

Otaki Community Board

Draft Submission on the Peka Peka to Otaki Expressway

The Otaki Community Board welcomes the opportunity to submit to the New Zealand Transport Authority on this matter. The submission covers the following points:

- process
- local road connection across the Expressway;
- left-off access to Te Horo
- other comments on interchanges and alignment
- the rail station
- Pare-o-Matangi Park
- design quality
- economic impacts
- cost

1. Process:

The Community Board continues to have concerns that there is a lack of clarity about what aspects of the proposed Expressway are open to consideration and potential change through the consultation process. The NZTA has indicated to people that it will take into account any ideas that are put forward but at the same time has already commenced land purchase in some areas. While this purchase process does provide relief to those people who are directly affected and are willing sellers, it creates confusion for others in terms of what may still be open for consideration. This has been a frustration for the community throughout this process.

The Community Board also seeks a clear commitment from the NZTA and government that the community has certainty as to the alignment and design as soon as possible, consistent with undertaking the necessary work to provide for a high quality outcome. The community has suffered for many years from half completed processes around the designation and property acquisition.

2. Local Road Connections Across the Expressway

This issue is a very significant concern to the Community Board. The current proposal provides for reducing connectivity with the town and at Old Hautere Road. The Board notes that the McKay's to Peka Peka portion of the Expressway has a specific objective to maintain existing levels of connectivity for the local community. A different standard is being applied to the Peka Peka to Otaki portion and the Board questions why this is the case. The Community Board is satisfied with the general approach to access on and off the expressway, particularly given its concerns about growth impacts, but fails to see how the loss of connectivity across the Expressway can be justified.

Rahui Road

The proposal for Otaki town itself reduces access from the east to west sides of the town from two to one routes with the closure of Rahui Road. The Board understands that the Kapiti Coast District Council asked for work to be done to test a second access across, south of the Rail retail area, if NZTA was intent on closing Rahui Road. This was to address two matters:

- the capacity of the remaining network to manage traffic volumes;
- the resilience of the overall network in terms of having two points of access points (existing service level).

It is understood that the work since undertaken by NZTA's consultants shows that there is sufficient capacity in the proposed network with only one access across, provided that capacity is increased at the Mill Road Intersection in 2026. However, this fails to address the issues of network resilience. Should an accident occur on the bridge, or there be damage to the bridge, there is no access from one side of the town to the other. It is unacceptable for the NZTA to be creating a situation where people living on the Plateau could have no access to services, emergency or otherwise.

The options for alternative access developed by NZTA's consultants were examples only and did not specifically address engineering, property impact or design. The Board does understand that some estimate of cost was made and that there is reluctance on the part of NZTA to incur additional costs. From the Board's point of view access around the edge of the Otaki River is unacceptable and if there is alternative east/west access (as opposed to at Rahui Road) it should be much closer to the retail area at the railway.

The Community Board feels that insufficient information has been provided about the Rahui Road crossing point for it to make a clear judgment on this matter at this stage, although it is absolutely opposed to the overall loss of connectivity. The issue of whether or not there should or can be a crossing at Rahui Road is a complex one. The Community Board recognises that there are very difficult storm water matters to be addressed and is of the view that no solution should be adopted which puts the town downstream at an increased risk of flooding. Conversely, there is concern that an overbridge will have a huge visual impact and that the proposed grade will make it unusable for heavy vehicles and horse floats. The Board suggests that the grade will also make it difficult for elderly people or people with disabilities to use.

The Community Board requests that more work is done before the community can understand all of the issues and can provide a properly informed response. The areas of work needed are:

- reviewing assumptions about Rahui Road bridge height, including 'free-board' allowances for storm water, in order to reduce possible visual impact;
- providing the community with illustrations of the visual impacts as seen from local roads, from Mill Road, the existing bridge, Rahui Road and from within the retail area. The current illustration is shown from the point of view of the expressway user rather than local residents and is largely irrelevant as a consequence;

- provide a clear illustration of what a well designed footbridge will look like, given that the NZTA has stated that the current illustration is to show scale only. The approach ramps are unacceptable and unlikely to be used by older people;
- an analysis of the movement of people from the east to west side of the town (as has been mapped for the MacKay's to Peka Peka route) and an analysis of how the proposals increase or reduce walking and cycling, or increase or reduce reliance on vehicles. The Board has a particular concern that the proposals at present will increase reliance on vehicles;
- provide the community with fully worked up other options for road access from east to west that can service the needs of the Racecourse and the community, and can cater for increased employment and residential growth on the eastern side of the town.

This information should be made available in a further stage of consultation. Such a stage is necessary if the community and the NZTA are to have confidence that the best solution has been found for this issue.

Te Horo

The same issue of loss of local connectivity exists at Old Hautere Road where NZTA's proposal is to close the road. No clear justification has been provided for this. The Community Board is unclear as to the NZTA's rationale: cost? safety? Closure does provide some relief to local residents on Old Hautere Road who have had long standing concerns about speed of traffic but these issues can be addressed in other ways, particularly if NZTA was more flexible about posted speeds for rural roads. A solution in conjunction with the Council could be found to slow speeds in this area.

Closure of Old Hautere Road creates problems for emergency vehicle access into this area. The slip road proposals create a very ugly situation of effectively eight lanes of road through the area. More imaginative access solutions for individual properties could be found. The very long slip roads to access a small number of communities also places an unnecessary cost burden on the Council and therefore the community.

