

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Notices of requirement for designations under section 168 of the Act, in relation to Te Ahu a Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project

**BY**

**NEW ZEALAND TRANSPORT AGENCY**  
Requiring Authority

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JONATHAN PETER KENNETT (WALKING  
AND CYCLING) ON BEHALF OF THE NEW ZEALAND TRANSPORT  
AGENCY**

**8 March 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. My name is **Jonathan Peter Kennett**.
2. I am a Senior Project Manager – Walking and Cycling for the New Zealand Transport Agency ("**Transport Agency**").
3. In this role, I am responsible for developing the National Cycling Network and working in partnership with Ministry for Business, Innovation, and Employment ("**MBIE**") to assess funding proposals for cycle trails. I also provide expert advice and guidance on special cycling projects.
4. Since September 2018, I have been providing technical advice and guidance on the Transport Agency's Notices of Requirement ("**NoRs**") lodged on 2 November 2018 in respect of Te Ahu a Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project ("**the Project**") in respect of walking and cycling matters.
5. While I am not giving expert evidence in this matter, I have the following qualifications and experience relevant to my evidence:
  - (a) I hold a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in ecology;
  - (b) I have been writing cycling guidebooks since 1991, including mountain bike guidebooks, road cycling guide books, cycle trail guidebooks, a bike-packing guidebook, and cycling history books;
  - (c) since 1993, I have organised numerous cycling events including the Karapoti Classic, National and World Mountain Bike Championships, and the Tour Aotearoa bikepacking ride from Cape Reinga to Bluff;
  - (d) between 1998 and 2001 I was the co-manager of the Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park, now Wellington's most popular cycling destination;
  - (e) since 1998, I have designed walking and cycling infrastructure for various m, including mountain bike tracks, sections of Te Araroa Trail, a sealed shared path in a regional park (Queen Elizabeth Park at Paekakariki), and various other tracks and trails;
  - (f) from 2009 to 2011 I was a member of a Technical Assessment Group assessing applications for New Zealand Cycle Trails project; and
  - (g) between 2010 and 2017 I was a Project Manager for the New Zealand Cycle Trail project at MBIE. In that role I assessed feasibility and market demand for 22 Great Rides, developed the NZ Cycle Network,

co-wrote the NZ Cycle Trail Design Guide, audited all Great Rides upon completion, and assessed all Heartland Rides.

6. In preparing this evidence I have:
  - (a) reviewed the technical assessment and evidence of **David Dunlop**;
  - (b) attended a meeting with Mr Dunlop to review plans for the proposed corridor;
  - (c) attended numerous meetings and workshops with submitters raising issues regarding cycling, including Tararua District Council ("**TDC**", submitter 240), Palmerston North City Council ("**PNCC**", submitter 237), Horizons Regional Transport Committee (submitter 292), Te Āpiti Governance Group (submitter 374), Sport Manawatū (submitter 300), representatives of the 'Build the Path' group (submitter 316 and numerous other submissions), Manawatū Mountain Bike Club (submitter 373), and Cycle Action Network ("**CAN**"); and
  - (d) undertaken a preliminary analysis of the various options discussed relating to a proposed cycleway and estimated the user numbers relating to potential market groups.

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

7. In my evidence I do not discuss the effects of the Project on walking and cycling, as they are discussed in some detail in the evidence of **David Dunlop**. As **Mr Dunlop** explains, the Project benefits cycling and walking in various ways and, as **Sarah Downs** states in her evidence, alongside this Project the Transport Agency is committing to addressing a long-standing 'gap' in the walking and cycling network by constructing a dedicated facility on or adjoining the existing Ashhurst Bridge. The Transport Agency is also committing to providing a pedestrian facility (in addition to the cyclable shoulders) on the new bridge across the Manawatū River, with the details to be worked through during the later design process, as well as enhanced connectivity in other respects.
8. Rather, my evidence focuses on the desire expressed by many submitters for a separated path to be constructed as part of the Project to facilitate walking, cycling, and horse trekking between Ashhurst and Woodville. It is intended to demonstrate the considerations and assumptions that will need to be worked

through and tested by the Transport Agency and others, in deciding whether to implement a recreational proposal in future.

