



# New Ōpaoa River Bridge



## Project update

You may have noticed that work on the new Ōpaoa River Bridge has been coming along nicely since our last newsletter.

Much of the bridge build is nearly finished, with the piles, piers, abutments and headstocks all complete, most of the bridge beams in place, and nearly all the bridge deck spans concreted. The next phase involves completing the bridge edge barriers and expansion joints, and asphaltting the bridge deck.

Work on both approaches to the bridge is also underway. Retaining walls are being built on the south approach. Earthworks, stormwater works and roading construction have started on the north approach.

Early in 2020, the bridge construction will be largely complete, with work on the road approaches becoming the focus. As soon as the bridge build is finished, northbound traffic will be diverted on to the new bridge, so work on the approaches can be completed. Southbound traffic will remain on the old bridge until the approach work is largely complete.

Please stick to the reduced speed limit when travelling through the site for you and the workers' safety.

It will be quiet on site between 20 December and 6 January as work stops for the Christmas holiday period. However, as it is still a construction zone, traffic management will remain in place with a reduced speed limit for the safety of the public.

## PROJECT BENEFITS

- Improved traffic flow for freight and light vehicles.
- A bridge structure that is safer and more resilient to natural hazards – making State Highway 1 more secure as New Zealand's key freight route.
- Easier access for people travelling into central Wairau (Blenheim).

# Landscape plan creates gateway to Wairau (Blenheim)

The landscape design for the new Ōpaoa River Bridge incorporates a prominent gateway, creating a strong sense of arrival to the northern entrance of Wairau (Blenheim).

Key features of the gateway area include:

- an asphalt shared pathway connecting Wairau (Blenheim) with Spring Creek for cyclists, scooters and pedestrians, travelling through the gateway and across the heritage bridge
- bands of mixed native planting extending across the highway, where possible, will help create a gateway for motorists to pass through rather than drive alongside

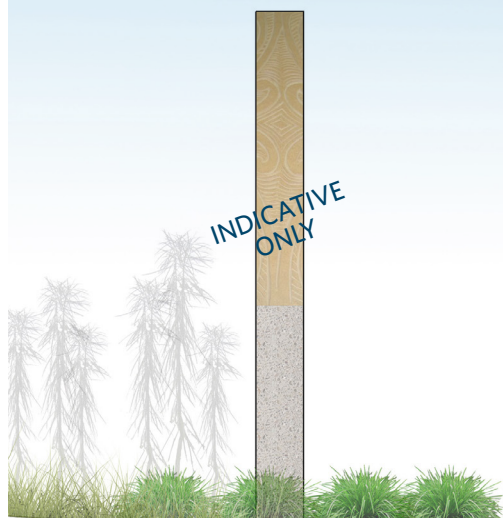
- a central courtyard with a paved whāriki (welcome mat) in a woven pattern, as well as information panels, seating, cycle racks and locally sourced boulders

- a 7m high carved Pou Whenua. Māori references and native themes are key to the landscape design, with the incorporation of 'weaving' through the hard landscape elements, as well as the bold use of different harakeke/flax species. These large areas of native plantings are designed to help enhance the biodiversity of the Ōpaoa River.

A stylised version of the harakeke (flax) and its flower will be sand blasted along the new bridge's concrete side barrier. These patterns are to be depicted on several panels, with the motif fading from dark to light as motorists continue along the bridge.

Information panels will be an integral part of the new landscaping, with two landscape format panels forming walls on either side of the courtyard. One panel will include stories from mana whenua while the other will focus on the history of the site and the heritage bridge.

Mana whenua iwi – Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira – are working with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency and Marlborough District Council on the gateway and landscaping alongside the bridge.



Courtyard elevation.



Information panel.



Secondary seating.



Members of the Nelson Tasman branch of Engineering NZ and the Property Institute heard about the technicalities of the bridge build at a site visit in November.

## FAST FACTS

- The new bridge will be approximately 188m long with a carriageway of 10m wide (2-lane, 2-way) and curved for a third of its length at the southern end.
- The main superstructure is one piece with no expansion joints as usual at each pier. This reduces noise and vibration, as well as maintenance associated with replacing the expansion joints.
- The pier stems above ground are octagonal (with 8 sides) to reflect the octagonal bow string arches on the adjoining heritage bridge.
- The bridge has been designed as lean and simple as possible following consultation with stakeholders, so it does not detract from the adjoining heritage bridge.

## Master carver appointed for new Ōpaoa River Bridge gateway

Award-winning Spring Creek master carver Reg Thompsett has been commissioned to carve the 7m high Pou Whenua that creates a commanding presence to the gateway to Wairau (Blenheim) on the northern side of the new Ōpaoa River Bridge.

Reg is well known for his skill and passion for carving – he trained at the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute in Rotorua as a young man. Beautiful examples of his work can be found at the Wairau Hospital chapel, Meretoto (Ship Cove) and the whare nui Te Aroha O Te Waipounamu at Omaka Marae.

Reg has chosen a large Matai log sourced locally as his raw material for the carved pillar.



Students from Redwoodtown School get a lesson in the art of Pou Whenua carving from master carver Reg Thompsett.



Visit our website for more information on this project:  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/new-opaoa-river-bridge](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/new-opaoa-river-bridge)