

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	SH25A Taparahi, Kōpū to Hikuai, Rebuild Announcement
Date	5 May 2023
Briefing number	BRI-2762

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1 st contact
Brett Gliddon	Group General Manager - Transport Services		Section 9(2)(a)	✓
David Speirs	Director Regional Relationships (Waikato/Bay of Plenty)		Section 9(2)(a)	

Action taken by Office of the Minister

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- ☐ Withdrawn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

5 May 2023

Hon Michael Wood – Minister of Transport

SH25A Taparahi, Kōpū to Hikuai, Rebuild Announcement

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with information about State Highway 25A (SH25A) Taparahi, between Kōpū to Hikuai, which suffered significant damage with the road collapsing after the North Island's major storm event in late January 2023.
2. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is holding an event to announce the solution – how SH25A will be fixed, and the Coromandel communities will be reconnected. The event will be held Tuesday, 9 May 2023, between 9:45am and 10:45am at Thames Coromandel District Council.
3. A briefing with Thames Coromandel District Council, iwi representatives and the Independent Advisory Panel group will be held at Thames Coromandel District Council prior to the announcement. This will provide the community the opportunity to share their concerns surrounding the rebuild and impact of the closure.

Project funding and costs

4. Costs are currently being finalised; the expected cost is likely to be below \$50 million.
5. Reinstatement of SH25A is part of the recovery/rebuild phase. It is recognised by all parties that additional funding for recovery/rebuild will be required.
6. Confirmed funding to date including, we understand, in Budget 2023 is only for initial response costs. Depending on the final costs of response, SH25A could possibly be funded from remaining North Island weather events (NIWE) response funding but this would mean using response funding to fund one element of recovery. This may not be consistent with the basis for budget funding decisions.
7. Waka Kotahi has advised Treasury and Te Manatū Waka - Ministry of Transport officials of this position.

Project features

8. Based on the options assessment report, a bridge has been selected as the best option to reconnect the Coromandel. It will be constructed along the same alignment as the existing highway and approximately 125 metres long. Once a contractor is on board, we will know more about construction methodology (ie. type of bridge structure; concrete or steel, how it will be built) and programme.
9. A bridge was selected as it's the safest and most resilient option, and work can continue throughout winter.

Project benefits

10. Key benefits of the SH25A Taparahi, Kōpū to Hikuai, solution include:

- Restoring vital access for Coromandel locals, businesses, visitors, and communities.
- Creating a more resilient state highway network by restoring this crucial link between Kōpū and Hikuai.

Project context

11. The SH25A Taparahi, Kōpū to Hikuai, rebuild project is part of the North Island 2023 storm and cyclone recovery projects in Waikato. A number of state highways and access for communities were impacted following the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. These major storms followed unprecedented rainfall over January 2023, at two and a half times the average monthly total in this region.
12. On Sunday 15 January 2023, while network contractors were inspecting the road, surface cracks were seen on SH25A. As SH25A is an important connector for the Coromandel community, a decision was made to keep the road open during daylight hours while assessments took place. The site was monitored daily for movement and boreholes drilled to understand the full nature of the movement. However, new cracks continued to appear – and another weather event further saturated the Coromandel region.
13. On Friday, 27 January 2023, the road was fully closed and, later that day, the cracks widened and a significant section of SH25A collapsed. The road remains impassable.
14. The site is complicated due to the geography and amount of road surface and earth lost in the collapse. Before a decision on any solution could be made, geotechnical investigations needed to take place and access to site was limited until deemed safe, ie. once the site had stopped slipping. The site could not be accessed until Wednesday, 1 February 2023.
15. By mid-March geotechnical investigation rigs were established on site and on Thursday, 30 March 2023 the investigations were completed. This information was used to develop the options assessment report, where three valid options were considered (bypass, bridge or retaining wall).
16. The final options assessment report was issued to Waka Kotahi on Tuesday, 2 May 2023, with the bridge option endorsed Friday, 5 May 2023. The project team and options assessment report recommended the bridge as the preferred remedial solution, which best balances the programme, risk and cost considerations.
17. The bypass was ruled out based on longer time to construct and high cost. A large amount of soil would need to be cut out and moved off site (c400,000m³), and the ecological protocols required to manage bats and lizards under the Wildlife Act 1953 added considerable programme risk.
18. The retaining wall option on a minor realignment was the second best, however it was more expensive and had a higher programme duration with a risk of being further impacted by weather. This is due to the construction being in the slip area itself which will be very difficult and especially so in wet conditions.
19. Bridge option is lowest cost, shortest programme when the risks are assessed, and provides greater opportunities for innovation.

