

MINO-0435 Potholes, road maintenance funding and new initiatives

4 August 2022

The Associate Minister's Office has requested data for pothole repairs around New Zealand since 2017, funding allocated for state highway maintenance, and what new initiatives are underway to improve road conditions.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

1. **Has the number/rate of reported but unrepaired potholes on New Zealand roads increased or decreased since 2017?**
 - o **What is the urban / regional / rural breakdown of these numbers?**

The appendix below details potholes repaired per region since 2017 in a graph. Please note that we have a continuous programme of maintenance in place to ensure that potholes are continually being repaired. This data is not broken down at the urban or rural level (this can be provided by Waka Kotahi however it will require a significant amount of work). Generally speaking, the pothole frequency in an urban environment is less frequent due to more durable pavements and road materials as compared to rural environments.

It has been a particularly challenging winter with unseasonal intense winter rain accompanied by frequent snowfall events. Much of our rural networks were built with flexible pavements, chip seal surfacing for waterproofing and traction (skid resistance). With climate change and increased heavy traffic loading, higher specified pavements will be necessary for improved longevity and less maintenance interventions on these more highly trafficked routes.

There has been a significant impact on our maintenance programme from COVID-19. During the first lockdown in 2020, none of the Network Outcome Contractors (NOCs) were able to complete heavy maintenance or renewals work, which had a flow on effect after the lockdown. This had a significant and longer flow-on effect on the pavement maintenance activities.

Other issues can be related to supplier performance, through poor treatment selection and/or workmanship. In the three most effected regions, Northland, Central Waikato and Taranaki:

- potholes are appearing in renewal sites that have been deferred due to budget or resourcing constraints,
 - preventative maintenance work is being carried out very late in the season, or not at all,
 - some maintenance patches and renewals were completed last year with only one seal coat (typically a minimum of two seal coats, 12 months apart are necessary for improved waterproofness).
2. **Has the funding allocated to State Highways maintenance increased or decreased in real terms?**
 - o **What is the urban / regional / rural breakdown of this funding?**

Please see the Attachment which details the actual spend on state highway road maintenance since 2012/13 as well as the remaining allocation for the 2021-24 National Land Transport Programme (NLTP).

We are only able to provide a breakdown of this information at a regional level. The data shows that, when adjusted for CPI, the amount allocated to state highway maintenance has increased from \$460 million in 2012/13, to \$671 million for 2023/24.

3. What new initiatives, if any, does the Government have underway to improve the condition of our worst regional roads, broken down by region, funding allocated, and progress made?

The state highway programme is developed nationally and responds to individual network needs, taking pavement and surfacing condition into account. From a national perspective, the renewal programme of pavement rehabilitation, thin asphalt surfacing and chip sealing, has increased from the 2018-21 National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) of 5,481 lane kms to the forecasted 7,070 lane kms in the 2021-24 NLTP. This is an increase in this category of nearly 30 percent.

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Pothole Trends per NOC

