



Hamilton Regional Office

30 June 2005

MEDIA RELEASE

Big projects focus on solving Tauranga congestion

Projects to relieve traffic congestion in and around Tauranga dominate Transit New Zealand's 10-year State Highway Forecast for the Bay of Plenty.

The leading project is Harbour Link, where work continues on developing a funding package with Transit's partner, Tauranga City Council. The project will provide a flyover of the existing road network on the Tauranga side of the Harbour, duplicate the Tauranga Harbour Bridge and provide a four-lane Hewletts Road. This project is currently awaiting a Government decision on toll funding.

Another major project designed to promote economic development and alleviate the congestion caused by rapid population and development growth is to construct a bypass of Pyes Pa on SH36. Work on stage 2 of the bypass is scheduled to begin on this \$30 million project in 2007/08 and will be carried out in conjunction with a developer and the Tauranga City Council, who will share the cost. Work by the developer is almost complete on stage 1 of the bypass adjacent to the Route K toll road.

Transit has identified the investigation and implementation of travel demand management initiatives in and around Tauranga as the highest priority in the Bay of Plenty and has provided \$3.4 million for this in the first three years. The Land Transport Management Act 2003 signalled the need for travel demand management as an integral component of a sustainable approach to land transport. Transit is working with the council and Environment Bay of Plenty to identify appropriate projects that will complement the other transport initiatives underway.

Transit regional manager Chris Allen noted that a major project to ease congestion is currently under construction. This is the \$27.6 million Hewletts Flyover project in Mt Maunganui. In addition the \$5.1 million SH2 Domain Road Roundabout safety project near Papamoa is also under construction with both projects due for completion in the middle of 2006.

"Funding has been provided for the design of the Tauranga Eastern Arterial project bypassing Te Puke. This is the next most critical part of the Western Bay of Plenty sub-regions transport system and we will be working very closely with the respective councils and developers to progress the development of this eastern corridor," said Mr Allen.

Transit also intends to undertake strategic studies to update investigation of a range of projects in and around Tauranga and Rotorua.

Safety continues to be a major focus for Transit with two passing lanes planned for SH2 near Katikati. A further four are planned depending on progress with other projects and the availability of regional distribution funding.

Transit plans to improve 'out of context' sections of state highway and roadside hazards and provide two new stock effluent disposal facilities in Katikati and Opotiki that will add to the network of stock truck effluent disposal sites. A realignment of the SH5 Gasline Curves

crash blackspot is planned within the next three years and investigations are continuing on further improvements to the Hairini/Welcome Bay roundabout. Improvements are also planned to the Wainui Road intersection, east of Whakatane. Other safety improvements planned within the first three years are a guardrail at Maniatutu Road North on SH33 and the widening of the Mangarewa Stream Bridge on SH36, north of Rotorua.

Transit is working with Tauranga City Council on cycle facilities around Hairini Junction and Turret Road on SH2 and with the Rotorua District Council on developing an integrated walking and cycling strategy for the Rotorua road network.

Funding of \$63.4 million for the 2005/06 year had been allocated to the Bay of Plenty region for state highways and over the 10-year forecast period a total of \$762 million has been proposed said Mr Allen.

Of this more than 50 percent would be spent on maintenance and operation of the state highway network in the Bay of Plenty. Transit would continue to focus on safety in all maintenance activities especially on the Katikati to Paengaroa section of SH2. It is proposed to develop a response plan to the impact of forest harvesting, particularly on the more remote sections of rural highway. It is also planned to install guardrails in the Waioeka Gorge and focus on how to improve the 'ride' on SH2 in the Eastern Bay of Plenty particularly for heavy vehicle with the aim of attracting more traffic away from the route through Whakatane and Ohope.

Mr Allen said the announcement today by Transit did not include the additional \$500 million of land transport funding announced by the Government on 23 June. Final decisions on how that funding will be spent are yet to be made and a revised national forecast would be released in the next few weeks.

Transit's forecast this year is split into a one-year works' programme to which Transit was fully committed, a three-year plan with the best estimates of time and cost, and the balance of the 10-year forecast provided an indication of priorities but was less certain, he said.

ENDS www.transit.govt.nz

NEWS MEDIA: For further information, contact:

*Chris Allen, Regional Manager, Tel 07 957 1610 or 027 292 8072 or
Deborah Willett Communications Manager Tel 04 496 6653*