



**Napier Regional Office
Media Release**

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SH35 projects come into state highway forecast

Projects to widen the road surface on two stretches of SH35 north of Gisborne and safety improvements at several other locations are the major features of Transit New Zealand's 10-year State Highway Forecast 2005/06 – 2014/15 for Gisborne, released today.

The Tolaga to Gisborne Seal Widening has an indicative construction start date of 2008/09 and the North Tolaga Seal Widening is forecast for a construction start in 2012/13. In Transit's 2004/05 plan, both projects fell outside the 10-year period.

Transit regional manager (acting) Graham Taylor said Transit would spend more than \$16 million improving and maintaining state highways in the Gisborne region in 2005/06, with the total spend for the 10-year period forecast to be more than \$190 million.

"Transit plans to improve 'out of context' sections of state highway north of Kaiteratahi Hill on SH2 north of Ormond, and near Dymock Road on SH2 south of Te Karaka, within the next three years. A slow vehicle bay will also be constructed at Panikau Hill on SH35 north of Pouawa.

"We'll continue to focus strongly on the ongoing maintenance and operation of the state highway network, plus undertake minor safety improvements. This year we've looked for opportunities to widen the seal on particularly narrow parts of the highway while we've been there carrying out other maintenance, and will keep on doing so," Mr Taylor said.

In addition to maintaining current and future levels of service, and preserving the state highway asset, Transit proposes to:

- carry out more pavement reconstruction than in previous years, adopting environmentally appropriate recycling strategies
- bring the network up to the target seal widths, as and when opportunities arise during maintenance activities
- continue to work on a risk analysis of subsidence sites, particularly on SH35, to reduce these risks, where appropriate.

Mr Taylor said the forecast did not take account of the extra \$500 million for land transport announced by the government last week.

"This additional land transport funding is excellent news and comes on top of an already record level of investment nationally in state highways for 2005/06 and the years to come. Transit is working on proposals for how the extra funding could be spent and will release an update incorporating the necessary changes to the state highway forecast in the coming weeks."

Transit's current 10-year forecast is divided into a firm one-year programme for 2005/06, which Transit is fully committed to delivering. The first three years will be known as the State Highway Plan and contains the best estimates of time and cost for the listed projects and activities. For the rest of the decade the forecast is less certain due to the potential for issues in the planning stages to affect timing and costs. Large projects are forecast over 10 years and small and medium-sized projects with construction costs of less than \$3 million have been planned over three.

“The timeframe for the development and construction of the projects in the forecast is likely to change depending on the use of regional distribution funding, which comes from the increase in petrol tax from April 2005 and will be allocated regionally on a population basis.

“Ultimately, Land Transport New Zealand decides which projects are funded using regional distribution funding. The level of regional distribution funding it is making available is reduced in early years, but gears up in later years to ensure all regions receive their full entitlement over the 10-year period,” Mr Taylor said.

The 2005/06 – 2014/15 State Highway Forecast is the first prepared under the full provision of the Land Transport Management Act and Transit consulted more widely than in the past on its draft plan. Over 900 written submissions were received and the views of 100 organisations or individuals were heard at hearings in 17 locations nationwide.

For more information contact:

Transit regional manager (acting) Graham Taylor – 04 801 2580

Transit communications advisor Janice Wilson - 04 496 6643