growth areas will be located across the Auckland region in the North West, Warkworth, North and South.
- Notices of Requirement (NoR) have recently been lodged for the designations in the North West and Airport to Botany project areas.
- In the case of the Takaanini Level Crossings project, approval to proceed with NoR lodgement comes from AT as the Requiring Authority, not Waka Kotahi.

Project information

- The Takaanini Level Crossings project (the Project) forms part of the South programme of works.
- The area is approximately 20 kilometres south of Auckland's central city and is around 30 kilometres in length.
- The South area has the largest proportion of future growth areas including Takaanini, Opāheke Drury, Drury West, Pukekohe-Paerata and Clarks Beach.
- The South Area Wide Indicative Business Case (South IBC) was undertaken by Te Tupu Ngātahi in 2018 and endorsed by Waka Kotahi and AT Boards in 2019.
- Development of a Detailed Business Case (DBC) is currently underway to designate the land required for the project. The DBC will be submitted to the Waka Kotahi and AT boards in May 2023 for endorsement, and NoR lodgement is planned to take place following endorsement.
- There are four existing level crossings and one new crossing in scope of the Project. Please refer to the Project's webpage at: https://findoutmore-supportinggrowth.nz/level-crossings-in-takaanini for more information on what and where the key features may be.

Why the project is needed

- After 2030, we expect trains to pass through level crossings on the Southern Line every 2 - 3 minutes. This includes the planned City Rail Link service. More trains will mean a bigger delay at level

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crossings because safety barrier gates will be down more often and for longer, exceeding half of every hour. Some people will take risks to avoid being delayed by safety barrier arms.

- The four Takaanini level crossings are forecasted to be amongst the most highly affected by the increasing barrier downtime.
- In the longer term (15 years+) the rail corridor is planned to expand from two tracks to four tracks.
- As level crossings are not permitted on four-track rail corridors, planning for the removal of level crossings is occurring across the wider Auckland region.

Current Project Phase

- This project is for option selection and route protection (identification of a footprint) only.
- The project is preparing for the route protection phase with lodgement of NoR planned for July 2023.
- Detailed design and construction will be later phases.
- Implementation is likely within the next 15 years, subject to regional funding priorities.

Engagement with the community to date

- Te Tupu Ngātahi has regularly engaged with the community throughout the development of the Programme and IBCs over the last seven years.
- In relation to the overall Southern network, feedback received was generally supportive of improved network resilience and better North-South movements.
- Targeted landowner engagement for the DBC development took place between 12 August to 26 September 2022.
- The project team heard from members of the community, local stakeholders and groups that felt as though they did not have enough time to give feedback. In response, a second engagement period ran between 5 November – 20 December 2022. This includes:
    - Community flyers drop
    - Landowner letters
    - 1:1 meetings
    - 2 x Business Breakfasts
    - 2 x Community information sessions (Saturday 5th November at the Community Hub Walters Road from 1-3pm, Tuesday 8th November drop-in event at Pullman Park Meeting room 5pm-7pm.)
    - Engagement with transport/freight stakeholders
    - Regular elected member updates
    - Mana whenua engagement
- Attachment 1 provides a high-level summary of the feedback we received from the community.

Engagement with s 9(2)(a)

- Specific landowner engagement is currently underway, including with s 9(2)(a) and other owners of the Takaanini Town Centre s 9(2)(a).
- This engagement provides an opportunity for individual landowners to have 1:1 meetings with the project team to answer questions on potential impacts on their properties.
- s 9(2)(a) has raised with us that they consider an option for an underpass rather than an overbridge is the better outcome.
- Our assessment has concluded that the level of construction impacts and complexity, risks and disruption for an underpass are anticipated to be much greater than an overbridge for the following reasons:

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    - The underpass is anticipated to take longer to construct as to maintain rail operations during construction, construction will need to be staged.
    - The soft ground conditions in Takaanini i.e., peat may require groundwater management, and there is a risk of settlement of the surrounding area and buildings.
    - There is potential for ground settlement that could require relevelling of the rail line which could impact rail operations during construction, further adding to the complexity and risk.
    - There will be greater impacts on existing utilities such as stormwater and local utilities will need to be relocated with an underpass.
- In addition, a bridge is preferred from a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) perspective due to the perceived threat/personal risk concerns with an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists.