9. In particular, my evidence:
  - (a) summarises my initial market assessment of a separated pedestrian and cycling path (and potentially a bridleway) between Ashhurst and Woodville, the demand for which is likely to differ depending on the nature and route of the path;
  - (b) comments on submissions received in respect of the NoRs that are relevant to my evidence; and
  - (c) responds to relevant questions asked by the Hearing Panel, including in relation to the possible future route of the New Zealand Cycle Trail.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

10. I present below a preliminary market assessment of three types of 'product' for a separated pedestrian and cycling path (and potentially a bridleway) between Ashhurst and Woodville.
11. This analysis demonstrates that a number of potential connections would provide attractive recreation opportunities in the area, including the use of the old Gorge road, which would be an excellent outcome (provided that geotechnical and safety issues can be addressed sufficiently). It is also an asset held by the Transport Agency, so would not require private land to implement, unlike other options analysed adjacent to or near the new road or through the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve.
12. The Project does not preclude the use of the old Gorge road being implemented in future, subject to the outcome of discussions with adjoining landowners, tangata whenua, and stakeholders – and, importantly, to the current geotechnical and health and safety risks being addressed. Nor does it preclude other recreational facilities in future, over and above the challenges that exist currently.

### **PRELIMINARY MARKET ASSESSMENT FOR A SEPARATED WALKING AND CYCLING PATH AND BRIDLEWAY BETWEEN ASHHURST AND WOODVILLE**

13. The various submissions on the NoRs propose a number of different potential forms, functions, and routes for connections for active modes – cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians – between Ashhurst and Woodville. For example, I understand that:

- (a) many submissions in support of Build the Path seek a path from Ashhurst to Woodville “*as part of the new highway route*”, which I understand to mean a sealed path either alongside or near the route of the new road;
  - (b) others seek access via the start and end of the new highway to gravel trails planned on the north side of the Manawatū River;
  - (c) others raise the prospect of a walking and cycling connection using the old road through the Manawatū Gorge, on the south side of the Manawatū River; and
  - (d) other submitters seek a bridleway connection. One submitter, Arthur Yeo, told me that he guided around 500 people a year on land around the planned highway and wants to have the ability to continue guiding people there in future.
14. As **Sarah Downs** explains in her evidence, there are a number of important tasks for the Transport Agency to carry out in assessing potential opportunities to provide for active modes, including:
- (a) processes to consider funding priorities and alignment with national and local planning documents;
  - (b) discussions with landowners; and
  - (c) statutory processes to consider environmental effects and obtain any necessary approvals.
15. To illustrate the type of considerations that would need to be worked through in detail, I have undertaken an initial market assessment of three ‘product’ options for an Ashhurst to Woodville path/trail. The three product options are:
- (a) a sealed shared path alongside the new highway (but outside the wire rope barrier);
  - (b) a recreation trail on the northern side of the Manawatū Gorge, mostly away from the new highway, with an aggregate surface for much of its length; and
  - (c) a recreation/commuter trail using the old road through Manawatū Gorge.
16. The expected “user types” for these facilities would be:

- (a) commuters between Woodville and Ashhurst (and surrounds, including Palmerston North);
  - (b) local recreational cyclists, walkers and runners;
  - (c) domestic holiday-makers;
  - (d) New Zealand bike-packers/cycle tourers;
  - (e) international bike-packers/cycle tourers;
  - (f) international tourists travelling by car or campervan;
  - (g) equestrians; and
  - (h) participants in walking/running/cycling events.
17. A number of key assumptions or inputs have been identified to inform this initial market analysis. These establish parameters and drivers for use of facilities and help assess projected user numbers. While some involve quantitative inputs, other assumptions would need to be tested robustly and worked through with stakeholders in order to complete an evaluation of options.
18. The key assumptions and inputs are as follows:
- (a) The easier a route is, the higher the number of users there will be.
  - (b) The more scenic, quiet and generally enjoyable the route, the higher the number of users.
  - (c) The number of commuters using any connection is likely to be relatively low, due to the low population in Woodville (1,500) and the distance from Woodville to Palmerston North (approximately 30 km, entailing a 1.5-hour ride on a normal bike, or 50 minutes on e-bike, assuming a route over the Ruahine Ranges).
  - (d) The approximate populations of key centres are Palmerston North: 87,300; Ashhurst: 3,062; and Woodville: 1,500.
  - (e) In Palmerston North, 5.9% of commuters travel by bicycle (in the past, the mode share was 11%).
  - (f) The estimated maximum number of cycle commuters in Woodville is 89, assuming the same percentages as Palmerston North (which is likely to be a high assumption, because commuter numbers tend to be