20. Waka Kotahi has been engaging with industry since April 2023, and throughout the geotechnical investigation and the options assessment phase. We have now entered a procurement phase to select a contractor to design and deliver the bridge. We expect to be able to name a contractor by Friday, 2 June 2023.
21. Typically, a bridge of this nature would take 12-14 months to construct. However, until we have a contractor onboard, we do not have a definitive date or programme. We'll select contractors to do this work who have the speed of delivery as the primary factor.
22. This announcement will be welcomed by the local community and businesses who are anxious about the state of their roads, uncertainty of the rebuild timing and the sacrifices they are having to make while SH25A is closed. This is on the back of COVID-19 and the impacts this has had on local tourism and businesses. There is a possibility the bridge won't be completed in time for Christmas, Coromandel's high season for tourism, which could lead to further frustration and anxiety.
23. There are currently two active petitions; one for [temporary access](#) (3465 signatures), or [bypass](#) to be formed (438 signatures).
24. An investigation into a bypass was undertaken and determined not viable. The steep topography in this location – both above and in the slip area - requires considerable earthworks and retaining work to form traversable slopes for regular vehicles.
25. It is not possible to do a "quick fix". The access tracks that have been formed are very steep and only suitable for vehicles with tracks. Because the ground conditions are so poor even the tracked geotechnical drilling equipment requires a digger to assist them when they are shifting location, particularly if rain has fallen recently and softened the surfaces further.
26. Temporary staging can be built across the face of the slip, however, this too is not a quick fix as it would take several months with a considerable amount of piling work required to support it. It would also be very likely to be in the way of construction of the permanent solution.
27. As part of our assessment of the contractor, Waka Kotahi will evaluate their ability to deliver both from an expedited programme perspective and having the appropriate resources to ensure this is achievable.

Key messages

28. Key messages for the announcement of the SH25A Taparahi, Kōpū to Hikuai, solution:
 - SH25A Taparahi between Kōpū and Hikuai suffered significant damage with the road collapsing after the North Island's major storm event in late January 2023. The road is closed indefinitely while investigations have been underway to determine a long-term solution for this highway.
 - We are aware locals, businesses and communities are anxious about the state of their roading network and uncertainty of the rebuild timing and the sacrifices they are having to make while SH25A is closed.
 - A dedicated team of project managers and consulting engineers are focused on delivering a robust solution that can be built as quickly as possible. This team has been actively working through three options for the best long-term solution.

- Waka Kotahi has confirmed a bridge is the best option to fix SH25A, based on the ability to build back better and as quickly as possible.
- A bridge was selected as it will reconnect the Coromandel Peninsula communities in the shortest time possible, it's the safest and most resilient option, and work can continue throughout winter.
- We have the expertise in New Zealand to construct bridges. Examples within the region include the Kōpū bridge and the structures that connect SH1 Waikato Expressway.
- Waka Kotahi has already engaged with the construction industry on this important work and started the procurement process. Once the contractor is on board, Waka Kotahi will be able to share more details about the construction methodology and timeframes.
- Many roads on the Coromandel Peninsula have been compromised and are vulnerable following the storm events earlier this year. Waka Kotahi recognises how important it is for communities, businesses, and visitors to keep SH25 open. It is a priority and includes long-term solutions so SH25 and SH25A remain accessible and resilient.

