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Committee Regional Transport
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Proposed Variation to the Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme 2009 – 2012: Waterfall Road Connection

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's support for a variation of the Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme at the request of the NZ Transport Agency (Highways and Network Operations Group).

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report are subject to the legislative requirements of the Land Transport Management Act (the Act) 2003¹. Section 18D(5) of the Act requires the Committee to determine if a proposed variation to the RLTP is significant, in accordance with its significance policy adopted under 106(2) and included in the programme.

An assessment of the variation against the RLTP significance policy is set out in section 6 of this report and concludes the matter does not trigger the requirement to carry out consultation.

3. Background

3.1 The Regional Land Transport Programme

The Act requires the Regional Transport Committee to prepare and consult on a Regional Land Transport Programme (RLTP) every three years. The current programme (2009 – 2012) was prepared by this Committee and subsequently approved by Greater Wellington in June 2009.

The RLTP contains all the land transport activities proposed to be undertaken throughout the region over 3 financial years, the regional priority of those activities, indicative activities over the following 3 financial years, plus a 10 year financial forecast.

¹ As amended by the Land Transport Management Act 2008.

The activities in the RLTP are submitted by the NZ Transport Agency (the Agency) and 'Approved Organisations' (including the eight territorial authorities and Greater Wellington). The activities in the programme relate to passenger transport, walking and cycling, travel demand management, local roads, state highways, and the movement of freight.

4. Process for considering a variation

The Act includes provision for changes to some types of activities without the need for a variation to the RLTP. However, this provision does not apply to the proposed new activity outlined below. As such, the process for dealing with requests for variations must be followed.

Section 18D of the Act states that if a good reason exists to do so, the Committee may prepare a variation to its RLTP during the three years to which it applies. This can be at the request of an Approved Organisation or the Agency, or on the committee's own motion. In this case, the request has been made by the Agency.

Section 18D(4) requires the Committee to consider any variation request promptly.

Section 18D(5) notes that consultation is not required for any variation that is not significant.

If the Committee does not wish to accept the request to vary the RLTP, it must give written advice to the Agency of that decision and the reasons for the decision.

5. Proposed variation

The Agency has requested that a new project titled 'Waterfall Road Connection' be included in the RLTP.

The new project has a total cost of \$4.03 million and is expected to commence during the 2010/11 financial year. The project would be funded by the Agency with an anticipated contribution from KiwiRail.

The project falls within the Wellington Northern Corridor of the Roads of National Significance (RoNS). Specifically, it falls within the bounds of the Mackays to Peka Peka Expressway project which is currently being tendered as an Alliance. The main objective of the Wellington RoNS is to reduce congestion, improve safety and support economic growth.

This project was not identified when the regional programme was being developed in early 2009, but the need to progress it has become evident since that time for the reasons set out below. The Agency has been able to progress the investigation and design of the project using allocated funding for the Wellington RoNS, but construction funding is now required to progress the project.

Immediately east of the intersection with State Highway 1 (SH1), Waterfall Road crosses the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) at a level crossing. There is currently insufficient stacking space to the west of the level crossing for a truck to wait without extending onto SH1 when the rail crossing is closed to vehicular traffic. This means that traffic turning into Waterfall Road frequently extends back onto SH1. This is an ongoing safety and efficiency risk, evidenced by the accident record at the intersection and traffic delays caused by turning traffic queuing.

KiwiRail are in the process of double tracking and electrifying the NIMT line as far as Waikanae. As a consequence, there will be more frequent rail services and trains approaching the level crossing from two directions. To keep the crossing open after double tracking, KiwiRail must install barriers on the level crossing for safety reasons.

This means that a roading solution for Waterfall Road must be found. KiwiRail's double tracking schedule necessitates modification of the Waterfall Road intersection by Christmas 2010 and means that this project is extremely urgent.

The Agency has identified three potential roading solutions for the Waterfall Road Intersection post double tracking. The options are as follows:

- A. Close the median barrier and construct a left in, left out intersection at Waterfall Road
- B. Close the intersection and upgrade the unsealed link via Valley Road to Kapiti Road, Paraparaumu
- C. Close the intersection and extend Emerald Glen Road to the Mackays Crossing underpass and SH1.