higher in cities). In terms of how many of these people might commute from Woodville to Palmerston North, I estimate that at most 10 people would commute by bicycle (or e-bike) to Palmerston North per day. This number may grow as the number of e-bikes grows, or if the Manawatū Gorge could be opened to walkers and cyclists as a commuting route.

- (g) Many walkers or runners currently use the Department of Conservation's ("DOC") Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve track(s); DOC estimates put the numbers of people per year at 69,761 (this was from 2017-2018 counter data; numbers were a few thousand higher before the road through the Gorge closed). Comments made to me by some locals indicate that the tracks are too busy. Most of these people would likely choose another option, or do a loop trip using additional paths/trails available.
- (h) The Manawatū River is developing into a significant recreation area. Plans are to increase active recreation.
- (i) A trail/path would likely be used in various ways (depending on its form and location), including:
  - (i) as a there-and-back trip up to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve and/or a lookout point from western end;
  - (ii) as a through-trip; and
  - (iii) as part of a loop trip for walkers and potentially cyclists who also use Saddle Road/Pahiatua Track.
- (j) If the surface was sealed, it would be used by road cyclists. However, more and more road cyclists are buying 'gravel bikes' to get away from traffic by riding on gravel roads and trails.
- (k) A shared path that is largely within the DOC Scenic Reserve is likely to be more popular than the existing Scenic Reserve walking track as it could be used by both walkers and cyclists and may have suspension bridges from which there would be good views (as per plans developed by the Frame Group Limited<sup>1</sup> and DOC in 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> The Frame Group is a business of expert and prolific walking and cycling trail designers.

- (l) There would be potential for a nationally significant annual event for walkers and/or cyclists; examples on other trails attract around 1000 entrants (e.g. 866 on The Taniwha on the Waikato River Trail, 1,500 on Hawke's Bay Trail The Big Easy, and 800 on the Great Lake Trail walk/run).
- (m) Areas where there are loop options are considerably more attractive than through-trips for local recreational users.
- (n) Most of the people that would commute on a shared path beside the highway across this terrain are likely to be confident adult cyclists. Some of these cyclists may also use the road shoulder, especially if it is more direct compared to a separated path that zig-zags to reduce the gradient. Therefore, there may be reduced additional gain from a shared path right beside the road for commuting compared with the shoulders provided by the Project, because many of those people that are put off by only having a shoulder to ride in are also likely to be put off by the distance and topography (12 km and 250m climb).
- (o) There is demand for a path beside the proposed highway for the first kilometre at the western end, to gain access to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve on the northern side of the Gorge.
- (p) The new road would be physically easier and faster to cycle on than Saddle Road or Pahiatua Track given that the total distance and amount of climbing would be less.
- (q) It is unclear how equestrians would access the proposed facilities, given that the new clip-on on the Ashhurst Bridge (if that is the solution provided) would have to be lightweight, because the bridge cannot support a heavy structure. Equestrians in the past have used Saddle Road Bridge to cross the Manawatū River.
- (r) According to one well-known local equestrian and guide, there are 500 equestrians in the Ashhurst area, and he personally guides a similar number per year.
- (s) It is unlikely that DOC would allow horses on a trail through the Scenic Reserve.
- (t) If cyclists could e-bike on the old road through Manawatū Gorge, the commuting time would be quite fast and clearly the easiest option, as

well as being safer than Pahiatua Track which has relatively high volumes of large trucks. This is likely to be an appealing option for the rapidly growing number of people who own e-bikes.

