

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway site visit September 2023
Date	20 September 2023
Briefing number	BRI-2874

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1 st contact
Linda Stewart	Director Regional Relationships	s 9(2)(a)	s 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- ☐ Withdrawn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

20 September 2023

Rt Hon Prime Minister Chris Hipkins

BRI-2874 TE AHU A TURANGA: MANAWATŪ TARARUA HIGHWAY SITE VISIT SEPTEMBER 2023

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with information about Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway project, prior to the site visit on Friday, 22 September 2023, from 9am to 10am.
2. This briefing provides an overall update on the progress to date on Te Ahu a Turanga, with some additional information about works at the Eastern end of the alignment (Woodville), which is the area being visited.

Project funding and costs

3. The current estimated total cost of the project is \$620 million, funded by the National Land Transport Programme.

Project features

4. Key features of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway include:
 - 11.5 kilometres of new highway between Ashhurst and Woodville
 - six million cubic metres of earthworks
 - six structures, including two bridges of more than 300 metres' length
 - cuts of up to 55 metres in depth
 - embankments up to 28 metres high
 - viewing areas over Ashhurst, Woodville and Te Apiti Wind Farm
 - a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists through the length of the highway.

Project benefits

5. Key benefits of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway include:
 - The new highway will restore a vital connection for local communities, travellers, and distributors across the lower North Island.
 - The project is 'treading lightly' through the area by working closely with iwi partners, stakeholders, and local authorities to minimise its cultural, environmental and ecological footprint.
 - The project is mitigating effects through the planting of 46 hectares of native forest, 28 kilometres of stream rehabilitation, the protection of 48 hectares of existing forest, and the pest control of 300 hectares of already protected forest reserve.

- About 1.8 million native plants will be planted over the course of the project.
- The project is creating work and training opportunities for many in the region. The target is to employ locals for more than 60 percent of the workforce, which will peak at about 350 people working on the job at any given time. Currently, 80 percent of the workforce is local. About 35 percent of the workforce are Māori or Pasifika.
- The shared use path will provide a new level of access for walkers and cyclists to a stunning landscape, along with linkages to other local pathways.
- A key benefit of this project is a ground-breaking partnership approach with local iwi, who are represented at governance, leadership and operational levels, and are deeply involved in planning, design, cultural expression and project delivery.
- The project's social outcomes programme has a strong focus on the development of Māori business and supporting local small and medium enterprises.
- The project is in partnership with several educational and training organisations, including Te Pūkenga – UCOL, Pūhoro STEMM, and Connexis. These relationships have been established to provide apprenticeships, internships and work experience to people interested in the infrastructure industry.
- The project has partnered with the Ministry of Social Development on the Conservation Works Skills programme, which provides jobseekers with a 12-week work programme on Te Ahu a Turanga. There have been five intakes of this programme to date.
- Engineers from the New Zealand Defence Force have been seconded to the onsite construction teams to allow them to upskill on a range of heavy machinery.

Project context

6. Major slips forced the closure of the former State Highway 3 route through the Manawatū Gorge in April 2017.
7. The project to replace the road was confirmed in August 2017. Consent for the main works was granted in November 2020.
8. Continuing instability of the hillsides in parts of the gorge mean the State Highway 3 gorge route is no longer viable as a safe long-term transport route for the region.
9. Since closure, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has worked with the public, local government, iwi, and industry to identify a safe, resilient and efficient replacement, considering the geological, social, economic and environmental effects of any new road. Work is also underway to consider options for future management and ownership of the road through the closed Manawatū Gorge.
10. The route for the new highway best meets the needs of the community, businesses, and all road users. The new road will run from near the western entry of the closed State Highway 3 gorge route across the Ruahine Ranges north of the gorge, before emerging near Woodville.
11. There are four iwi groups that have interest in the area of the project (each are at a different stage of Treaty settlement):
 - Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tamaki nui a Rua
 - Rangitāne o Manawatū

- Rangitāne o Tamaki nui a Rua
- Te Runanga o Raukawa (Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Kauwhata)

Key messages

12. Key messages of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway project include:

- Construction commenced in January 2021 and is currently achieving significant milestones. The project recently passed the six million cubic metre mark of its earthworks programme, which means bulk earthworks is largely completed. The remaining 300,000 cubic metres is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.
- In early September 2023, the landscaping team planted its one millionth plant (a silver pine), placing the project more than halfway towards its target of 1.8 million plants.
- Also in September 2023, a form traveller was installed on pier 1 of Parahaki Bridge – a 300-metre-long balanced cantilever bridge across the Manawatū River. The form traveller allows for construction of the road surface of the bridge by pouring concrete one segment at a time.
- Partnership with iwi has underpinned the ability for the project to proceed as quickly as it has. The ability for the Crown and iwi to focus on a combined kaupapa and the success to date has already been recognised through implementation of the partnership approach on other projects.
- This is more than a highway, it is a legacy project that will leave a positive impact for the Central North Island region, re-connecting the region and Aotearoa for future generations.
- The project is scheduled to be opened in mid-2025. The project's original opening date was December 2024, which was set in 2018 prior to the start of construction. The opening date changed in April 2023 due to engineering challenges, inclement weather, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce.

Other matters

13. Public sentiment is generally positive towards the project, with the local community eager to see the highway completed as soon as possible. Regular full alignment flyovers have proven popular with the public, with the most recent August 2023 flyover generating more than 240,000 views across social media platforms.

Ministerial site visit

14. The site visit will begin at the project's eastern access at Hope Road, Woodville.
15. The visit will take place entirely in Zone 4. Earthworks in Zone 4 is largely complete, with 2,140,000 cubic metres of earth moved to date and pavement construction due to start in the coming months. During peak production, about 25,000 cubic metres was moved across the entire alignment each day. This is now reduced to around 5000 to 10,000 cubic metres a day as the earthworks approach completion.
16. This zone includes Cut 28, which is the second deepest cut on the alignment at more than 60 metres deep. The cut is largely completed with approximately 1.3 million cubic metres of material cut from the site.
17. Work is progressing well on the abutments of the Mangamanaia Stream Bridge in Zone 4. The piling methodology for this structure was changed to ensure minimal disruption to the waterway it traverses.

18. The alignment will end at the Eastern Roundabout, near the entrance to Woodville. Drainage and ground works are under way on the roundabout.
19. Much of the land surrounding the alignment in Zone 4 is owned by members of the Bolton Family, a fourth generation Tararua District farming whānau.

Key attendees to acknowledge:

20. The key attendees invited to the Te Ahu a Turanga site visit include the following:

21. Hon Kieran McAnulty, Minister of Regional Development

22. Tangi Utikere, MP for Palmerston North

23. Project representatives including:

- s 9(2)(a), Acting Project Director
- s 9(2)(a), Kaiarahi
- s 9(2)(a), Pou Tiaki
- s 9(2)(a), Earthworks Manager
- s 9(2)(a), Zone 4 Project Engineer
- s 9(2)(a) Landowner and Stakeholder Lead

24. Iwi partner representative, s 9(2)(a)

Media

25. Media are expected to be in attendance on the day. They will be accompanying the Prime Minister throughout the visit.

It is recommended that you:

26. Note the contents of this briefing.



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Linda Stewart

Director Regional Relationships, Taranaki/Hawke's Bay/Gisborne/Manawatu

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Rt Hon Prime Minister Chris Hipkins

Date: 2023

Proactively Released