

New Zealand Upgrade Programme Q&A

How is the overall NZ Upgrade Programme tracking?

Eleven projects have been completed across the core NZUP programme, and its regional package. Within the core programme four projects are currently in construction, with five further projects due to start construction in the next 12 months. Around \$3 billion worth of project have been or are currently in delivery.

The New Zealand Upgrade Programme and its projects have been impacted by significant global inflation and COVID-19 related cost increases, as has been experienced across the construction sector. s 9(2)(g)(i)

Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway

s 9(2)(g)(i)

Why do we need this project?

State Highway 1 between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway has a poor safety record with a disproportionately high number of people seriously hurt or killed on the road.

Between 2015 and early 2020, 44 people were seriously hurt and 18 people were killed in crashes.

In urban Whangārei, 11 people were seriously hurt during this period – most of these crashes involved vulnerable road users – people walking and on bikes. With a lack of cycling infrastructure and generally narrow footpaths in the area, infrastructure for vulnerable users needs to be improved, especially alongside this busy section of SH1 to separate them from vehicles.

In the rural section (between Toetoe Road and Port Marsden Highway), 18 people lost their lives and 44 were seriously hurt in crashes between 2015 and early 2020. 75% of these crashes were a result of head-on collisions and vehicles crossing the centreline.

Installing centre median barriers prevents drivers from crossing the centreline and colliding with another vehicle and are highly effective in preventing people getting seriously hurt on our roads. Results show a 65% reduction in road fatalities wherever they are installed.

What is the current status of the project?

With \$270M funding now confirmed for the project, we can move beyond the completed business case into detailed design which includes planning where and how the safety measures will be implemented, where the turnaround bays will be, what the shared path will look will and considering other measures such as raised speed platforms and traffic lights.

Confirming the detailed design will help us to understand property impacts as well as the consenting and procurement processes for the project.

We will continue to engage with key partners and stakeholders, including hapū, Local Council, and communities throughout the process.

How long will the project take?

We expect to begin construction in late-2025. We anticipate the project will take three years to complete and will be carried out in stages to minimise disruption.

Projects of this size and scale require extensive design and planning and need the adequate amount of time to carry out several complex processes. This includes:

- Confirming the project design
- Engaging with hapū, key stakeholders, community and landowners to ensure feedback is utilised in the design process
- Acquiring property which requires negotiation with affected landowners
- Acquiring consents which requires preparing a detailed consent application, lodging this with local council and negotiating on consent conditions
- Procuring the materials, machinery and people resource needed for the project.

Now that we have confirmed funding, we can continue progressing with the detailed design process which will include engaging with the community.

Safety improvements won't be implemented for a few years. What is being done in the meantime?

As an interim safety intervention and to start saving lives as soon as possible, we will be installing flexible safety posts in the centre of the road between Toetoe Road and Port Marsden Highway. Construction will take approximately three months and will be phased to minimise disruption. We're currently procuring for this work and expect it will be completed this year.

We will provide more information on an estimated project programme for both the long-term and short-term safety improvements in the coming months.

What is happening with the four-laning project?

The Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway four-laning project will not continue as part of the NZ Upgrade Programme. Waka Kotahi recognises State Highway 1 as a strategic route and further changes in the future will likely be required to meet the demands of the region.

What is happening at other high-risk areas on SH1 such as Brynderwyn Hills?

To improve resiliency for State Highway 1 (SH1) south of Whangārei (including SH1 Brynderwyn Hills and SH1 Dome Valley, we are currently undertaking a piece of work to identify the short, medium, and long term options to provide ongoing and resilient access to the highway when future weather related events happen.

Part of the work will be to identify if any of the local roads connecting with SH1 need to be upgraded.

Due for completion in July this year, the plan will include a set of recommended short, medium and long term programmes, along with estimated funding required for each programme, and potential funding sources. All the programmes will be subject to securing funding to proceed into detailed investigations and design.

Some programmes may be able to get started straight away as part of smaller scale business-as-usual activities once funding is secured, while others will be more complex and require detailed investigation, including public engagement.

Ōtaki to North Levin

Why is the project needed?

The current route is one of the country's most dangerous sections of road to drive. 72 people have died or been seriously injured in crashes on this section of road during the last five years.

In addition, with a high risk of SH1 closure by crashes or weather-related events and no alternative route between Manakau and Ohau, the new road will build resilience into the state highway network.

How is the project being funded, and is it fully funded to completion?

The project is part of the Government's NZ Upgrade Programme.

Queries on the project funding should be referred to the Minister's office.

In addition to improving safety and resilience, what are other benefits of the project?

In addition to improving safety and improve resilience the new highway will support growth in the region and provide new opportunities for walking and cycling.

What's the scope of the project

The project will be building 24km of four-lane median divided highway, from the northern end of the recently completed Peka Peka to Ōtaki expressway, to north of Levin.

