

## 1. WHAT IS THE SOUTHERN LINKS PROJECT?

The Southern Links Investigation Project is a joint NZ Transport Agency and Hamilton City Council initiative. The Southern Links project involves approximately 21km of state highway, three new river crossings and 11km of urban arterial roads inside Hamilton's Peacocke growth area.

(Please note: the Southern Links project is not part of the Waikato Expressway construction and design works that are currently underway).

## 2. WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE PROJECT?

The long term aim of the project is to develop an effective network of well connected state highway and urban routes linking: SH1 from Kahikatea Drive in Hamilton to the Waikato Expressway at Tamahere in the southeast; and SH3 from Hamilton International Airport to central and east Hamilton. The purpose of this joint investigation is to identify preferred routes which could connect these points and provide the corridors for future transport; and to and protect these preferred routes for designation.

## 3. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT?

The benefits of this initiative would see better linkage and access across and in and out of Hamilton City and surrounding districts for all motorists, which supports the region's growth strategy by enabling more efficient movement of people and freight. Those benefits would include enabling economic growth, reducing travel times, improving road safety, reducing congestion and creating further opportunities for Waikato communities and businesses.

When constructed, the Southern Links project will reduce congestion, improve safety on SH1 and SH3 in the Hillcrest and Melville suburbs of Hamilton, improve freight flows for industry and be a key part of the city's urban arterial network integrated into the HCC Access Hamilton Strategy. It is also an integral part of the Regional Land Transport Strategy, the Waipa Integrated Transport Strategy and the developing Waikato Integrated Land Transport Strategy. Southern Links will also complement the Waikato Expressway (a Road of National Significance) by providing the main southern access linking Hamilton City and the Expressway.

## 4. WHAT FACTORS WERE USED TO DETERMINE THE PREFERRED NETWORK?

Some of the factors include:

- Terrain and ground conditions and effects on soil and air quality.
- Constraints associated with ecological, archaeological and heritage sites.
- Considerations related to cultural values, social impacts and community cohesion.
- Natural character, aesthetics and urban design and noise impacts.
- Density of development, stormwater and catchment management, engineering feasibility, economics and modelling of the preferred network's performance.
- Legal and statutory requirements of the RMA (including undertaking an Assessment of Environmental Effects).

## 5. WHAT STAGE IS THE SOUTHERN LINKS PROJECT AT?

As at May 2013, the Hamilton City Council and the NZTA Board agreed to proceed with the preparation of the route protection applications for the preferred Southern Links network, specifically:

- The Peacocke Arterial Routes (HCC).
- Relevant routes outside of the Hamilton City boundary (the Transport Agency).

Please note that there are no changes to the preferred routes to be designated which were shown at the Public Information Days held in May 2012.

Both Hamilton City Council and the Transport Agency have now lodged their respective route designation applications ('Notice of Requirement') under the Resource Management Act (RMA) with the relevant councils (Waipa District, Waikato District and Hamilton City). Resource consent applications to Waikato Regional Council for the key new bridges on the network have also been lodged at the same time.

Now that the Notices of Requirement and the consent applications are lodged, the formal RMA process can begin. That process is administered by the receiving councils (Waipa District, Waikato District and Hamilton City) and it involves three more steps - public notification; a period in which public submissions can be lodged; and a Hearing before Commissioners who will be appointed by the receiving councils.

The respective councils are responsible for public notification and the RMA process. Once public notification has been advised, anyone can make a submission on the Notices of Requirement; and on the resource consent applications to Waikato Regional Council regarding the proposed key new bridges within the network. Before the Councils publicly notify the Notices of Requirement and the resource consent applications, they will review the documents and decide whether they need to ask Hamilton City Council or the Transport Agency for any further information about the project.

## **6. WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE ROUTES HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED IN THE RESPECTIVE DISTRICT PLANS - IS THIS TRUE?**

No routes have been designated yet. While some of the maps in the proposed Hamilton City District Plan and the proposed Waipa District Plan show the Southern Links network alignment on them, the network is shown for information only and this information is still subject to the formal RMA designation process.

## **7. WHAT INPUT HAS THE PROJECT HAD ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ?**

It is a legal requirement under the RMA to explore environmental and cultural issues in relation to any project affecting infrastructure. Iwi input on this is a key contributor on these aspects. There is also the Waikato River vision and strategy currently being developed and this also needs to be taken into account in relation to the proposed new bridges crossing the river as part of this project.