- (u) Recreational road riders would see an appealing loop around Saddle Road and the new highway. Those on gravel bikes would also use a recreational path. This could attract 3,000-4,000 trips per year, based on Strava data analysed by the Transport Agency (Strava is an online platform connecting people's personal GPS units to a website that automatically shows where they have cycled or walked/run).
  - (v) Of course, all of these options assume that land is available to implement them and that any cultural concerns and adverse environmental effects can be appropriately addressed.
19. Taking into account these inputs and assumptions, my initial estimate of demand (as reviewed by my colleagues at the Transport Agency) is as set out below in **Table 1**.

Market sector	Projected users: sealed path near highway	Projected users: recreational trail away from highway	Projected users: Manawatū Gorge
<b>Commuters</b>	10/day 2,000/year	10/day 2,000/year	30/day 6,000/year
<b>Local recreational riders and walkers</b>	5,000	50,000	80,000
<b>Domestic holiday-makers</b>	10,000  Just to bridge / lookout / scenic reserve.	20,000	40,000
<b>New Zealand bikepackers/cycle tourers</b>	1,000	2,000	3,000
<b>International bikepackers/cycle tourers</b>	400	400	600
<b>International tourists travelling by car/campervan</b>	500	2,000	5,000
<b>Equestrians</b>	500	(nil if through the Reserve)	1000
<b>Events</b>	0	1,000	1,000
<b>Total</b>	19,400	77,400	136,600

**Table 1: demand estimates** (Note: these numbers are for visits per year. One local person may visit a number of times each year, whereas tourists are likely to only visit once and may not return).

20. It will also be necessary to factor robust cost estimates into the overall analysis of potential options. Some initial estimates have been provided by GHD are as follows:
- (a) a sealed shared path alongside the new highway – approximately \$20 million (which would have to be funded entirely by the Transport Agency);
  - (b) a recreation trail with a mostly aggregate surface – approximately \$6 million funded by the Transport Agency (relating to the sections beside the highway at both ends) plus \$2 million (local councils or Provincial Growth Fund to fund the middle 8-10 km); and
  - (c) using the old road through the Manawatū Gorge – the costs of this are uncertain given the ongoing risk, but would relate to installing an automatic slip warning system or systems and building a structure or structures over/around the potential major slip site(s).
21. A full analysis of risks will also be required. Risks to be factored are likely to include the following:
- (a) Risks associated with the recreation trail outside the highway designation include that land access cannot be obtained for a suitable trail corridor to build a Grade 3 Trail,<sup>2</sup> that the trail is not feasible due to difficult terrain, or that there are areas that are too environmentally and/or culturally sensitive.
  - (b) A risk of using the old road through the Manawatū Gorge would be a landslide closing the route and/or causing harm to users. A related risk could be that maintenance costs are unaffordable.
22. A further step in the analysis would be to consider the benefits, primarily economic and health-related, from each user type, against the cost of each product. Clearly, the higher the use of the facility, the greater the likely benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> This would be a shared trail built to Grade 3 (Intermediate) NZ Cycle Trail standards, which is gentle enough to be used by almost all people on foot, and suitable for use by a range of bikes.

23. In conclusion, a more detailed analysis of the options outlined above would likely rank a path through the Manawatū Gorge the highest (depending on cost) and a shared path beside the new highway lowest (albeit that usage of such a path would likely be higher than cyclists commuting or touring across the Ranges via the Project, using the road shoulder). There may also be options for a path/trail somewhere in between a path right beside the highway, and one far away from the highway, but these options have not yet been considered.
24. It is likely that a path right beside the highway would not receive enough use to justify the costs. However, a path partly beside the highway and partly away from the highway has the potential to receive considerable use, equal to and above the existing DOC walking track in the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve. As **Ms Downs** notes, however, it is unclear at this stage whether affected landowners (including Meridian) and tangata whenua would support such a path.
25. The old Gorge road option is very attractive in terms of benefits, and could potentially be relatively low in cost, and as such would be an excellent outcome, on the obviously important proviso that geotechnical and safety issues can be addressed sufficiently. It is also an asset held by the Transport Agency, so would not require private land to implement.
26. As noted in **Ms Downs'** evidence, it would also be possible to provide walking and cycling access from the Woodville end, into the Gorge on the old highway for 2.5 km to Barney's Point. This area is of significance to Māori. Subject to the relevant processes being worked through, I consider that this route would be attractive to a variety of users.

