

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatū Tararua Highway site visit
Date	13 May 2024
Briefing number	BRI-3047

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1 st contact
Brett Gliddon	General Manager – Transport Services	section 9(2)(a)	section 9(2)(a)	✓

Action taken by Office of the Minister

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- Withdrawn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

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13 May 2024

Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport

Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatū Tararua Highway site visit May 2024

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with information about Te Ahu a Turanga — Manawatū Tararua Highway project, prior to the site visit on Friday, 24 May 2024 from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Project summary

2. The new highway will restore a vital connection for local communities, travellers, and distributors across the lower North Island.
3. The highway will provide considerable time efficiencies for freight, with the new route expected to take approximately 18 minutes for heavy vehicles, compared with 25 to 30 minutes it would take on the alternative route.
4. The route for the new highway best meets the needs of the community, businesses, and all road users. The new road will run from near the western entry of the closed State Highway 3 Manawatū Gorge route, across the Ruahine Ranges north of the Gorge, before emerging near Woodville.
5. The project is scheduled to be opened in mid-2025. The project's original opening date was December 2024, which was set in 2018 prior to the start of construction. The opening date changed in April 2023 due to engineering challenges, inclement weather, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce.
6. The highway is being constructed to a high quality, meaning it will be safer, more resilient, and more efficient than its predecessor or the alternative routes currently being used.
7. The project is creating employment, training, and development opportunities for people in the region. This includes employing locals for more than 60 percent of the workforce.
8. Between 250 and 350 people are working on the site at any given time, and more than 2000 people have been inducted on site since the project began. In December 2023, the project registered more than 2 million hours of work across the site.
9. A shared use path will run the entire length of the route. The construction of this path is part of a consent condition, which requires a safe walking and cycling connection between Ashhurst and Woodville.
10. A key benefit of this project is the ground-breaking partnership approach with local iwi, who are represented at governance, leadership, and operational levels, and are deeply involved in planning, design, cultural expression, and project delivery.

11. The project's social outcomes programme has a strong focus on the development of Māori business and supporting local small and medium enterprises.
12. Key features of Te Ahu a Turanga — Manawatū Tararua Highway include:
 - 11.5 kilometres of new highway between Ashhurst and Woodville
 - two lanes each way with a dividing barrier
 - six and a half million cubic metres of earthworks
 - six structures, including two bridges of more than 300 metres in length
 - cuts of up to 55 metres in depth and embankments up to 28 metres high
 - roundabouts at the eastern and western entrances
 - viewing areas over Ashhurst, Woodville and Te Apiti Wind Farm
 - a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists through the length of the highway.

Project context

13. Major slips forced the closure of the former State Highway 3 route through the Manawatū Gorge in April 2017.
14. The project to replace the road was confirmed in August 2017. Consent for the main works was granted in November 2020.
15. Continuing instability of the hillsides in parts of the Gorge mean that the State Highway 3 Gorge route is no longer viable as a safe long-term transport route for the region.
16. Since closure, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) has worked with the public, local government, iwi, and industry to identify a safe, resilient, and efficient replacement, considering the geological, social, economic, and environmental effects of any new road. Work is also underway to consider options for future management and ownership of the road through the closed Manawatū Gorge.
17. There are four iwi groups that have tangata whenua status in the project area (each are at a different stages of treaty settlement and relationships with one another):
 - Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tamaki nui a Rua
 - Rangitāne o Manawatū
 - Rangitāne o Tamaki nui a Rua
 - Te Runanga o Raukawa (Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Kauwhata)

Project budget and funding

18. The total implementation budget for the project as at April 2024 is \$658.5 million, funded through the National Land Transport Programme.

19. A price level adjustment paper requesting an additional \$165.6 million (including \$18.5 million in contingency) is being presented to the NZTA Board for approval in May. This will take the total project implementation budget to \$824.1 million.

Key messages

20. Key messages of Te Ahu a Turanga — Manawatū Tararua Highway project include:

- Construction commenced in January 2021 and the teams continue to achieve significant milestones. The project completed its bulk earthworks target of 6.5 million cubic metres of earth in early 2024, over one million trees have been planted, and 30 percent of the lower pavement layers have been constructed.
- The project began pavement construction in late 2023. Since then, 5 kilometres of the highway has received pavement aggregate and 2 kilometres of this is ready for structural asphalt. An asphalt plant is to be established on the site from July 2024 to ensure a steady supply of asphalt.
- Good progress is being made on Parahaki Bridge, a 300-metre-long balanced cantilever bridge across the Manawatū River. All three piers are completed, and work on the superstructure is underway. Two form travellers (devices used to construct balanced cantilever structures) have been installed on the bridge and have been used to pour 22 of the 54 concrete segments on the bridge.
- Partnership with iwi has underpinned the ability for the project to proceed as quickly as it has – early input from tangata whenua during the implementation phase was a key factor in the project going through the design and consent process in just 18 months. The success to date has already been recognised through implementation of the partnership approach on other projects.
- The road is scheduled to be opened in mid-2025.

Other matters

21. Public sentiment is generally positive towards the project, with the local community eager to see the highway completed as soon as possible. Regular full highway flyovers have proven popular with the public, with these videos generating hundreds of thousands of views online.

Ministerial site visit

22. The site visit will begin at the project's site office,

23. A mihi whakatau, led by Project Poutiaki [section 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) (Rangitāne o Manawatū) and the project's Iwi Directorate Lead [section 9\(2\)\(a\)](#), will be held in the office to formally greet you to the site.

Key attendees

24. The key attendees invited to the Te Ahu a Turanga site visit include the following:

- Suze Redmayne, MP for Rangitikei
- Brett Gliddon, General Manager – Transport Services (NZTA)
- Mark Kinvig, National Manager, Infrastructure Delivery (NZTA)
- Linda Stewart, Director Regional Relationships (NZTA)

- Project representatives including:
 - Lonnie Dalzell, Project Sponsor and Alliance Board Member (NZTA)
 - section 9(2)(a), Engineering Manager (HEB)
 - section 9(2)(a) - Iwi Directorate Lead (HEB)
 - section 9(2)(a) Pou Tiaki (Rangitāne o Manawatū representative)
 - section 9(2)(a) Wellbeing and Culture Manager (HEB)
 - section 9(2)(a), Safety Manager (HEB)

Media

25. Media have recently visited the site at the start of May

It is recommended that you:

26. Note the contents of this briefing.



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Brett Gliddon

Group General Manager – Transport Services

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Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport

Date: 2024

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