A walking and cycling path will run the length of the new highway.

How is the project working with iwi?

Waka Kotahi, Muaūpoko Tribal Authority and local hapū of Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga are working in partnership on the Ōtaki to north of Levin new highway project.

When will the new highway be constructed?

Construction is programmed to start in 2025 and completion of the new highway and shared use path is programmed for 2029.

What stage is the project at currently, and is there any hold-up?

There is currently no hold-up. The Ministers for Transport and Finance have both approved the detailed business case for the Ōtaki to north of Levin highway project and the Government has expressed strong support for the project continuing on the current timeline.

The project is in the pre-implementation phase. This phase includes securing resource consents and highway designations, progressing site investigations and purchasing property needed for the 24km highway and walking and cycling path.

How is the pre-implementation stage progressing?

Applications for resource consents and Notices of Requirements were lodged in November 2022, and the Councils sought public submissions in January-February this year. Waka Kotahi are continuing to work with the district and regional Councils and responding to submitters. They expect the Environment Court hearing to take place later in the year. If approved, these applications reflect the key environmental approvals required for the project to progress.

Waka Kotahi have already secured approximately 45% of the property parcels required for the new highway and shared path, and they are continuing to work with property owners in the proposed designation.

Preparations are also underway for the procurement stage, to engage the design and construction team to build the project.

What's being done in the interim, to improve safety on the roads?

Alongside progress on the new highway, safety improvements and speed reviews continue along SH57 and SH1 to improve overall safety in the area. This includes already-completed safety improvement work on SH57 from SH1 to a new roundabout at Queen St. On SH1, the first phase of safety improvements between Ōtaki to Ohau are underway, with new turnaround areas and stretches of median and side barrier. These safety improvements are designed to transition drivers safely from the dual-lane, median separated highways from Wellington to north of Ōtaki, to the single-lane State Highway 1.

New speed limits were implemented on sections of SH1 and SH57 in December 2022.

Other NZUP Projects

RiverLink/Melling Transport Improvements

What is RiverLink?

RiverLink is a partnership of five, with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi), Greater Wellington, Hutt City Council (HCC) 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. As part of this partnership, Waka Kotahi is delivering the Melling Transport Improvements.

What does the RiverLink alliance do?

Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Hutt City Council, Greater Wellington, and Waka Kotahi celebrated the signing of an Interim Project Alliance Agreement in May 2023 that saw AECOM-Fletcher become RiverLink's delivery alliance.

An alliance is a different way of working together, compared to traditional construction contracts. It is a collaborative team made up Fletcher-AECOM, and RiverLink partners to deliver the programme and achieve the best outcomes for the community.

What's happening now?

Under the Alliance delivery model, the RiverLink programme is now in a design and construction planning phase or Interim Project Alliance Agreement (IPAA).

The IPAA phase is done to better understand the challenges of the programme before committing to the construction contract beginning.

Over the next six months, RiverLink partners will work closely with the alliance to finalise the design to deliver the best balance of cost and outcomes.

When the detailed design, cost and construction approach is finalised, a Project Alliance Agreement will be signed. Main construction for RiverLink is expected to begin later this year and be completed in 2027.

We will be able to confirm the final agreed cost for the RiverLink programme, s 9(2)(g)(i)

When will construction on RiverLink start?

Once the final cost and construction approach are agreed through the IPAA phase, and the PAA is signed, construction of the main works can then begin in late 2023. RiverLink is scheduled to be completed in 2027.

Note: There is an indicative package of advance/enabling works that is required and has begun.

What are the benefits of RiverLink?

RiverLink is a transformational set of projects for Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai (Lower Hutt).

The programme of works will deliver crucial flood protection and river restoration work, improvements to public transport, walking and cycling routes, local roads and the State Highway 2 Melling Interchange, as well as urban revitalisation of the Lower Hutt city centre.

Melling Transport Improvements

The Melling Transport Improvements will deliver a new Melling road bridge and grade separated interchange. In addition, a new public transport hub will be created by shifting the current Melling train station south to be co-located with a new bus hub, and park and ride facilities. A new pedestrian and cycle bridge over Te Awa Kairangi will link Hutt City centre to the public transport hub, and the new extension of Te Ara Tupua north from Bridge Street along the rail corridor.

The transport improvements will help deliver real choice for Kiwis however they choose to get around, with reduced congestion, waiting times, and more timely and accessible public transport. Rail patronage is projected to grow by 30%, and new walking and cycling infrastructure is set to enable an increase in active travel of well over 200%.

Note: For example, the separated path on the true left bank, will cater for an increase from the 2019 peak hour of 63 cyclists to 500 cyclists by 2050 (>400% increase in use).