Implication of pausing NoR lodgement

- As noted, AT is the Requiring Authority for this project and as such, has the decision-making authority on proceeding with lodgement.
- This work is the culmination of seven years of investigations and financial commitment by AT and Waka Kotahi working within the Alliance, aspiration setting and engagement with the local board, the community, landowners and other stakeholders in the South.
- Any delay to lodgement would mean that nearly 200 landowners are left in limbo with no certainty on what is happening to their property. Community feedback has strongly told us that they want us to get on with these projects and any further delay will stop them from getting on with their lives.
- The lodgement process, which is facilitated by Auckland Council, gives the public the opportunity to lodge submissions with the Council (whether supporting, opposing or seeking changes to the NoR and proposed designation boundary). This is an important formal opportunity for the public to support or object to some or all of the NoRs that is of interest at a hearing in front of independent commissioner.
- s 9(2)(g)(i)
- At this stage, lodgement is planned for July 2023 with ongoing stakeholder engagement until that time.
- s 9(2)(g)(i)
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Attendance Recommendation

- On 13 April 2023, Waka Kotahi received a letter on the same matter from Dr Leavasa MP, and co-signed by Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki, List MP based in Papakura, and Angela Dalton, Auckland Councillor (Manurewa-Papakura). A copy of the letter is enclosed as **Attachment 2**.
- In response to this letter, Te Tupu Ngātahi is currently organising an in-person meeting the MPs to discuss the landowners' concerns in more detail (date and time TBC).
- Steve Mutton, Director Regional Relationships (Northland/Auckland) will also attend as Waka Kotahi representative.
- Due to the ongoing engagement, we believe a meeting between Te Tupu Ngātahi and the MPs would be the most appropriate approach to take at this stage.
- As per the standard procedure, Waka Kotahi will provide the Minister with a meeting summary afterwards.

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Feedback summary
Takaanini Level Crossings

Between 12 August-26 September 2022 and 5 November-20 December 2022, we spoke to the community and potentially affected landowners about the level crossings project. This is a summary of the feedback we received across both periods.

81 responses overall

11 emailed pieces of feedback

2,278 visits to our online engagement platform

44 'pin drops' via social map

23 responses from landowners

26 survey responses

Online engagement

We received 70 pieces of feedback through our online engagement platform. Forty-four of these were 'pin drops' on the interactive map and 26 were survey responses. We also received 11 pieces of feedback via email.

Our online engagement platform:

- received 2,278 page views
- received 1,627 unique visits
- attracted 1,540 first-time visitors to the online platform.

We asked:

Level crossings are progressively being removed throughout Tāmaki Makaurau, to improve safety and reduce delays. Is this a good safety initiative for Takaanini?

61.5%

agreed that this is a good safety initiative.

Key themes:

Requests for more information

What you said

- People said they would like to see more information.
- We were asked to show 3D models or concept designs, and to explain the position, route, and height of the potential bridges.

What we have done/what we will do

- We re-opened engagement and presented information at two community open days in November 2022.
- We are still investigating our options, so we cannot provide design details at this stage. Detailed design will occur closer to construction.

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Using underground space at Walters Road

What you said

- Some pieces of feedback queried why the potential Walters Road crossing is not an underpass.
- Other pieces of feedback wanted to see the rail tracks go underground, or for the rail line to become a 'subway'.

What we have done/what we will do

- The underpass has greater complexity, risks and impacts than a bridge, such as soft ground conditions and resilience in extreme weather events. Additionally, the level of construction impacts and complexity, risk and disruption from an underpass is anticipated to be greater than a bridge.

Active modes

What you said

- The feedback received questioned if the community would embrace active modes. We were told that it is currently unsafe to walk or cycle around Takaanini, and that the current community do not walk or cycle often.

What we have done/what we will do

- We are proposing to provide active modes facilities at all proposed crossings in the project. This will provide the community with safe, user friendly facilities, and give the community more transport options.

Potential closure of the Spartan Road and Manuroa Road level crossings

What you said

- We heard from freight industry stakeholders that this is an important route for movement and business.
- People were concerned that the potential closure of Spartan Road would direct heavy vehicle traffic into residential streets, and create congestion.
- People do not support the proposed closure of Manuroa Road, as it is used by thousands of vehicles a day.
- Some pieces of feedback did not think Oakleigh Avenue could support an increase in traffic movements should both of these crossings close.

