



Communities reconnected but we're not there yet

Tairāwhiti's state highway network has now fully reopened following last month's significant weather event. While the road to recovery will be long and State Highway 35 won't look the same in the future, communities are now reconnected and can travel freely around the Coast.

The recent weather event had the most significant impact on Gisborne's main state highway connection since the devastating damage brought by Cyclone Bola, 34 years ago. It's also the latest of six significant weather events for the region in the past 12 months. The priority for Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency remains maintaining the access for our East Coast communities. The efforts of contractors and resilience of the East Coast communities have been remarkable, with hundreds involved in the repair and clean-up work on the highway.

The immediate response was led by Waka Kotahi maintenance contractor Downer, with everyone pitching in to do their bit, from traffic management, arborists and those operating excavators, graders and diggers, to mana whenua, Civil Defence and community groups. The Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) and 2018-21 National Land Transport Fund allocated \$13.5 million to the SH35 Resilience project with the aim of strengthening and stabilising some of the corridor's most problematic areas.

A number of these projects were underway before the March weather event and have been severely impacted. As we move into the wetter, winter months, a lot of the necessary repair work will need to wait until more favourable weather arrives with the next construction season.

Waka Kotahi National Journey Manager Helen Harris says the highway is open, but not necessarily pretty. "What you see on our network will be like this for some time. The road is still down to a single lane in some places, with sections of unsealed road, signs, traffic lights, cones and temporary speed limits. "This will be a lengthy recovery and as with our immediate response the longer-term plan will be a combined effort with mana whenua, communities and council partners.

Our teams have worked night and day, through relentless weather and challenging working conditions to reconnect our communities, but there are still a lot of repairs needed. "We ask that people continue to drive with care and keep an eye out for our worksites and our contractors."



Mangahauini Bridge: The Tokomaru Bay to Te Puia Springs section of SH35 was most significantly impacted by the weather, with the Mangahauini River causing substantial erosion and dropouts, and washing a Mangahauini Bridge abutment away, leaving a 16-metre-wide gap in the highway and cutting access to communities north of Tokomaru Bay.



Thanks to a mammoth effort by contractors, the Mangahauini Bridge at Tokomaru Bay was repaired, and communities reconnected, in just 10 days, much sooner than initially expected.



More information

Sign up to the Connecting Tairāwhiti e-newsletter to receive the latest updates on Tairāwhiti's roading network at connectingtairawhiti@nzta.govt.nz.

Check the Journeys website www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz or see the Waka Kotahi Hawke's Bay and Gisborne Facebook page www.facebook.com/WakaKotahiHGB



To show some appreciation for the local legends responsible, Waka Kotahi put on a barbecue - a small gesture with big thanks behind it.