## **COMMENTS ON SUBMISSIONS**

27. A large number of submissions have been received on walking and cycling. In particular:
  - (a) around 700 submissions were received in support of Build the Path;
  - (b) around 30 other submissions sought a separated walking and cycling path to be included as part of the Project (similar to the Build the Path submissions);
  - (c) three submissions sought that the Project provide for the 'Lindauer Trail', a proposed walkway from Woodville along SH3 to the Manawatū

Gorge Walking Track via the Ferry Reserve, in honour of the painter Gottfried Lindauer; and

- (d) a number of submitters, including the Manawatū Mountain Biking Club (submission 373) and Sport Manawatū (submission 300) sought that the Project provide for future mountain biking trails that may be established on the northern side of Manawatū Gorge, and (in the case of Manawatū Mountain Biking Club's submission) in the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve.

28. I will address each of these issues raised by submitters below.

**'Build the Path'**

- 29. As noted above, I met with representatives of Build the Path on 1 and 15 February 2019. On a personal note, it was great to see people mobilising to support active transport infrastructure.
- 30. However, as discussed above, the preliminary market assessment indicates that a separated path right beside the highway would not be a good option. Rather, there may be other potential options that would likely be more suitable, subject to further engagement and other processes playing out, such as a walking and cycling path along the old Gorge Road – provided that the geotechnical and associated risk issues can be addressed. Further, as identified above, a shared path that is largely through the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve would likely be even more popular than the existing walking tracks in the area.
- 31. Further, as also identified in my preliminary market assessment, I assume that most of the people who would commute on a shared path beside the highway over such a hill and distance would be confident adult cyclists. It is my assessment that some of those commuters would also be likely to use the road shoulder, especially if it was more direct compared to a separated path that zig-zagged to reduce the gradient. Therefore, there may be reduced additional gain from a shared path for commuting compared with the shoulders that are already to be provided through the Project, because those people who are put off by only having a shoulder to ride in will also likely be put off by the distance and topography.
- 32. However, if a shared path was made more appealing, by providing more separation and a vegetative screen and some features to attract people, then the number of users would be higher. Given the design of the new highway required large cuts and fills, this would be quite challenging.

### **Other submissions seeking a separated walking and cycling path**

33. As set out above, a number of submissions were received from individual submitters seeking the inclusion of a separated walking and cycling path as part of the Project.
34. I met with a number of these submitters, including PNCC, Horizons, TDC, and the Te Āpiti Gorge Governance Group, who sought that the first 1 to 2 km and the last 1 to 2 km of the new highway accommodate a shared path that would provide access for them to build a gravel trail the length of the Manawatū Gorge. A draft master plan has now been provided, and is attached to **Ms Downs'** evidence.
35. Discussions with the councils have also highlighted that planning for trails on the northern side of Manawatū Gorge dates back to 2011 or earlier. DOC and a professional trail designer from the Frame Group Ltd completed a feasibility study for a trail mostly in the Scenic Reserve in 2011. Then DOC and Tourism Recreation Conservation consultants ("**TRC**") did a feasibility study for mountain bike trails in 2016. A combination of these options seems to have morphed into a plan for a trail that is included in the draft master plan.
36. **Ms Downs** notes that the draft master plan document has only just been received and is in an incomplete state, and that the level of landowner and iwi support for those plans is unclear.

### **Submitters concerned with the Lindauer Arts Trail**

37. As **Ms Downs** explains, the Transport Agency intends to provide for part of the Lindauer Arts Trail by extending a shared path from where it currently ends (just west of Woodville) to the new roundabout at the eastern end of the highway. There will also be walking and cycling paths around this roundabout.

