



**Wanganui Regional Office
Media Release**

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Embargoed until 6pm**

Consultation helps deliver Bell Block Bypass for the Taranaki region

The Bell Block Bypass, north of New Plymouth, is the region's largest roading project programmed to start construction this year as announced today in Transit New Zealand's 10-year State Highway Forecast 2006/07.

"This project is of major importance to the region and many will be pleased to see it's going ahead. The effectiveness of Transit's consultation process has proven itself in light of the reinstatement of the project as a top priority," regional manager Errol Christiansen says.

"Bypassing the existing highway will greatly reduce congestion and improve safety for this vital route between Paraiti and Egmont roads," Mr Christiansen says.

The Bell Block Bypass, scheduled for completion within five years, also includes the Mangaone Hill four-laning project.

Other projects included in the Forecast to improve safety are the Normanby Overbridge Realignment, south of Hawera and the Rugby Road Underpass, south of Inglewood. They will provide a more reliable route, particularly for heavy vehicles. These projects are scheduled for construction within the next five years.

Transit is undertaking a number of strategic studies of New Plymouth north and urban areas, a passing lane study and a study of Awakino Gorge, to improve long term planning.

Works to improve safety and efficiency of SH3 over the next three years include a passing lane on SH3, Whareroa Rd south of Hawera, improvements to the signals at Mangaorei Road intersection, the Tangahoe Bridge widening and Waitotara north curve improvement.

As well as improvement work, the emphasis in the 10-year State Highway Forecast is maintenance of the existing regional state highway network. Maintenance projects for next year include resurfacing 96 kilometres and road reconstruction of over seven kilometres.

Information with a national focus is included in a separate media statement.

Transit's 10-year State Highway Forecast 2006/07 and a media kit will be available at 6pm today on our website at www.transit.govt.nz

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