Other matters

29. A lot of the slip material has ended up on neighbouring Māori owned land. Waka Kotahi has not precluded remediating, via re planting, this land. Earthworks would likely create more damage. As a courtesy, Waka Kotahi has the landowner details and is currently trying to make contact.
30. An urupā (cemetery) on a neighbouring property was also disturbed by the slip and several kōiwi (skeletal remains) lost. The project team are working with the whānau on this matter.
31. The name 'Taparahi'. Waka Kotahi is engaging with Section 9(2)(a) Ngāti Maru, who is representing mana whenua in the area. Section 9(2) confirmed the name Taparahi is known and used by those that live locally.
32. A Project Director and Project Managers have been appointed for the strategic and short-term physical works. Waka Kotahi and Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) are working together on the recovery and long-term resilience works for the Coromandel Peninsula – both local road and state highways. Representatives from both organisations are meeting weekly to share updates, lessons learnt and discuss best to deliver a coordinated response to the recovery, rebuild and long-term strategic view for the peninsular.
33. Currently, TCDC and Waka Kotahi are developing the strategic response framework for the region, due to be completed over the next 12 weeks. The scope of this work includes the three key local roads: Tapu-Coroglen Road, 309 Road and Colville Road (Coromandel to Colville). The investigation of a 'blue highway' between the peninsular and Auckland will also form part of the strategic review.
34. SH25 remains vulnerable. There are approximately 50 significant slip sites along SH25 we continue to monitor, and we are also aware of a number of sites that will flood when river levels get too high.
35. To keep the SH25 network open, the following work is underway:
 - Physical works are underway to repair the SH25 McBeth-Opoutere underslip – due to be completed late May 2023.

- Overnight road closures are planned for SH25 (Kereta hill, Kuaotunu) to facilitate urgent pavement repairs or geotechnical investigations, before winter.
 - Regular monitoring of significant slip sites with more thorough geotechnical inspections every two months.
 - Prioritising the clearing of drains and culverts and clearing vegetation.
 - Monitoring traffic and truck volumes around the Peninsula, as well as travel times, so any causes of significant delay are identified and quickly acted on.
 - Finalising destination signage changes so visitors find the best way to their destination.
 - Continuing to assess the safety and capacity of one-lane bridges and critical intersection and planning the timing and type of maintenance work to minimise impacts.
36. As a result of the SH25A closure, traffic volumes have increased on SH25 (SH25A Hikuaï telemetry site suggests approximately 3700 vehicles per day used this road, of those, 311 are heavy, 8.4 percent).
37. A question has been raised if the speed limit on SH25 can be temporarily lowered while SH25A is closed and if traffic calming measures can be put in place (between Waikawau and Kereta). Waka Kotahi is investigating a resolution.

You have received the following briefings on this subject:

38. BRI-2704 - Update on Thames-Coromandel Roads Impacted by Upper North Island Flooding Events, 9 February 2023
39. BRI-2710 - Ministerial Visit to Coromandel, 14 February 2023
40. MIN-4058 – Talking points for oral update on the upper North Island flooding events, 31 January 2023
41. MIN-4008 - Assessment of roading and rail network post Cyclone Gabrielle, 3 March 2023
42. MIN-4160 - Update on Waka Kotahi support for Thames Coromandel District Council on the Coromandel Recovery, 26 April 2023
43. MINO-578 – Update on Auckland flooding for post Cabinet press conference, 31 January 2023
44. MINO-623 - SH25A lines for correspondence, 14 March 2023
45. MINO-743 - Tapu-Coroglen Road, 5 May 2023

Ministerial SH25A announcement event

46. The event will be held at Thames-Coromandel District Council, Council Chambers, 515 MacKay Street, Thames.
47. There will be speeches followed by media interviews and light refreshments.

Key attendees to acknowledge

48. The key attendees invited to the announcement to acknowledge:

- **Section 9(2)(a)**, Ngāti Maru (mihi, karakia)
- Mana whenua – Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Tamatera, Ngāti Whanaunga
- Brett Gliddon, Group General Manager - Transport Services, Waka Kotahi
- David Spiers, Director Regional Relationships (Waikato/Bay of Plenty), Waka Kotahi
- Mayor Len Salt, Thames-Coromandel District Council
- Mayor Toby Adams, Hauraki District Council
- Chris McLay, Chief Executive, Waikato Regional Council

Media

49. Local and national media have high interest in this project and the national weather response over the last few months. It is expected the announcement will be largely positive, however the key will be managing expectations - on build time/how long it's going to take to restore access, why we haven't built a temporary bypass and things aren't happening fast enough.

50. Backpocket questions and answers are included in this information pack.

It is recommended that you:

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



Brett Gliddon

Group General Manager - Transport Services

Hon Michael Wood, Minister for Transport

Date: 2023