

Kopu Bridge Replacement



Construction staff are midway through placing the fifth span of bridge beams.

Five spans of bridge beams have now been placed on the completed bridge piers in the middle of the Waihou River. The contractor is now preparing the area on top of the beams to construct the first sections of the bridge deck.

Placing the beams

Four beams are placed on each span between the piers. The contractor starts the process by assembling the beams in pairs on the deck of the temporary working platform above the river. Steel bracing is fitted between the beams, then temporary plywood floors are built between the beams to provide a working platform for staff. These temporary floors allow the contractor to construct the decks above.

Cranes then lift each pair of beams into place and they are bolted into position.



A pair of beams, connected by bracing, are lifted into place on the bridge piers. The wooden floor between the beams provides a temporary working platform for construction staff. Photo supplied by HEB Construction Ltd.



A pair of beams are about to be bolted together.

Building the deck

The contractor is now working on the formwork that will provide a 'mould' for the first section of concrete bridge deck. Temporary supports are placed between the bridge beams to support the weight of the concrete when it is poured. Steel reinforcing and concreting will progress westwards as each bridge span is completed.

Completing the piers

Work continues on the remaining piers.

At 1 October, construction progress was as follows (piers are numbered from the west bank of the river):

- piers 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 - completed
- piers 3, 4, 5 - under construction
- five spans of bridge beams are now in place, with deck construction underway.

Settling the approaches

Rock embankments have been placed on the bridge approach roads to settle the soft subsoils so they will support the weight of the approach roads.

Subsoils have already settled by up to 1 metre. More rock is being added as soil pressures allow. Settlement is expected to continue for at least another 12 months before road construction can begin.

Building the roundabout

Construction of the new State Highway 25/26 roundabout is underway but traffic is not expected to use the full roundabout until the new bridge opens in 2012.

By completing the roundabout this summer, the contractor frees up labour and equipment resource to use the following summer when 2.5km of new approach roads will be built.



A road construction crew prepares a new lane to connect the existing Ngati Maru Highway (SH26) with the new SH25/26 roundabout.

New bridge a catalyst for local visitor industry

In the visitor industry, perception is everything. And a positive perception is gold.

'Some people don't come to the Coromandel Peninsula because of the Kopu Bridge traffic congestion,' says Jim Archibald, chief executive of Tourism Coromandel. 'The new bridge will substantially change that.'



Removing the current Kopu Bridge traffic bottleneck could inject millions of dollars into the local economy.

The Kopu Bridge is also an iconic gateway to the Peninsula, so opening the new bridge in 2012 could have a bigger than expected effect on visitor growth.

On the Coromandel Peninsula, the visitor industry generates a substantial part of the district's income. While it is difficult to put dollar figures on what a change in perception about the new bridge could mean, Jim says there is an opportunity to lift the number of local visitors.

'Last year, the visitor industry grew 7 percent - twice the national average. That is worth \$12 million to the Coromandel visitor industry. Roughly 60 percent or \$7 million is domestic growth generated by visitors from other parts of New Zealand.

'If the market perceives that the Coromandel is "opening up" and our local visitor numbers grow another 3 percent as a result, that's a \$7 million boost to the local economy - this year and next, because it compounds each year.

'There is no doubt that the new bridge will be a real catalyst in the domestic visitor market - especially to those who live in Auckland. For Auckland visitors, the whole roading and congestion issue has been a big deal.'



For more information

For more information, go to www.nzta.govt.nz/kopubridge.