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## MIN-4065 Notes on Bay of Plenty transport issues for Prime Minister Hipkins.

8 February 2023

Notes on transport issues in the Bay of Plenty region to support his meeting with the Bay of Plenty Times newspaper on 9 February 2023. Key issues noted include maintenance, new infrastructure, speed reviews, active mode and public transport, and changes to tolling on the Tauranga Eastern Link.

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### Regional overview and key messaging.

- Our focus in the Bay of Plenty is to create a safer, more resilient transport system to provide communities with access to employment, education and essential services as well as managing the increasing impacts of climate change.
- The role of transport varies across Bay of Plenty with three distinct sub-regions that have different needs, all requiring strong partnerships with local government, tangata whenua and key stakeholders to plan and deliver innovative system-wide outcomes.
- The local economy is largely reliant on export industries, such as agriculture, horticulture and forestry. The Port of Tauranga is a significant contributor to New Zealand's economy, handling 25% of the country's imports and exports. Maintaining safe, reliable and robust freight connections including State Highways 1/29 (SH1/29) and the North Island Main Trunk/East Coast Main Trunk rail line within the region and to neighbouring regions is critical to supporting both regional and national economies.
- The region continues to experience substantial population growth particularly in the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region. Rotorua, and more recently Eastern Bay of Plenty towns such as Whakatāne, are beginning to experience reasonable population and economic growth after a flat period over the past 10 to 20 years. With regional partners, we are working to manage this growth to ensure it supports well-connected communities and safe, sustainable transport options through:
- Those living in the region's urban areas remain heavily reliant on private vehicle use. Nearly 90% of journeys to and from work in Rotorua and Tauranga are by private vehicle. Getting people to use safe, accessible and reliable ways to move around the cities is a priority focus for investment in the 2021-24 National Land Transport Plan (NLTP) where the focus is on public transport and walking and cycling.

### Maintenance and impact of late-January 2023 weather event.

- We have experienced significant rainfall throughout summer, and this has led to an increase in defects of the BOP state highway network. We acknowledge this is frustrating for road users, and we are working with our contractors to manage the network appropriately.
- The wet weather has resulted in numerous minor slips, flooding and road surface issues across the region which were generally cleared within 24 hours and did not close the roads for long periods of time.



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- There are two significant slips one on SH29 Lower Kaimai Range and one near Waihou Bay on SH35. Both are being investigated by Geotech engineers.
  - SH29 slip – we have closed a crawler lane which slows traffic movement
  - SH35 hasn't encroached further into the shoulder so traffic flow is currently unimpeded. Further significant deterioration of this slip would cause a major issue with no quick fix and a lengthy detour. We will know more once the investigation is complete.
- Potholes continue to develop across the network as a result of the huge amounts of rain, ongoing use by many more heavy vehicles than the roads were designed for and vegetation growth along shoulders which prevent the increased volumes of water from running off the road as quickly and easily as is desired.
- There has been \$70 million worth of funding approved for the region as part of the 2022/23 summer maintenance programme. 200 lane kilometres will receive maintenance works to ensure the safety and resilience of the network.

#### **New infrastructure in the region.**

- There are a number of infrastructure projects ongoing or planned for the Bay of Plenty region. These include new roads and improvements to existing roads to make them safer and more resilient to growth.
- *SH2 Baypark to Bayfair Link*
  - The Baypark to Bayfair Link project will complete the SH2 Eastern Corridor, transform how people move through the area and contribute to a safer and more resilient transport network in Tauranga.
  - It will improve safety for everyone by separating local traffic from the state highway and rail corridor and provide safer walking and cycling connections.
  - The project is running to schedule and due to be completed in late 2023.
  - The total project cost is \$262 million.
- *SH29 Tauriko Enabling Works*
  - Alongside the long-term planning work for Tauriko West, Waka Kotahi and Tauranga City Council have identified initial improvements required to the transport network. These upgrades, called the Tauriko Enabling Works, will improve safety at SH29/Cambridge Road and SH29/Redwood Lane intersections, enable development within Tauriko West, support continued development of Tauriko Business Estate, protect freight routes to the Port of Tauranga and improve access to public transport, walking and cycling.
  - Currently completing the detailed design and seeking statutory approvals. The programme for construction is being developed, with the goal to move into construction in late 2023 for the SH29/Redwood Lane roundabout.
  - Construction is expected to take 36 months and will be carried out in stages.



