

## DRAFT HDC FEEDBACK TO NZTA ON THE O2NL RONS PROJECT

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Horowhenua District Council (HDC) welcomes the opportunity to provide this feedback to the NZ Transport Agency (the Agency) on the Otaki to North of Levin (O2NL) Roads of National Significance project.
- 1.2. It outlines the key expectations and issues considered important for the development of the project from a HDC perspective and aims to support its progress.
- 1.3. The feedback is grouped under the following headings:
  - Collaboration and Support
  - Cultural and Heritage
  - Project Programme, Scope and Staging
  - Project Design
  - Effects on Urban Form
  - Interchanges
  - Walking and Cycling
  - Access and Road Network
  - Amenity
  - Environment and Ecology
  - Economic Impacts
- 1.4. This feedback is not intended to be a complete record of all the views, issues and requirements that HDC considers relevant to the project. It is reflective of our knowledge and the level information available on the project. As the project develops and more detailed information becomes available, we would welcome further opportunities to provide feedback.

### 2. Collaboration and Support

#### **Collaboration**

- 2.1. We support the collaborative approach being taken to develop the project. The Agency's willingness to engage with the community, key stakeholders and iwi is appreciated. The different perspectives and knowledge that these groups bring will provide valuable input to the project and deliver positive outcomes for the District. The current engagement plans proposed to the end of the year will ensure that communities, stakeholders and iwi get the opportunity to communicate to the Agency their views and aspirations for the project.

#### **Support**

- 2.2. The project is important for our District, and we are very eager to see it progress through to construction at the earliest opportunity. We fully support the intent of the project and acknowledge the transport benefits and the opportunities it can bring for the economy both at a national level and for our District, especially if the project planning and design process are well considered and delivered on.

- 2.3. The project will create significant change to the roading infrastructure in the District. Approximately 27km of existing State highway will become local road and HDC's responsibility. Levin town centre will experience change and being a key centre in the District it is important that HDC plans effectively for the future changes.
- 2.4. Responding to these changes and engaging on the project generally, creates administrative challenges for HDC with increased demand for resources and specialist technical advice creating additional expenses.
- 2.5. To enable HDC to continue engaging effectively on the project, which assists the Agency deliver positive national and local project outcomes, the provision of financial or resourcing support is requested. This will help offset the additional expenses being created by the project.

### 3. Culture and Heritage

- 3.1. The Horowhenua District has high cultural and heritage value for iwi, hapū and the wider community. HDC supports strong engagement with iwi and hapū to ensure cultural issues are dealt with appropriately and sensitively. The Agency should support tangata whenua through the engagement process.
- 3.2. The District has a significant cultural landscape, containing wāhi tapu and areas and features of cultural importance, these need to be identified, respected and preserved in the design process.
- 3.3. The cultural significance to tangata whenua of the Tararua Mountain Range, the sea and rivers should be respected and preserved in the design process.
- 3.4. All components of the design of the Expressway and associated infrastructure should recognise the local cultural and heritage context.

### 4. Project Programme, Scope and Staging

#### **Programme**

- 4.1. The length of time taken to develop the project and the changes in scope are creating anxiety and uncertainty for our community. This will be compounded by the level of detail that surrounds this round of consultation.
- 4.2. Moving forward, HDC wants to see more certainty on the project for the District, our community and potentially affected property owners. Traffic growth has been high on SH1 over the last 3 years and can be expected to remain high, exacerbating existing traffic issues in the District. This demonstrates the crucial need to achieve the forecast construction start of 2021 or face unacceptable traffic conditions.
- 4.3. We support the current programme through to construction and consider it important that the Agency works expeditiously to achieve it.

#### **Scope**

- 4.4. Whilst it is beneficial to extend the scope of the project from SH1 Taylors Road to the Manawatū River, we do however question the reasoning of ending the project at the Manawatū River and not the northern end of Foxton. Rooding standards and traffic volumes on the section of SH1 between Manawatu River and Foxton are no different to those immediately to the south.
- 4.5. The traffic impact on Foxton as the first town traffic on SH1 will pass through from Wellington needs to be assessed. Removing bottlenecks between Wellington and Foxton will create free flowing traffic conditions on SH1 that may create future traffic issues in Foxton.
- 4.6. The overall scope of the project should consider the impact not only within the District but also on the function of the District from an inter-regional perspective.
- 4.7. HDC does not support the scope of the project or staging scenario that ends the project south of Levin. This would not alleviate the traffic issues in the town centre.
- 4.8. The project needs to consider the high level of growth being predicted for the District with project decisions supporting the District achieves its growth projections. HDC are reviewing the future growth projections for the District and can provide updated information to the Agency.

#### **Staging**

- 4.9. Generally, HDC does not support any staging of the project; however, if staging was going to enable parts of the project to be delivered early this would be supported.

#### 5. Project Design

- 5.1. The project should promote good urban design principles to assist the District to realise its growth potential and help achieve its community outcomes.
- 5.2. Given the scale of the project, it will have a profound effect on the District, its communities and landscape well into the future. Therefore, HDC expects the Agency to use best practice design standards with a high degree of innovation applied to produce project outcomes that support the District in achieving its community aspirations and outcomes.

