



Wellington Regional Office

MEDIA RELEASE

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Construction of replacement Awatere Bridge key feature of state highway forecast

Construction of a replacement for the 100-year-old Awatere Bridge near Seddon beginning in 2005/06 is the major feature of Transit New Zealand's 10-year State Highway Forecast for Nelson/Tasman/Marlborough, released today.

Transit regional manager Graham Taylor said he was delighted to be able to report would be constructed a year earlier than was indicated in Transit's 2004/05 10-year plan, released this time last year.

"The Awatere Bridge project involves the replacement of an existing narrow, one-lane bridge on a railway structure with a new two-lane bridge with realigned approaches. The existing bridge provides a very low standard of service to road users, especially heavy vehicle operators, and cannot be used by over-sized loads.

"A lot of people have worked very hard over the last three years or so to see this project brought forward and I'm sure the community will be as pleased as we are that we'll soon be getting started on construction," Mr Taylor said.

The Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman state highway forecast seeks to protect and preserve the existing asset, improve the security and efficiency of the roads into and out of Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman, and improve road safety.

"There are significant development pressures affecting the operation of the SH6 on the outskirts of Nelson, and Transit is currently carrying out the Nelson to Brightwater Corridor Study. We expect that this may have an effect on the scope or nature of projects already in the 10-year forecast and may identify additional projects. Once the study is finished Transit will work through the impacts it might have on the 10-year forecast."

In the Tasman district, the SH60 Ruby Bay Bypass falls inside the 10-year period with a forecast construction date of 2013/2014 as does the SH6 Hope Saddle Realignment. The Whangamoia South Realignment is forecast for construction beginning in 2012/2013, whereas previously it had sat outside the 10-year period.

Other projects in the Marlborough and Nelson/Tasman areas include constructing a series of passing lanes on SH1, both north and south of Blenheim.

"These will improve the opportunity for overtaking, reduce driver frustration and reduce the number of accidents occurring," said Mr Taylor.

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 incorporate the changes in an addendum to the state highway forecast, to be issued 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. For the purposes of forecasting, indicative construction start dates are based on estimated funding levels if 75 percent of regional distribution funding for Nelson/Tasman/Marlborough was allocated to state highway projects.

“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 of the 10-year period, but gears up in later years. Transit has had to take a national view of the state highway asset when recommending projects for regional distribution funding in the first few years because although each region will receive its full entitlement by the end of the 10-year period, there will be limited funds available in the earlier years,” 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.

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