

# Kopu Bridge Replacement



The old and the new – the new Kopu Bridge is taking shape alongside the existing one-lane bridge.

## Construction of the new Kopu Bridge and approach roads is on target for completion in mid-2012.

### Roundabout complete

The new two-lane roundabout that will eventually connect the new bridge approach road with the State Highway 26 Ngati Maru Highway, between Thames and Paeroa, is substantially complete. Traffic is already using the straight-through routes on either side of the roundabout, but the roundabout cannot begin operating as a full intersection until the approach roads and new bridge are finished.

Completion of the roundabout ensures traffic will not be held up by roadworks during the peak holiday traffic period in December and January.

New concrete kerbs, footpaths and accessways to businesses and homes have been constructed along SH26 as part of the project. North of the roundabout, a low retaining wall at the base of the hill opposite RD1 and a short section of new footpath are still to be completed. Landscaping of the roundabout will be carried out in autumn.

### Embankments topped up

On the bridge approaches, rock embankments have been topped up for a second time. The weight of the rock causes the soft subsoils underneath to settle. As settlement occurs, the embankments are topped up with more rock and more weight to promote more settlement. The subsoils will be allowed to settle for a further 9–12 months before the final rock top-up occurs.

Even if the bridge structure is finished ahead of schedule, the approach roads cannot be constructed until the subsoils have settled sufficiently to support the weight of the new approach roads.

### Bridge on target

Ten concrete piers have been built from a temporary work platform extending from the western bank of the Waihou River.

Steel beams have now been placed on seven spans from Piers 3 to 10. One more span is planned before Christmas.

The concrete decks have been poured on four spans, from Pier 6 to 10.

A new temporary work platform is being built from the eastern bank. This will provide access to build the five remaining piers. The western platform is being progressively dismantled, and the components are being ferried across the river by barge to be used to build the eastern platform. The temporary work platform from the eastern bank will not connect to the existing western platform, in order to keep the navigation span clear.



The temporary work platform being built from the eastern bank of the Waihou River.

# No more delays for ambulance crews

Ambulance officers based in Thames have become skilled at minimising delays at the one-lane Kopu Bridge, but they are looking forward to the new two-lane bridge opening in 2012.

Eoin Hicks, an advanced paramedic and rural support officer for the Hauraki-Coromandel, says eliminating delays will be positive for patients.

'The advanced paramedics who would normally attend serious road crashes and accidents on the Hauraki Plains are based in Thames, so if there is a serious road crash on the Plains, the local crews will call us for backup.

'We have keys that will alter the traffic signal phasing on the Kopu Bridge if we need to, but that means using the keys twice – once on one side of the bridge, then again on the other side to restore the normal phasing. Most of the time, it is faster to go to the front of the queue and wait for the light to turn green.

'It is conceivable that, in the busy holiday periods, it might take a crew longer to get to the front of the traffic queues and they might lose 5-10 minutes in getting to the scene and then returning to Thames Hospital. Even a 5-10-minute delay can be life-threatening, so we are looking forward to the new bridge eliminating those delays.'

The new bridge will improve travel times for all emergency services, including St John Ambulance, the Fire Service and Police.



Thames ambulance officer Eoin Hicks says 'Even a 5-10-minute delay can be life-threatening.'



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For more information, go to [www.nzta.govt.nz/kopubridge](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/kopubridge)