
NZ Transport Agency Bay of Plenty Office

29 July 2010

Early construction start for Tauranga Eastern Link confirmed

Construction of the Tauranga Eastern Link road of national significance will start up to 10 years earlier than previously possible following the Government's approval for the route to be tolled, the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) confirmed today.

NZTA Bay of Plenty Regional Director Harry Wilson says this decision clears the way for the NZTA to get the main construction underway in early 2011.

"Having confirmation that we'll be able to start early is excellent news. The Tauranga Eastern Link will make an important contribution to the Bay of Plenty's economic and social well-being and the earlier we can get the road built, the better," says Mr Wilson.

The four-lane road will run from Te Maunga (near Baypark Stadium) in Tauranga to the existing junction of State Highways 2 and 33 (the Rotorua and Whakatane highways) near Paengaroa. It will be made up 17km of new road and an upgrade of six kilometres of existing highway.

As well as improving the efficiency of freight vehicles accessing the Port of Tauranga and beyond, the Tauranga Eastern Link will improve safety for residents along the current route of State Highway 2 and open up access to new developments planned for Papamoa, Mr Wilson says.

With an estimated cost of \$455M*, it will be the largest state highway project ever built in the Bay of Plenty. The NZTA is currently evaluating tenders from two major consortia and expects to announce the successful tenderer in October this year.

"We're excited about what completing this project will mean for the Bay of Plenty and are grateful for the support of our local government partners – Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council and the Bay of Plenty Regional Council."

Mr Wilson says tolls will apply to the section of new road from the Domain Road intersection to Paengaroa. A free-flow tolling system will be used to enable motorists to travel the 23km journey without having to stop or slow down to pay a toll.

"We know there will be a lot of interest in the project as it gets underway and we'll be working hard to keep people informed of progress. This will include a dedicated website and an on-site visitor centre which is due to be opened next year," says Mr Wilson.

Until then, keep up-to-date with developments at www.nzta.govt.nz/tel

ENDS

*\$455M is in 2010 dollars

Editor's notes

The government has identified seven essential state highways projects that are linked to New Zealand's economic prosperity. Called the roads of national significance, or RoNS for short, the NZTA is charged with substantially completing this programme of state highway improvements within the next 10 years. The RoNS programme represents one of New Zealand's biggest ever infrastructure investments.

The seven RoNS projects are based around New Zealand's five largest population centres. The focus is on moving people and freight between and within these centres more safely and efficiently. Other RoNS may be added in future but currently from north to south the seven projects are: Puhoi to Wellsford - SH1, Completing the Western Ring Route, Auckland - SH16 and SH20, Victoria Park Tunnel, Auckland - SH1, Waikato Expressway - SH1, Tauranga Eastern Link - SH2, Wellington Northern Corridor - SH1, Christchurch Motorways. More information is available at www.nzta.govt.nz/rons

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