#### 6. Effects on Urban Form

- 6.1. The project should limit its overall impact on existing developed areas in the District.
- 6.2. The project should maintain the integrity of the district's growth areas and should minimise severance of these areas from existing residential areas, particularly around Levin.
- 6.3. Appropriate future proofing should be included in the design of new infrastructure to ensure that it can be easily upgraded to accommodate growth in the District.

#### 7. Interchanges

- 7.1. The provision of interchanges must be strategically located to ensure highly efficient access to Levin and its town centre. Levin is a key destination in the District which is reflected by the significant volume of traffic that has an origin or destination there.
- 7.2. It is desirable that the form of interchanges achieves as much free flow of traffic as possible, by using merges/diverges rather than give way or stop control.
- 7.3. HDC supports a connection to the south of Levin that will be the key access between Levin and the south. It is understood that a connection for Levin is being considered to the south of Ōhau; however, HDC considers that a location closer to Levin would provide a more beneficial access and give a sense to drivers that Levin is close. This location should be investigated.
- 7.4. It is understood that an interchange at Manakau has been investigated and whilst this would be desirable to serve the local area, it is not considered a suitable access to Levin from the south. The interchange would potentially attract a high volume of traffic onto the existing SH1 which would be a local road in the future.
- 7.5. The interchange provision should enable inter-regional freight movements that travel through Levin to avoid the town centre.
- 7.6. The interchanges on the expressway will form gateways and first impressions to the District, its towns and services and should enhance the appeal of the District for visitors and residents.
8. Walking and Cycling
  - 8.1. A shared walkway/cycleway should be provided that runs the length of the project like that built in the MacKays to Peka Peka RONS project.
  - 8.2. The project should integrate with HDCs shared pathways strategy, and ensure connection opportunities between O2NL pathways and HDC's local pathway network are included.
  - 8.3. Any residential areas severed by the Expressway should have appropriate connections for walking and cycling as long detours are not attractive or appropriate for these modes.
  - 8.4. The expressway should not limit the opportunity for the proposed growth areas to integrate with existing residential areas in terms of walking and cycling.
  - 8.5. Any roads that experience increases in traffic volumes should maintain the existing level of service for pedestrians and cyclists with mitigation measures as necessary.
  - 8.6. The project should improve traffic conditions in Levin town centre and create opportunities for improved pedestrian movement in and around the town centre.

9. Access and Road Network

**Access**

- 9.1. The RONS project should recognise the key destinations in the District and provide easy access between these areas and the Expressway, especially for traffic associated with Levin.
- 9.2. Maintain efficient two-way access to Levin from the south via a connection at Ōhau or closer to Levin.
- 9.3. Maintain efficient two-way access between Levin and SH1 to the north.
- 9.4. Maintain efficient access to Levin from SH57 and Palmerston North.
- 9.5. Access between the local road network and expressway should minimise traffic on local roads that could otherwise be using the expressway.
- 9.6. Ensure the RONS interchange strategy maintains access points to Levin from the north and south.
- 9.7. Maintain and enhance access to key recreational areas within the District, especially the Tararua hill country, Ōhau River and Lake Horowhenua.
- 9.8. Provide good access from the expressway for freight traffic accessing industrial areas in Levin.

**Road Network**

- 9.9. Any changes to the local road network should minimise any increase in travel time for local traffic.
- 9.10. Reduce congestion and delays in the Levin Town Centre.
- 9.11. Any capacity and safety issues on the local road network because of changed traffic patterns should be mitigated.
- 9.12. The level of service for existing freight and commercial vehicle movements around the District should be enhanced.
- 9.13. Revoked State Highways should be designed to meet their new function as part of the local multi-modal transport network.
- 9.14. Revoked State Highways, including structures, are required to have an appropriate remaining life.

10. Amenity

- 10.1. Any infrastructure changes should preserve and enhance the rural character of the District.
- 10.2. With the proposed Expressway running in a north-south direction any impact on the visual amenity and access between the Tararua Mountain Ranges and the sea should be minimised.
- 10.3. Contribute to enhancing the character and amenity in Levin Town Centre particularly by removing non-essential heavy vehicles.
- 10.4. Minimise effects on key view shafts for existing and future residential areas.
- 10.5. Promote innovation in the design to enhance the overall fit with the landscape and cultural heritage of the District.
- 10.6. Incorporate design components (e.g. artwork, embossed concrete surfaces) that promote and celebrate the local cultural and heritage context of the District.

11. Environment and Ecology

- 11.1. Improve the overall environmental footprint of transport infrastructure throughout the District affected by the project.
- 11.2. Improve the management of stormwater runoff from any new and revoked infrastructure.
- 11.3. Include positive environmental and ecological outcomes for land, air and water for native flora and fauna to thrive across the scope of the project.
- 11.4. The multiple small stream crossings and waterways should be recognised and provided for in the design and earthworks managed to maintain principle land forms.

12. Economic Impacts

- 12.1. Many businesses in the District are located adjacent to the existing State highways and rely on passing traffic. The impact on these businesses and the wider economic impacts on the District needs to be assessed as part of the project.