Option A represents a short-term solution which would be acceptable to KiwiRail but which is inconsistent with the Wellington RoNS strategy. Option B is consistent with the Wellington RoNS strategy but would cause substantial journey time delays for Waterfall Road and Emerald Glen residents and could be difficult and expensive to achieve. It would also be unlikely to be completed prior to the commissioning of the double track. Therefore the Agency's preferred option is Option C, to close the intersection and extend Emerald Glen Road to the Mackays Crossing underpass and SH1. This option is broadly supported by the residents of Emerald Glen Road, as well as the Department of Conservation (DoC). It causes least journey time delay to residents and is consistent with the Wellington RoNS strategy.

This proposed variation is therefore to include construction funding in the Wellington RLTP for building a connection between Waterfall Road and SH1 which is consistent with the Wellington RoNS strategy. This will be a new link road from the end of Emerald Glen Road to the Mackays Crossing intersection, across the Department of Conservation (DoC) owned Whareroa Farm. No private land is required other than that owned by DoC. The new link road will provide a new access to SH1 for the residents of Waterfall Road

and Emerald Glen Road and therefore permit the closure of the at-grade intersection of Waterfall Road and SH1, and the level crossing of the NIMT.

The project is consistent with the safety and economic benefits of the Wellington RONS programme and would eventually need to be undertaken to complete the expressway between Mackays Crossing and Peka Peka. It allows the removal of an at-grade intersection from SH1, and a level crossing from the NIMT. In addition, the completion of a link to Mackays Crossing provides an alternative route between Paraparaumu and Mackays Crossing (using Valley Road, Waterfall Road and Emerald Glen Road) in the event of the closure of SH1, thereby providing additional route security.

Consultation with residents and affected stakeholders is underway for this project and a Scheme Assessment Report is due to be completed in May 2010.

Based on the Committee's prioritisation approach, State Highway Block Programme projects are second priority activities. Therefore this new activity would fall within the list of second priority activities in the programme.

Details of the proposed new activity for inclusion in Table 1 of the existing RLTP are set out in **Attachment 1**.

6. Determination of Significance

Officers have assessed the significance of the proposed variation, for the purpose of consultation, against the adopted RLTP significance policy.

The significance policy is set out in section 14 (page 40 and 41) of the RLTP.

In making a determination of significance (against the criteria set out in section 14.3 of the RLTP), officers noted that the proposed variation:

- Would not result in a material change to the balance of strategic investment in the programme;
- Would not materially impact on the contribution towards NZTS objectives and/or GPS targets;
- Would have a small to moderate impact on a small number residents, and;
- Would not affect the integrity of the RLTP, including its overall affordability.

As such, officers consider that the proposed variation to the RLTP is not significant and does not trigger the requirement to carry out consultation.

7. Next Steps

If the Committee agrees to the variation request, it will then be forwarded to Greater Wellington for approval. As is the case with the programme itself, Greater Wellington must either accept the recommendation or it can refer the variation back to the Committee once with a request that it be reconsidered.

Once the variation has been approved by Greater Wellington, the variation is then forwarded to the Agency for consideration of inclusion in the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) for funding.

There is no obligation for the Agency to vary the NLTP by including the new activity. However, it must give written reasons for any decision not to do so. In this case, the Agency has already agreed under officer delegation to include the new activity in the State Highway Block Programme.

8. Voting

Section 107(1) of the Act states that objective and interest representatives have full speaking rights, but are not entitled to vote on matters related to regional land transport programmes. As the subject matter of this report does relate to the regional land transport programme, objective and interest representatives **may not** vote on the resolutions.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives*** the report.
2. ***Notes*** the content of the report.
3. ***Agrees*** to vary the *Regional Land Transport Programme 2009 – 2012* by adding the proposed new activity, set out in ***Attachment 1***, to the programme as a second priority activity.
4. ***Agrees*** to recommend the variation to the *Regional Land Transport Programme 2009 – 2012*, as set out in ***Attachment 1***, to Greater Wellington for its consideration.

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Variation to Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme 2009 – 2012:
NZ Transport Agency – Waterfall Road Connection