

1 Introduction

Opus International Consultants Ltd (Opus) have been commissioned to develop a strategy for creating a State Highway 1 (SH1) expressway through Kapiti Coast District. The study area extends between Pukehou Bridge north of Otaki; and MacKays Crossing to the north of Paekakariki. The geographical extent of the study area is shown in Figure 1.1.

The study was commissioned in response to concerns that SH1, north of Wellington, does not adequately cater for peak traffic demand and that this may damage the regional economy and adversely affect communities living close to the road. The Western Corridor Study, completed in 2005 by Maunsells, concluded that SH1 in Kapiti should be upgraded to at least expressway standard. The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) wants future highway improvements to improve network reliability and road safety.

This report includes references to, and builds upon findings of, initial scoping work documented in a Scoping Report prepared by Opus and issued to NZTA in July 2008. This report documents the findings of technical work undertaken on this contract (TNZ 266PN) since then.

1.1 Study Area

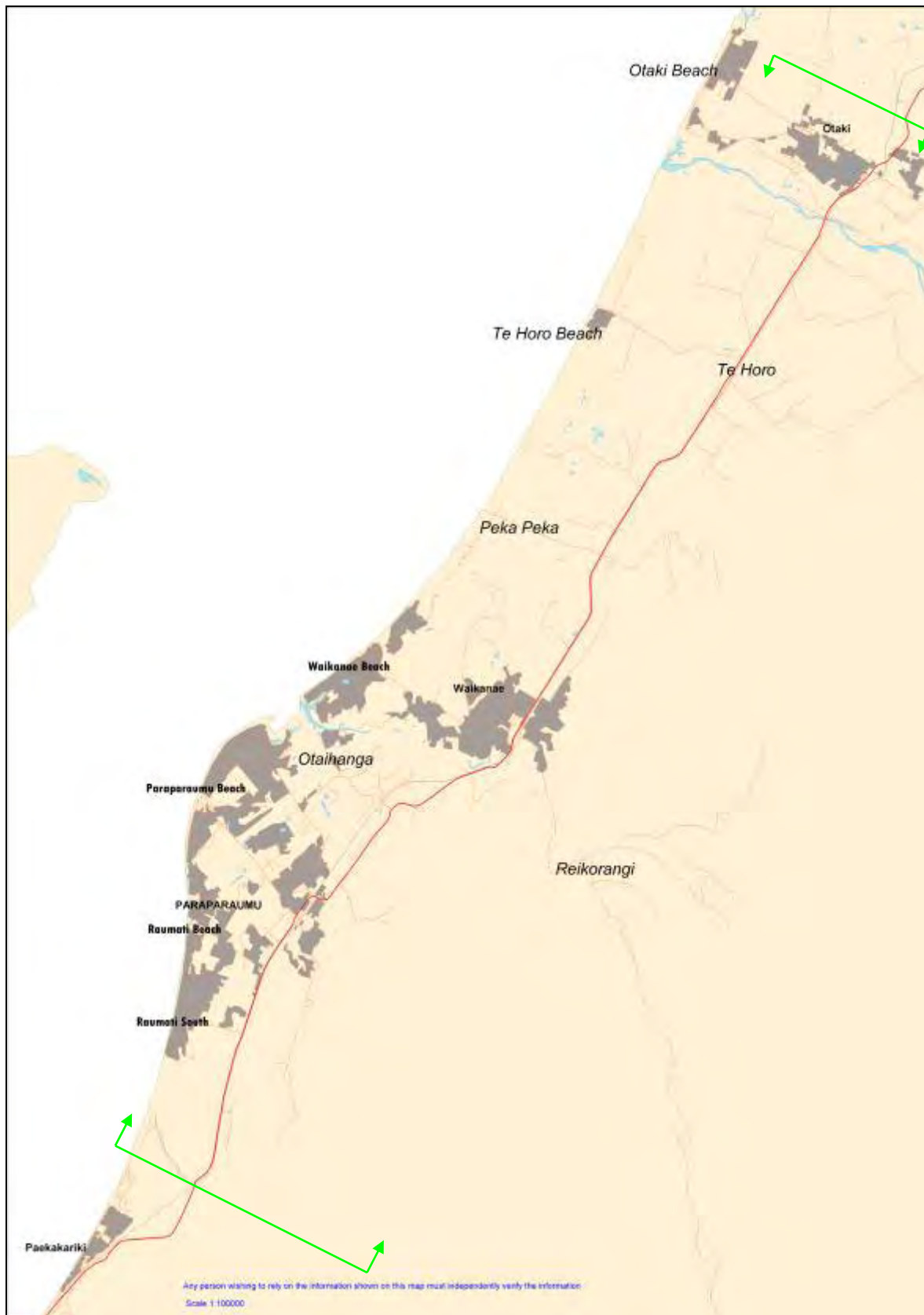
Kapiti Coast District is located on the south western end of the north island approximately 50km north of Wellington. The district has a total population of 46,200. The majority of this population live in the four main settlements of Otaki, Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Raumati. Waikanae and Paraparaumu serve as the District's primary service centres.

The study area follows the corridor from just north of Otaki to MacKay's Crossing, extending between the coast and the foot hills of the Tararua ranges. The nearest major centres outside the study area are Levin approximately 20km north of Otaki and Porirua, approximately 30km south of Raumati. Historically, the Kapiti Coast has a functional relationship with Wellington.

