WAKA KOTAHI
NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

# MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

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| **Subject** | Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass - Start of Construction Showcase |
| **Date** | 29 September 2022 |
| **Briefing number** | BRI-2603 |

| **Contact for telephone discussion (if required)** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Position** | **Direct line** | **Cell phone** | **1st contact** |
| Linda Stewart | Director Regional Relationships Central North Island | s 9(2)(a) | s 9(2)(a) | ✓ |
| Sarah Downs | Regional Manager System Design Central North Island | s 9(2)(a) | s 9(2)(a) | |

**Action taken by Office of the Associate Minister:**

- ☐ **Noted**
- ☐ **Seen by Associate Minister**
- ☐ **Agreed**
- ☐ **Feedback provided**
- ☐ **Forwarded to**
- ☐ **Needs change [please specify]**
- ☐ **Withdrawn**
- ☐ **Overtaken by events**

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**Associate Minister of Transport**

# Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass - Start of Construction Showcase

## Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with information about Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass prior to the event to mark the start of its construction on Thursday, 6 October 2022, from 10:00am to 11:30am.

## Project funding and costs

2. The cost of Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass is currently forecast at $280 million.

3. This is funded by the Government's Accelerated Regional Roading Programme and the National Land Transport Programme.

## Project features

4. Key features of Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass include:

    - A new 6km section of State Highway 3 in North Taranaki, replacing the existing steep, narrow and winding route over Mt Messenger.
    - Two bridges of approximately 125m and 30m, and a tunnel of approximately 235m in length.
    - A summit height of 110m compared with 175m for the existing road
    - Grades of up to 7.5 percent compared with grades of up to 12 percent for the existing road.
    - A pest management programme for over 3650 hectares of surrounding forest.
    - 32 hectares of restoration planting to offset vegetation being removed for the bypass.
    - Close partnership with mana whenua, Ngāti Tama, who are represented at all levels of the project – board, management and operational.
    - An innovative cableway that will operate from early 2023, transporting machinery, equipment, and workers into the heart of the project.

## Project benefits

5. Key benefits of the Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass include:

    - A safer, more resilient and reliable route in and out of North Taranaki through:
        - A reduction in the number of crashes
        - Fewer and shorter road closures

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- Improved journey time predictability
- Improved driver experience

- Long-term population growth of native animals, such as kiwi, lizards and long-tailed bats, whose numbers are in decline.
- Recovery of native bush that has been seriously damaged by pests such as rats, stoats and possums.
- Creation of more than 70 new jobs, in excess of $4 million in additional salaries each year and around $25 million a year in spending with Taranaki businesses for the supply of goods and services.

**Project context**

6. Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass is a key part of the Awakino Gorge to Mt Messenger programme in Taranaki and Waikato. This programme is delivering safety, resilience and reliability improvements along 58km of SH3 and has included completion of the Awakino Tunnel Bypass.

7. The project will be delivered by the Mt Messenger Alliance, which brings together Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Downer, HEB Construction, Tonkin & Taylor, WSP and iwi partner, Ngāti Tama.

**Key messages**

8. Key messages include:

- Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass will deliver a safer, more resilient and more reliable route to and from North Taranaki.
- The project also includes a comprehensive environmental programme to support the surrounding forest's recovery from damage caused by pests.
- A 32 hectare planting programme and enduring pest management over 3650 hectares will help the bush to recover and provide an environment where threatened species, such as long-tailed bats and kiwi, can thrive once more.

**Partnering with Ngāti Tama**

9. Waka Kotahi and Mt Messenger Alliance have worked closely with Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Tama to develop the project.

10. Ngāti Tama became involved in 2016. Waka Kotahi had identified options for an improved and safer SH3 route that avoided Mt Messenger but traversed the Ngāti Tama rohe. 20 hectares of land needed for the bypass had previously been returned to the iwi through a treaty settlement. A commitment by Waka Kotahi was made to negotiate agreements with Ngāti Tama for the land required.

11. As manawhenua, Ngāti Tama were keen to see a safer route through their rohe but were also concerned about the potential effects on the natural environment.

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12. A significant milestone was reached in 2020 when iwi members voted with an 82 percent majority in favour of the agreements with Waka Kotahi, to allow land needed for the Mt Messenger Bypass to be exchanged.

13. The deal includes a 120 hectare coastal property in exchange for 20 hectares of Ngāti Tama land, a cultural compensation payment and the environmental programme which includes enduring pest management over 3650 hectares of the Ngāti Tama rohe.

**Ministerial event to mark the start of construction**

14. The event will be located at the Mt Messenger Alliance Office, 62 De Havilland Drive, Bell Block, New Plymouth.

15. Speeches will take place followed by a viewing of project display material and exhibits, including a 'Drive the Bypass' simulator.

**Key attendees to acknowledge**

16. The key attendees invited to the event include the following:

- Nicole Rosie, Chief Executive Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency
- s 9(2)(a), Chair Te Runanga o Ngāti Tama
- s 9(2)(a) Chair Mt Messenger Alliance Board
- Sarah Downs, Project Sponsor, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency
- Linda Stewart, Director Regional Relationships Central North Island, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

**Media**

17. We expect some local/national media interest.

18. Opposition to the project, including the recent unlawful occupation of one of the construction sites, has been widely covered in the media. However, the project enjoys good support from key stakeholders including local government, freight and emergency services, along with the wider community.

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**It is recommended that you:**

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing.

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**Linda Stewart,**

Director Regional Relationships Central North Island Regional

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**Kieran McAnulty, Associate Minister of Transport**

Date: 2022

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