

31 October 2024

[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-16549

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 26 September 2024 requesting information on the proposed tolling of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I will answer each part of your request in turn.

1. In what aspects of the tolling assessment was the Tararua district considered?

The tolling assessment included understanding the potential diversion and network considerations of tolling of road users, including those in the Tararua district. In reviewing alignment to the priorities in the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024 (GPS), NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) assessed economic growth and productivity, increased maintenance and resilience, safety and value for money.

2. In setting the tolling price, was any consideration given to the average or median incomes of the populations that will/need to access Palmerston north from the Tararua side?

NZTA consider income levels in relation to willingness to pay assumptions, with lower levels of income leading towards lower willingness to pay, lower values of time and therefore higher levels of diversion.

3. What tolling questions in the assessment did NZTA seek or receive comments from the Minister of Transport, NZTA board or other relevant person on? What were these comments and did they change any tolling assessment findings?

To provide context, NZTA assessed Te Ahu a Turanga for suitability as a tolled road following the release of the GPS. As part of that process, NZTA officials provided a tolling assessment to the NZTA Board, and it agreed with a recommendation to seek approval from the Minister of Transport to proceed with public consultation on a tolling proposal. The Minister of Transport approved NZTA to undertake public consultation. NZTA does not seek or receive comments from the Minister of Transport about the tolling assessment during this process and this was also the case for Te Ahu a Turanga. As such, this part of your request has been refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

The feedback received from public consultation will be summarised and provided to the Minister of Transport. This will provide insights into the level of community support for the proposed tolling scheme in the region.

The NZTA Board will consider the feedback from the consultation as part of its consideration of whether to recommend tolling of the road to the Minister of Transport. The final decision on whether or not to toll each road rests with Cabinet on the recommendation of the Minister of Transport.

4. Gate 2B- in relation to the question "Tolling does not significantly or unduly reduce project outcomes or result in new or additional dis-benefits.":

- how does NZTA arrive at the conclusion, when the modelling in Gate 2A clearly shows that there is a 33% decrease in benefits as a result of tolling. Which is a significant amount.

NZTA officials considered a range of factors including social, safety, travel time and resilience when determining whether tolling would significantly or unduly reduce project outcomes or result in new or additional dis-benefits.

The Gate 2B section looks to assess the policy and project alignment, including to understand how tolling impacts project outcomes based on the original project business case. For Te Ahu a Turanga, NZTA looked at diversion rates, safety implications, travel time and resilience.

Gate 2B also assesses the priorities set out in the GPS. It found tolling is not contrary to, and has alignment with, the priorities by ensuring that tolling will not result in impacts that negate the goals of the GPS.

- When was the Minister first made aware of the dis-benefits and what was his response(s)/comment, and did NZTA change anything in the tolling assessment as a result of this?

The Minister of Transport was not provided the tolling assessment as part of the initial briefing process. The Minister of Transport was provided a briefing asking him to agree to NZTA undertaking public consultation, after the NZTA Board approved the proposed tolling schemes.

In line with NZTA policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman about my decision to refuse part of your request. The complaint form is available on the Ombudsman website at: <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/>

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact the Ministerial Services team, by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



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