### **COMMENTS ON QUESTIONS BY THE HEARING PANEL**

38. I comment in this section of my evidence on questions asked by the Hearing Panel that are relevant to my evidence.

**It is stated that there are fundamental operational issues in relation to terrain for both Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track. Please provide clarification of how, in your view, these routes are suitable for cyclists given those terrain constraints.**

39. These routes involve climbing and descending several hundred metres (compared with 240-260 metres climbing on the new highway). They are suitable for fit and experienced cyclists and are mainly used by sport road cyclists and cycle tourists/bikepackers.

**Has your opinion on the likely use of the new route by cyclists changed in light of the number of submitters requesting the provision of a shared pathway for cycling and walking along the new route?**

40. My answer depends on what type of facility is provided.

41. My assessment of the likely use of a road shoulder or shared path *right beside* the highway has not changed in light of the number of submissions. However, the submissions have made me revisit the range of facilities that could be provided, ranging from a shared path beside the road, to a shared path well away from the road. Indeed, some of the submitters were requesting an option I had not previously seen proposed: a shared path beside the highway only for the first 1-2 km, to provide access to a path that is then away from the highway for the majority of the route (which would have a high recreation and tourism value).

42. The assumptions on which my preliminary assessment are based include that the further from a road a path is, the more appealing it is and, therefore, the more it is used. Even being able to provide a narrow vegetative screen between a road and a path makes a significant improvement in the user experience.

43. Other important factors in determining the use of any potential shared path in this context would be viewing sites providing destinations, and other recreational facilities that may provide destinations and would drive up the use of any shared path leading to them.

44. Prior to meeting with submitters, I was largely unaware of the plans for walking and cycling facilities on the northern side of Manawatū Gorge in the last ten years.

45. Again, however, it is not clear to me that there is a consensus of views as to the form of a possible cycling facility, or that it would have the support of landowners (including Meridian) or tangata whenua. These are matters that need to be worked through, and considered alongside other possibilities such as a path along the old Gorge road.

**Have you consulted with the NZ Cycle Trail administrators regarding their preference for the national trail – namely reinstating the Pahiatua Track or instead routing the trail over the new route?**

46. Yes, the Transport Agency has been discussing this with NZ Cycle Trail Inc. and my colleagues and I will write a recommendation paper on the options before the new highway is opened. Our recommendation will be to move the NZ Cycle Trail Heartland Ride from Pahiatua Track to Saddle Road (unless a path is opened through the old Gorge Road, in which case we will recommend that route). This is because it is of a comparable standard or better than many other Heartland Rides, and will be preferable to Pahiatua Track due to the traffic volumes being so much lower on Saddle Road (250 vehicles a day compared with 2200 vehicles a day) and the work the Transport Agency is carrying out to provide a safe crossing of SH3 at the Woodville roundabout. I expect that NZ Cycle Trail Inc. will accept our recommendation.

**In your opinion, are the proposed shoulders wide enough to ensure the safety of cyclists?**

**Will cyclists and pedestrians be on the traffic side or the non-traffic side of any road side barriers?**

47. Cyclists and pedestrians will be on the traffic side of the road side barriers; the Project does not include a separated facility for cyclists, as **Ms Downs** explains, but the shoulder provided could be used by cyclists. A shoulder does not provide the separation of a physical barrier that would avoid altogether the risk of a conflict between a motor vehicle and a cyclist. However, the proposed shoulder width, in conjunction with ATP (rumble strips) between the shoulders and traffic lanes, and 'shy space' between the shoulder and the roadside barrier, will provide a considerably higher level of safety for cyclists than the old Manawatū Gorge road did.

## **COMMENTS ON COUNCIL SECTION 42A REPORTS**

48. I have read the recreation evidence of Jeff Baker, with whom I have met during the course of my meetings with submitters, and other relevant aspects of the section 42A report. I have set out above, in response to questions from the Hearing Panel, comments about the relative safety of the proposed shoulders for cyclists, and other possible future recreational opportunities in the area.

**Jonathan Peter Kennett**

**8 March 2019**