Deaths and Serious Injuries (DSIs) are also set to reduce by a projected 83%, and transport resilience will be enhanced by a 60% reduction in events.

Flood protection works

Te Awa Kairangi Hutt River is an invaluable resource to the Greater Wellington community, supporting the economy, lifestyle, and culture of the Hutt Valley. The river is identified as a taonga, a sacred treasure and serves as an attraction for both locals and tourists - it is visited by over a million people each year.

The river offers many recreational activities, including swimming, walking, cycling, fishing, and scenic views of the Hutt Valley and of Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington Harbour). It also supplies half of the consumable water for thousands of people living in Wellington, Hutt and Porirua cities, which equals around 75 million litres of water per day.

The flood protection works will deliver a substantial increase in protection for Lower Hutt from the effects of increased flooding. Removing and replacing the existing Melling bridge is critical to that work as it currently creates a pinch point.

Protection will increase to a 1 in 440-year event, and safeguard residents from large 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 across the community.

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

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.

Hutt City Revitalisation

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. RiverLink embraces and celebrates the spirit of our taonga (treasure), Te Awa Kairangi Hutt River. The project aims to build the foundations of a modern, energetic city that looks to the future.

Turning Lower Hutt into a true 'river city' aims 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.

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.

South Auckland Package

Why are the South Auckland Package projects needed?

Auckland is growing fast, and the south is the region's fastest growing area with an extra 100,000 people expected to make it their home over the next 30 years.

We're planning early to ensure the infrastructure is in place to give people more transport choices – safer and more reliable connections; options to walk, cycle or use public transport; options that help reduce carbon emissions.

Why are the SH22 Drury and Waihoehoe Road upgrade projects going ahead now?

The Drury-Opaheke Structure Plan adopted by Auckland Council in 2019 is estimated to provide around 22,000 homes and around 12,000 jobs with a population of around 60,000¹. By comparison, this is a population similar in size to that of Rotorua or Napier.

The government is enabling us to get ahead of the increased demand on the Drury transport network by providing funding through the NZ Upgrade Programme for the pre-implementation phase of the projects. That's why we've progressed from the initial long-term strategic plan more quickly than anticipated. The projects will support the new rail stations and housing developments planned for Drury.

Who is delivering the South Auckland Package projects?

Waka Kotahi is partnering with Auckland Transport, Mana Whenua and (for the Drury projects) KiwiRail to plan and deliver the projects in an integrated way.

What stage is the SH22 Drury Upgrade Project at?

A joint Waka Kotahi and Auckland Transport project team has been established, as well as partnership with Mana Whenua and KiwiRail, to ensure projects in the area are delivered in an integrated way.

Pre-implementation work is underway. This stage covers obtaining resource consents, site investigations, developing designs further, and property purchase.

We will be seeking feedback from the community on design details when we develop the detailed designs.

What stage is the Waihoehoe Road Upgrade Project at?

A joint Waka Kotahi and Auckland Transport project team has been established, as well as partnership with Mana Whenua and KiwiRail, to ensure projects in the area are delivered in an integrated way.

Pre-implementation work is underway. This stage covers obtaining resource consents, site investigations, developing designs further, and property purchase.

We have completed the indicative project designs to understand property requirements.

We will be seeking feedback from the community on design details when we develop the detailed designs.

What's happening with the 'Mill Road' project?

The Government decided in June 2021 not to proceed with the full Mill Road corridor and asked Waka Kotahi to develop a business case to upgrade the Manukau to Takaanini corridor, and invest in Drury local transport upgrades. The aims are to improve safety, improve walking, cycling and public transport connections and support additional housing.

¹ <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/place-based-plans/drurystructureplandocument/drury-opaheke-structure-plan.pdf>

The previous proposals for the full Mill Road corridor, which is not proceeding through the New Zealand Upgrade Programme (NZUP), remains part of the South Auckland strategic transport network endorsed as part of the Auckland Transport Alignment project (ATAP). Long term route protection remains a consideration but would be dependent on funding availability through sources other than NZUP.

Why has the name of the 'Mill Road' project changed?

The name has changed to 'Manukau to Takaanini Access and Safety' to better reflects its purpose and to minimise confusion with the previous full, four-lane Mill Road project.

What area does the Manukau to Takaanini Access and Safety project cover?

The project stretches between the Manukau City CBD and Clevedon Road in the Takaanini / Papakura area, primarily along the Manukau Station Rd – Redoubt Road – Mill Road – Cosgrave Road corridor. To connect to the wider transport network the project includes parts of Hollyford Drive, Aspiring Avenue, Murphys Road and Airfield Road.

What's the timeline for the Manukau to Takaanini Access and Safety project?

Waka Kotahi has developed options and is continuing to work on the business case for the rescoped Mill Road and Drury transport improvements. The rescoped business case will be presented for ministers' approval in August 2023.

Proactively Released