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- *Takitimu North Link Stage One*

- 6.8km expressway and active mode path between Tauranga and Te Puna, funded as part of the New Zealand Upgrade Programme (NZUP).
- Main construction is now underway on the \$655 million project and there have been big changes across the site since the contractor, the Fulton Hogan and HEB Joint Venture, started work in December 2021. The works include the construction of eight bridges, three million cubic metres of earthworks, 29 culverts, eight stream diversions and seven wetlands. The project will also see around 900,000 plants planted within the project area, with a focus on locally sourced flora.
- The project is making progress one year into construction with environmental controls in place, site accesses established, five bridges in construction, a site office opened, and critical utilities relocation work underway.

- *Ōmokoroa Road Intersection (lead agency: Western Bay of Plenty District Council)*

- In July 2022 it was announced the State Highway 2 / Ōmokoroa Road intersection will receive a \$43 million upgrade to address safety and capacity issues, and unlock housing potential in Ōmokoroa.
- Western Bay of Plenty District Council secured \$38.292 million from the Kāinga Ora-managed Infrastructure Acceleration Fund, for the project. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has contributed \$5 million to the upgrade, and supplied land worth \$1.49 million.
- The upgrade will include the construction of a new interim roundabout at the State Highway 2 / Ōmokoroa Road intersection, four-laning on Ōmokoroa Road from SH2 to Prole Road, and a second roundabout, servicing the industrial area, at the future Francis Road intersection.
- This funding unlocks critical housing supply for the region by solving the existing safety and capacity issues at the intersection, which were a barrier to further development in Ōmokoroa. It is a minimum 10-year interim solution to address the immediate needs of the intersection, until funding becomes available to build a full interchange (Takitimu North Link Stage Two).

- *SH30 Awakeri to Whakatāne safety improvements*

- This stretch of State Highway 30 (SH30) between Awakeri and Whakatāne has been identified for prioritised investment in proven safety improvements and safer speeds.
- We're in the detailed design process and for the past few months, we've focussed on getting feedback from iwi representatives, Whakatāne District Council staff, landowners, businesses, emergency services and other key stakeholders. We will soon be looking for input from the public to help inform the final design. All information gathered through this process will help inform our final designs.

- *Rotorua Eastern Corridor: SH30/Te Ngae Road Stage 2*

- Phase One works are underway with the majority of the works between Iles Road and Coulter Road addressing safety and connectivity.
- Phase One includes improvements to meet the most immediate needs of the corridor, such as raised safety platforms, upgrades to key intersections, shared paths and cycle lanes, four lanes between Iles and Basely Roads and Brent and Ōwhata Roads, new pedestrian crossings and bus stops.



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- Phases Two and Three will be dictated by the growth and development of Rotorua. Both phases are currently unfunded.
- *SH2 Waihi to Ōmokoroa – safety improvement project*
  - Work includes road and shoulder widening, installing a wide centreline, roadside safety barriers in high-risk areas, and intersection improvements, and has been underway since 2019.
  - The safety of the road has been boosted further with total investment of \$164.6 million, providing for flexible median barriers and six intersection upgrades to provide safe turn around points between Tetley Road and Esdaile Road. These improvements will save lives and will raise the safety rating of the state highway. Work is now complete on seven sections of SH2 between Waihi and Ōmokoroa.

### Speed management.

- A number of corridors in the region have been included in the Interim State Highway Speed Management Plan (ISHSMP). The ISHSMP proposes safer speed limits on some sections of state highway as part of the Road to Zero strategy, putting in place more intersection speed zones and lowering speeds around many schools and some marae on state highways. Proposed speed limit changes in BoP include:
  - SH29 Te Poi to Tauriko.
  - SH29A Tauriko to Te Maunga.
  - SH24 Matamata to SH29 (including a small section of SH27).
  - Five marae.
  - Five Intersection Speed Zones.
  - 24 schools, including five kura.
- The ISHSMP is being prepared to be presented to the Director of Land Transport for certification. The Safety Improvements Programme of the ISHSMP is due to be implemented in the remainder of the 2021-24 NLTP. Schools will be delivered between 2023 and 2027.
- SH30 Tikitere to Whakatāne corridor was consulted on prior to the ISHSMP. The speed changes have strong support from local iwi although they want the changes implemented as soon as possible. Implementation is due the first half of 2023.

### Alternative transport modes.

- *Public Transport*
  - Bus driver shortages were causing high numbers of cancellations in Tauranga, so a reduced timetable is operating to provide certainty to bus users. Another 34 drivers are needed to be able to return to full timetable.
  - Significant pay increases have been rolled out and are having the desired affect
  - Recruitment is ongoing locally with some success and there are 20 overseas drivers currently going through the immigration and training process being deployed to Tauranga.