The topography of the study area is consistent along its length with relatively flat plains between the coast and the hills. The distance from the coast to the Tararua foothills ranges between 1.5km and 7.5km.

SH1 and the NIMT Railway are broadly parallel to each other running north - south through the district between the coast and upland areas. These links form the primary strategic transport infrastructure which currently serves the local centres as well as providing for national and regional journeys through the district. There is also a regional airport in Paraparaumu. At present this is predominantly used for short inter-regional journeys and for recreational flights. There are no strategic sea ports for freight or passenger journeys within the study area.

Figure 1.1 – State Highway 1 Kapiti Strategy Study Area



1.2 Study Objectives

The aim of the study, as defined in the scope of services for contract 266PN, is to:

“develop a long-term plan for SH1 through Kapiti that provides for the sustainability of the highway while facilitating strategic, planned connectivity with the Kapiti community and the passenger transport network. The long term plan for SH1 will compliment the committed rail upgrades to achieve a balanced transport network on Wellington’s Western Transport Corridor.”

1.3 Strategy Objectives

To guide the future direction of the study and help achieve this aim the study team developed strategy objectives. These objectives were developed following a workshop attended by representatives of regional stakeholder organisations. The objectives for the Kapiti State Highway 1 Strategy are to:

- (a) improve the safety and efficiency of national and regional trips to strategic destinations (e.g. ports, hospitals, airport etc) made using SH1;
- (b) develop SH1 so that it supports committed land-use proposals and agreed urban design aspirations;
- (c) maintain / improve access to local centres and passenger transport hubs in Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Otaki for pedestrians / cyclists and bus users;
- (d) maintain / improve current levels of access for motorists travelling to railway stations;
- (e) reduce or maintain the current degree of severance experienced by communities living on either side of State Highway 1; and
- (f) reduce the negative impact of State Highway 1 upon the air quality, ambient noise and public amenity in the local centres of Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Otaki.

1.4 Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated improvement options for the transport corridor linking Wellington and the north along the Kapiti Coast. Maunsell’s Western Corridor Study, completed in 2005, considered several options for multi-modal enhancements to the transport corridor. One of the study’s key recommendations: that rail capacity be increased between Waikanae and Wellington; will be implemented by 2010. The Western Corridor Study also found that even with rail enhancements, road upgrades were needed. Local residents were consulted on the proposal to improve SH1. The community was supportive of widening SH1 to four lanes through Paraparaumu as far north as Waikanae.

In 2002, Maunsell also completed an assessment of a four lane expressway between Pukehou Bridge and Peka Peka. As a result of this scheme assessment, Maunsell recommended an alignment which was subsequently accepted by the (then) Transit NZ Board.

A common theme of the previous work is conflict between local trips within the district and inter-regional trips. These studies have shown that through necessity, a significant number of motorists use SH1 for relatively short, local trips. Roading improvements must therefore address the strategic objective of reliable and efficient long distance journeys on SH1 and the need to provide access to local services in Kapiti.

1.5 Kapiti SH1 Strategy Scoping Report

The Scoping Report documented the base-line situation and defined the issues which the strategy must address. It was intended that the report would provide a basis for developing consensus between stakeholders and agreement on the direction for progressing the strategy. The scoping report documented:

- the policy rationale for developing the strategy;
- an initial catalogue of planning issues that influenced the formulation of a realistic and achievable strategy;
- urban design issues and opportunities associated with SH1 in Otaki, Waikanae and Paraparaumu;
- the demographic characteristics of the district and statistics that demonstrate how people live and choose to travel in Kapiti Coast District;
- initial forecast for future traffic conditions if no changes are made to SH1; and
- the engineering standards to which a state highway expressway design should comply.

As a result of this initial scoping report, the study team derived the principles from which the strategy would be developed. These principles are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

1.6 Policy Context

The policy context documented in the scoping report is still relevant. To avoid duplicating material, it is not reproduced here. A significant change has been the election of a new Government in November 2008 and release of a new Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Land Transport Funding 2009/10 – 2018/19.

The GPS details the current government's desired outcomes and funding priorities for the use of the National Land Transport Fund. The GPS emphasises the Government's focus on economic growth and productivity. It envisages this will be achieved through investment in high quality infrastructure that supports the efficient movement of people and freight.

As part of this new direction, seven Roads of National Significance (RoNS) have been identified. The Government sees these as essential routes that require significant development to reduce congestion, improve safety and support economic growth. The Government's objective in listing roads as nationally significant is to ensure that improvement schemes are prioritised when the NZTA develops the National Land Transport Programme. SH1 from Wellington to Levin (Wellington Northern Corridor) has been identified as a RoNS.

When assessing and prioritising projects, NZTA will continue to consider

- effectiveness,
- economic efficiency, and
- contribution to the national economy.

In particular initiatives that improve journey time reliability, ease severe congestion and provide more efficient freight supply chains on nationally significant routes will be prioritised.

1.7 Scope of Work

The scope of this project has evolved during the study. This has helped the project team understand the wider transportation needs of the Kapiti District. Initially, the project team worked on the basis that the WLR would be constructed between Poplar Avenue and Peka Peka. The design of the WLR, including its staging, evolved during the course of the study. This led to investigation of a wider group of scenarios for the route of the SH1 expressway, including on land that is currently designated for the WLR.