## **8. WHAT INVOLVEMENT HAVE LOCAL IWI HAD IN THIS PROJECT AND WHY?**

A Tangata Whenua Working Group is involved in this project: its membership is comprised of relevant hapu in the Southern Links area and the group is co-ordinated by Waikato-Tainui. The group was engaged in 2011 to provide a Tangata Whenua Effects Assessment Report (TWEAR) that will outline potential cultural and other effects of significance to tangata whenua and how the project could avoid, remedy or mitigate those effects.

The report includes a cultural and technical assessment for the project and recognises that the Waikato River environment as a whole has special meaning to tangata whenua.

The Transport Agency's contract with the group also allows the project team to work in an efficient and effective manner with tangata whenua, given the size of the project area and the number of hapu within it. This helps to ensure that cultural and other impacts of importance to tangata whenua are adequately identified and addressed.

The contract provides for a variety of services including to facilitate reporting to and review by marae representatives; establishing a working party; assisting the project team with community and environmental inputs; and consulting with marae elders.

The agreement covered the duration of the Southern Links Investigation up to the current point of lodging Resource Management Act documents for route designations.

## **9. WHERE TO FROM HERE FOR THE PROJECT - NEXT STEPS?**

Now the Notices of Requirement and the consent applications have been prepared and lodged (as per question 5 above), the formal Resource Management Act (RMA) process begins - that process is administered by the receiving councils.

The receiving councils (Waipa District, Waikato District, Hamilton City and Waikato Regional Council) will publicly 'notify' the Notices of Requirement and the resource consent applications - this is the stage when anyone who wishes to do so can make a submission to the appropriate council in relation to the relevant area of Southern Links they wish to comment on. Directly affected property owners will be formally notified by the councils. Relevant documents including submission forms will be made available online at that time and hard copies will be distributed to councils and libraries.

A Hearing before independent commissioners (appointed by the receiving councils) will be held so the submissions can be made in person. This process takes approximately three to 12 months to complete.

## **10. IS IT TRUE THAT THE SOUTHERN LINKS PROJECT CURRENTLY SITS OUTSIDE THE TRANSPORT AGENCY'S 10 YEAR INVESTMENT FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION?**

Yes. Neither the Transport Agency nor the Hamilton City Council has any funding set aside for the design or construction of the network in their respective 10-year plans. Timing for construction will depend on funding availability and priorities - and on the rate of development in Peacockes.

Getting the designations in place will protect the preferred network so that it can be built when required in the future. The project phase which is happening now is all about protecting the preferred network so that nothing can happen on the designated land that would preclude or make it harder to build the network when required in the future.

## **11. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED COSTS FOR THIS PROJECT IF IT GOES AHEAD?**

Initial investigations estimated the project costs to be around \$450 million. However, as the project sits outside the Transport Agency's and the HCC's 10-year funding plans (and as with any construction project), the cost of progressing the design and construction is likely to change in line with standard costs at that time and as the details of the design of the road become more specific.

## 12. DID THE TRANSPORT AGENCY USE FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY TO INFORM ITS PREFERRED NETWORK?

Yes, we held a number of public information days in various locations in May 2012. We also continue to collate and respond to feedback we receive through our webpage and/or email address.

## 13. WILL THE PROJECT AFFECT THE NARROWS GOLF COURSE?

Yes. If the preferred routes are designated, the Southern Links project will cut through Narrows Golf course. The golf club has been consulted throughout the process

## How can I get regularly updated information on the project?



Preferred route images and diagrams and project newsletters are available to anyone on the NZ Transport Agency's webpage at [www.nzta.govt.nz/southern-links](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/southern-links). You can also sign up to receive the newsletters by email by contacting the project team:

- Email: [southern.links@aecom.com](mailto:southern.links@aecom.com)
- Phone: 0508 STHNLINK (0508 7846 5465)

The latest newsletter (available as a PDF on the NZTA's Southern Links webpage) also sets out some detail about the formal RMA process and how people can be involved.

[www.nzta.govt.nz/southern-links](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/southern-links)

## How can I find out more about the submission process and the RMA regulatory process?



Please note documents and submission forms will be online once the Notice of Requirements have been publicly notified. Details will be provide on where to access these documents then.

Until then - and once these are available - all enquiries about the RMA designation process or how people can make a submission should be directed to:

Andrew Cumberpatch at MWH consultants  
Email: [andrew.j.cumberpatch@mwhglobal.com](mailto:andrew.j.cumberpatch@mwhglobal.com)  
Phone: 07 858 7607

MWH consultants have been engaged by the councils who are administering the RMA process to assist them with the processing of the HCC and NZ Transport Agency Notices of Requirement.

More information in details about the RMA designation process can also be found on the Ministry for the Environment's webpage at: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/everyday/designations/>

