



**Transit National Office
Media Release**

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\$206 million forecast for West Coast state highways over the next decade

Transit New Zealand today announced its 10-year State Highway Forecast for 2005/06 to 2014/15. The Forecast includes a planned spend of \$206 million on improvements and maintenance for the West Coast during the next decade.

The key regional transport issues the Forecast seeks to improve on the West Coast are the efficiency and safety of transport corridors; road safety on single lane bridges and the increase in traffic demands from coal mining activity, dairy industry and the tourist industry.

Transit regional manager Colin Knaggs said Transit understood the strategic importance of both SH73 and SH6 to the West Coast economy.

“Improvements proposed over the next 10 years are investigation of options at the Gates of Haast Bridge on SH6 and options for a new bridge at Arahura to ensure the security of the route. Investigations are already underway in both areas.”

The forecast also includes the Mingha Bluff to Rough Creek project in Canterbury, which affects the SH73 route to the Coast. Options will be investigated to improve the existing narrow width and tight alignment which is of concern to many road users.

“Plans are underway to improve difficult sections of state highway and roadside hazards to increase safety for all road users especially where heavy and light traffic interact. Improvements to Littleman Straight have been included in the Forecast, as have stock effluent disposal facilities, at Jacksons on SH73.

“Even though the traffic volumes are low on the Coast the lack of alternative routes requires a high standard of maintenance to keep traffic moving. Our maintenance activities include low-cost but highly effective safety improvements such as upgrading lighting, laying skid-resistant road surfacing, protecting motorists from roadside obstacles and drop-offs and widening the seal on key sections of the highway,” says Mr Knaggs.

Over and above general maintenance Transit proposes to install further electronic variable message signposting, introduce thermal mapping of the inland network to predict where icing will occur and install more weather stations to improve emergency responses.

Transit also proposes to continue risk analysis of rock falls and river erosion, implement risk-reduction works to reduce the vulnerability of bridges in the event of a severe earthquake and strengthen three suspension bridges on SH6. Transit will also work with the Department of Conservation to ensure that maintenance within the national parks represent world best practice.

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.

The forecast – with \$968 million earmarked nationally for 2005/06 - was prepared before the Government's 23 June announcement of extra funding for land transport, and is based on a funding allocation of \$950 million for 2005/06, \$162 million more than the equivalent figure for 2004/05. The State Highway Forecast for the 10-year period totals in excess of \$11 billion.

It does not include additional funding for land transport announced on 23 June.

“The additional \$500 million funding for land transport announced by the Government last week is excellent news and we hope to receive part of this funding for additional activity on the West Coast,” says Mr Knaggs.

This 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 including Hokitika.

For more information contact:

Transit regional manager Colin Knaggs 03 366 4455

Transit communications manager Deborah Willett 04 496 6653