The overriding question however is why the level of cross-expressway connectivity is being reduced in these areas. The Board can see no justification for doing so. The effect is the transfer of costs from the project to the community – in terms of operating costs, time costs and potentially capital costs.

3. Left-off Access to Te Horo

The Community Board supports the idea of a left-off interchange (from the South only) to provide access to the Te Horo businesses. The Community Board continues to support north facing ramps only at Peka Peka and south facing ramps at Otaki (south of the river), and no direct access at Te Horo, as a way of minimizing growth pressures. It is of the view, however, that a left-off access (with signage) somewhere between Peka Peka (not too close to either) would be of benefit, to both Te Horo and Otaki. This would encourage traffic from Wellington to exit near Te Horo and carry on through to Otaki.

4. Interchanges and Alignment.

The Community Board supports Option A (the preferred option in the consultation) at the northern end of Otaki as the formation which pulls access into Otaki as close as possible to the town. The Board is also aware that there is the potential for sensitive cultural sites to be affected in this northern area and that a process is underway with tāngata whenua to review this. The Board supports any action which ensures full consultation with landowners and the wider hapū, (if relevant) and welcomes work which appears to address the issue of limited consultation in earlier phases. It is important that if as a consequence of this consultation modifications have to be made to the alignment to a level that materially affects any current option, that this is reported back to the Board and community for comment.

The Board supports Option A at the southern end of Ōtaki as the least intrusive option which takes up as little land as possible. The Board supports Option B at Te Horo as the option which is less intrusive on the settlement. It recognises that there are some storm water management issues; any detailed design solution for this option must ensure that there is no increased risk downstream or increased risk of flooding at Te Horo Beach.

The Community Board supports any modification to the alignment which avoids damage to the very substantial areas of bush in the Mary Crest area. The Community Board is opposed to anything which harms this bush and wetland area. It is also aware that the alignment may affect the Te Horo Pa site and that investigations and discussions with tāngata whenua are underway. The Board expects that the concerns of tāngata whenua on this matter will be addressed. Again, if any action to reduce or avoid impacts has a material impact on the alignment, such there are other effects that need to be addressed, the Board expects that the community should be able to respond to and comment on these changes.

5. The Rail Station

The Community Board supports the option of moving the Rail Station slightly on its axis to accommodate a realigned rail line. It is absolutely opposed to any modification to the building itself. The NZTA must commit to reinstatement of the area to the same design intention and qualities in the surrounding area.

6. Pare-o-Matangi Park

The proposed Expressway destroys Pare-o-Matangi Park, a place which has been the focus of immense community effort by Keep Otaki Beautiful over a number of years. The NZTA must factor into its overall costs the need to provide an equivalent area of land as close as possible to the vicinity and a level of resourcing sufficient to bring that land to an equivalent quality. The Community Board also seeks a level of funding right now, to commence movement of trees on the site to other parks, in order that they are not lost. This work can commence immediately.

7. Design Quality: General and Old State Highway

During the 2009 consultation period on the Expressway, there was considerable emphasis by NZTA on its commitment to design. The Community Board accepts that at this stage detailed design has not yet been completed. It does have a high expectation that the next phase of

detailed design work on the Expressway itself will be at a best practice level, particularly in terms of how design and landscaping can mitigate visual, noise and air quality impacts.

It has concerns that NZTA may not follow through with this commitment as costs of the project become clearer. It is concerned for two reasons. First, during the course of this last stage, the stated rationale for not proceeding with some options has been given as cost (e.g. a second access point between the eastern and western side of the town). Second, it is concerned that the very necessary need for funding to restore Christchurch will be used to reduce design and mitigation commitments. While the need for such funding might delay construction, it should not be used as an excuse to compromise on the investigation, design and consenting of what will be finally constructed. That is, while there may be a time delay to construction this should not be used as an excuse to reduce expenditure on quality.

The Community Board is of the general view that an Expressway through the centre of the town is not an ideal situation, in terms of impacts on amenity, noise etc. However, it is also of the view that location close to the town is important to the economic survival of the town. The trade-off for this is ensuring that NZTA and the government honours its commitment to quality of design for the local community as well as any national benefit that may result from this initiative.

The Community Board is concerned that as yet there has been no explicit discussion by NZTA of what will happen with the old State Highway. Clearly, in its current state it is inappropriate as a local arterial and the need to design it down will place an unacceptable burden on the local community. As with the Board's concerns about differences in treatment around local connectivity between this project and the MacKay's to Peka Peka project, it is the Board's view that the old State Highway 'decommissioning' should be an integral part of the current work. If this cannot be the case, then NZTA needs to initiate discussions in the same proactive way and develop a clear process with the Council in order to commence this discussion. The Community Board and the Council should not be left in a difficult situation of trying to initiate discussions.

8. Economic Impacts

The Community Board welcomes the fact that the NZTA is taking the issue of the economic impacts of the Expressway seriously and that it is considering early investment in mitigation by providing funding for marketing and managing impacts. This is innovative. The Board understands that the intention is to have something in place by early July 2011 and has already sought Council commitment to providing a similar resource to work in collaboration with this process. This is now in place in anticipation of this early mitigation work.

9. Cost

As noted earlier, the Community Board is concerned that there is an explicit and transparent discussion of cost and any trade-offs between cost and design is explicit and able to be discussed in an open way. That such a transparent approach is sought should not be seen in any way as an acceptance that trade-offs are acceptable.

At this stage, it is of the view that the lack of connectivity, in particular, is transferring legitimate Expressway project costs to the community.