What we have done/what we will do

- We are proposing to provide a new alternative crossing at Manuia Road.
- We are unable to grade separate at Spartan Road, due to the proximity of the Takanini interchange. There is not enough space, and constructing a crossing here would seriously impact the surrounding environment. The current level crossing also has a poor safety record.
- We have proposed to close the Manuroa Road crossing to ensure an even distribution of the potential bridges over the rail corridor, which would maximise the benefits of these bridges.

Amenities

What you said

- People were concerned about the impact of the bridges over the rail corridor on the community. Feedback touched on concerns relating to noise, vibration, visual amenity, and land use amongst others.

What we have done/what we will do

- We are carrying out further investigations as part of the Detailed Business Case process. These will help the project team understand these impacts in greater detail.

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Grade separation at Takaanini Train Station

What you said

- You said that the level crossing over the rail corridor into the station is unsafe and should be removed.

What we have done/what we will do

- We have passed this feedback on to Auckland Transport, as it is not within this project's scope.

What are some of the things that people said?

"This is long overdue. But definitely better late than never. So I definitely support this."

"Doesn't seem a good idea, as the traffic is already overstretched. Unless there are options created the construction period will create nightmares for residents and vehicles"

"...NZ track crossings in general are very poor compared to other OECDs. I suggest you dig down to lower the tracks, and convert the current crossing road into a bridge. This will have absolute minimum impact to current road users, cyclists and pedestrians."

"I agree with grade separating this crossing for pedestrians [and] cyclists. This part of Auckland is highly unfriendly to cycling, and needs assertive action to provide safe, separated cycling infrastructure, beginning with this level crossing..."

Next steps

The Auckland Transport and Waka Kotahi Boards will consider the Takaanini Level Crossings Detailed Business Case in mid-2023, and lodgement of Notice of Requirements to support route protection of the preferred alignments will occur in mid-2023.

The project is currently without funding for detailed design and construction, with construction not expected to begin for another 10 to 20 years.

Contact us

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Labour

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Steve Mutton
Director Regional Relationships
Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

Theresa Walsh
South Area Lead Stakeholder Engagement
Te Tupu Ngatahi Supporting Growth

Re: Concerns around the Current Proposals for Grade Separation in Takaanini

Dear Mr. Mutton & Ms. Walsh,

We, Dr. Anae Neru Leavasa and Anahila Kanongata a-Suisuiki, Members of Parliament, and Councillor Angela Dalton, are writing on behalf of the Takanini community to express our concerns regarding the current proposals for grade separation in the area. We urge a pause on the Notice of Requirements expected to be lodged on the Takanini Level Crossings project in mid-July to allow for further options analysis prior to the commencement of further designation work.

During a recent meeting held on Monday 3 April 2023, representatives from various groups met to discuss their concerns regarding the current proposals for grade separation in Takanini. The group included consultants with planning and geotechnical expertise. The meeting revealed that Supporting Growth Alliance had significantly understated the proposal s impact, and there are concerns about the current narrow approach to designations, which could result in the loss of our flat, connected suburb. Despite this, all parties agreed that grade separation was necessary to avoid level crossings cutting Takaanini in half for at least 30 minutes every hour during peak travel times.

Local councillors and Papakura MP Judith Collins were also present at this meeting. They agreed to advocate for the project s submission to be halted due to a variety of concerns, including accessibility issues, crime and graffiti issues, and the belief that the Supporting Growth Alliance is not being transparent about its plans.

We were informed of a meeting held with the Planners responsible for writing the Notice of Requirements (NOR) and the group s planning consultant, s 9(2)(a), to ascertain the details of the proposed sequencing of the works, the proposed detailed designs, which properties will be directly affected by the Notice of Requirements, and how these tie in with the 4 lane tracks proposed by Kiwirail and the future bus routes through the area. Unfortunately, the answers to the community s questions were inadequate, and the Supporting Growth Team would not allow copies of any information to be taken from the meeting.

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Our desired outcome is to ensure that the interests and concerns of the residents, businesses, and community groups of the wider Takanini area are considered and adequately represented in the proposals for grade separation in Takanini. We request a pause on the lodgement of the Notice of Requirements, to ensure that the plans are not locked in for the next 30 years. We also request further and clearer engagement and communication with everyone who will be impacted by the project, as well as consideration of other options with clear plans that give full context to the community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

Dr Anae Neru Leavasa
MP for Takanini

Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki
List MP based in Papakura

Angela Dalton
Auckland Councillor, Manurewa-Papakura

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