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- *Connecting Mount Maunganui – SH2/Hewletts Road*
  - Waka Kotahi, mana whenua, Tauranga City Council and Bay of Plenty Regional Council are working together towards solutions to boost public transport use, improve safety and travel time reliability and improve environmental outcomes for the Mount Maunganui transport system including State Highway 2/Hewletts Road, Totara Street and Maunganui Road.
  - This is a multi-year project. At this stage, we are focusing on producing an indicative business case (IBC) which will provide a recommended package to be investigated further in the detailed business case (DBC). The IBC is investigating how to move people and goods safely, efficiently, and more effectively along the connecting transport routes in the Mt Maunganui area.
  - Concurrently, Tauranga City Council (TCC) is developing industrial and residential spatial plans for the area. The spatial plans will outline issues and a vision TCC is working towards, and then set policy direction to achieve this. Combined, these plans will help set a future land use and transport direction. We are working across these projects to help achieve the desired outcomes.
- *SH29/29A Tauriko long-term transport improvements*
  - The key objectives of the long-term improvements (10 plus years) are to provide choice in how people within the Tauriko West community want to travel, to support a thriving and growing community and protection of the freight route and safety for all users. Providing more travel choices and encouraging people to move differently will contribute to accessibility, safety, health and environmental outcomes.
  - We are working towards completing the Tauriko Network Connections Business Case and seeking board endorsement in 2023. There have been some delays to its completion while we ensure the proposed project responds to the recently released Emissions Reduction Plan.
  - At present, there is no funding for land purchase or implementation of the long-term improvements within the next 10 years. Delivery will likely be staged over a number of years once funding is approved, and aligned to growth triggers including housing supply, transport mode share, traffic volumes, and funding availability.
  - The vision for Tauriko West is to create a thriving community that allows people to live, learn, work, and play locally. This means creating a new community and ensuring it has access to amenities such as schooling, parks, cycle and walkways, the Wairoa River, shopping at nearby areas and transport options and infrastructure.
- *Transport Choices package for region*
  - A number of initiatives have been accepted as part of the Transport Choices programme, funded through the Climate Emergency Response Fund.
  - The flagship project for the region, the Arataki multi-modal corridor, supports transport choices in Grenada Street, Arataki (a key growth suburb for Tauranga). Improvements part of the project include a separated cycleway, a bus interchange and a recreational facility catering to a wide range of users. The project will also include better connections to Arataki School, improved pedestrian crossing facilities and bus stop upgrades.
  - Other Transport Choices projects are occurring in Rotorua, Te Puke and Whakatane and make improvements to the public transport, cycling, and pedestrian networks.



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### **Pāpāmoa East Interchange and changes to tolling of Tauranga Eastern Link**

- The Bay of Plenty Times wrote an article in July 2022 about the construction of the Pāpāmoa East Interchange (PEI) and changes to tolling of Tauranga Eastern Link as a result.
  - Link to article: [Construction of Pāpāmoa East Interchange to impact Tauranga Eastern Link Toll Road](#)
- Construction of the interchange is being led by Tauranga City Council, and is likely to begin in mid-2023 and conclude in 2026.
- A review of the tolling scheme will be required to determine the feasibility of tolling the PEI and the equity strategy required for the existing toll road as a result of the new interchange. Once a proposal is confirmed by Waka Kotahi, it will be submitted to the Minister of Transport for consideration and approval.
- Tauranga City Council Commissioners are exploring the idea of road pricing in Tauranga generally, and specifically the potential to toll the SH29 Tauriko long-term option.

### **Transport Planning Initiatives**

- *Takitimu North Link Stage Two*
  - This future project would extend SH2 Takitimu North Link expressway and shared use path a further 7km between Te Puna and Ōmokoroa. We are protecting the route for Takitimu North Link Stage Two between Te Puna and Ōmokoroa as part of the NZUP programme. This will give Council, landowners and the community certainty of the route and ensure Waka Kotahi is best placed to move forward when funding for construction becomes available.
  - In the period from April to December 2022 we have undertaken a thorough review and update of the assessment of alternative highway alignments and intersection forms. As part of this work, we have undertaken additional technical assessments.
  - We will recommence engagement with affected landowners and expect to undertake wider public engagement in the first half of 2023.
- *Access Whakatāne*
  - Access Whakatāne is a strategic and collaborative approach to provide better transport choice and accessibility to diverse community needs in the short to medium term
  - Coastlands Integrated Growth and Resilience Improvements Single Stage Business Case
  - The project name may change as it was concluded that Whakatāne West was more accurate representation of the location of the works.
  - A SSBC which will deliver a preferred option for the development of the Keepa Road corridor with the planned and anticipated growth while addressing existing issues on the corridor, key factors being resilience to flood and sea level rise, improving safety along the corridor for all users, reducing reliance on private vehicles, ensuring safe access to the new harbour development and potential new retail/industrial development opposite the new harbour.
  - Business case to track for approval later this year, with pre-imp/detailed design commencing early-2023.