

Report No.	19-83
Decision Required	

VARIATION TO THE REGIONAL LAND TRANSPORT PLAN 2015-25 (2018 REVIEW): PAHIATUA TRACK SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To consider a request from the NZ Transport Agency to vary the operative **Regional Land Transport Plan 2015-25 (2018 Review) (RLTP)**. The variation is to include the Pahiatua Track Safety Improvements as a project in the RLTP as a road improvements activity.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 19-83 and Annex;
- b. recommends that the Regional Land Transport Plan 2015-25 (2018 Review) be varied to include the Pahiatua Track Safety Improvements as a road improvements activity.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no financial impact as a result of this item.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Community engagement is not required.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk as a result of this item.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The **New Zealand Transport Agency (Transport Agency)** has been maintaining two local roads since the now permanent closure of State Highway 3 Manawatu Gorge in April 2017. The two local roads that act as alternatives in the event of Gorge closure are the Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track. These local roads are both under the joint jurisdiction of Manawatu, Tararua District and Palmerston North City Council's.
- 6.2. The Saddle Road has been the preferred alternative since 2011 when the SH3 Gorge was closed for a period of 18-months and has been upgraded significantly since. The Saddle Road carries 58% (5052 AADT) of east-west traffic with the Pahiatua Track carrying 42% (3809 AADT). Heavy vehicle traffic now accounts for 14% of traffic on Pahiatua Track. During this same period of time Pahiatua Track has had no improvements to respond to the temporary increased traffic.
- 6.3. Safety outcomes on the corridor have deteriorated since the increased traffic. In a typical year there would be 2-3 injury crashes on the route. There have been six injury crashes in the 12-months since the closure of the Gorge. During the 2011 closure there were twelve injury crashes. The predominant crash cause is run-off road.

- 6.4. Pahiatua Track from the State Highway 57 turnoff to Ballance Valley Road is also a part of the **NZ Cycle Trail (NZCT)** 'Heartland Ride' and is a popular sport cycling route. However, because of the increased vehicle traffic, particularly heavy traffic, and lack of shoulder space (average lane width is 3m) on the road it no longer meets the NZCT design guide criteria. Therefore, it can no longer be promoted as part of the NZCT network.
- 6.5. The proposed improvements will enhance long term safety, whole of life pavement and maintenance costs, and enable the Transport Agency to reopen the Heartland Ride.

7. FUNDING

- 7.1. While the Transport Agency is maintaining the road, the road is still an asset of **Palmerston North City Council (PNCC)**. As such, any improvement activity would normally have to be planned and funded from them at the normal **Funding Assistance Rate (FAR)**. However PNCC have not planned for any improvements to Pahiatua Track, and as such, do not have local share for any improvements. Therefore, it is proposed that the Transport Agency fully fund a programme of minor shoulder enhancements to address the current problems that will be ongoing during the period of construction (currently due for completion in 2024) for the replacement Manawatu Gorge route (Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatu Tararua Highway).
- 7.2. Should the Committee approve the RLTP variation, funding of \$2.1M will be sought from the Local Road Improvements activity class (Work Category 324), however funding is 100% NLTF funding as NZTA is currently maintaining the road for PNCC while the Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatu Tararua Highway activity is being delivered.

8. REGIONAL LAND TRANSPORT PLAN VARIATION PROCESS AND SIGNIFICANCE

- 8.1. Transport activities must be included in the RLTP to qualify for national funding subsidy. The current RLTP was approved by Horizons Regional Council in April 2018 and any new projects that need to be included require a variation to the programme which must be approved by the Committee.
- 8.2. The RLTP can be varied at any time. However, consultation will be required in accordance with section 18D of the Act if the variation is significant. The significance policy is provided below. Officers have considered the variation request against this and in their view do not consider the variation significant (in particular because the service is well discussed through the strategic component of the RLTP as being an important service for our region). As such public consultation of this variation is not required.

“Determination of significance for variations to the RLTP

The significance of variations to the Regional Land Transport Plan will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the RTC. In determining the significance of a proposed variation, the RTC will consider information such as the reasons for the variation, the options, relative costs and benefits, and those affected by the decision. Variations will generally not be considered significant unless the variation:

- *Materially changes the balance of the strategic investment in a programme or activity; or*
- *Negatively impacts on the contribution to Government and/or GPS contributions; or*
- *Adversely affects residents and/or communities (variations with a moderate impact on a large number of residents and/or communities, or variations with a major impact on a small number of residents and/or communities will have a greater significance than those of a minor impact); or*
- *Affects the integrity of the RLTP, including its overall affordability; or*
- *Is contrary to the strategic direction of this Plan (specifically the objectives and strategic priorities).*

Variations that are generally not significant

The following variations to the RLTP are generally not considered significant:

- *Variations to activities or new activities that are in the urgent interest of public safety; or*
- *New preventative maintenance and emergency reinstatement activities; or*
- *Replacement of activities within an approved programme or group with activities of the same type and general priority (e.g. maintenance programmes); or*
- *Addition of an activity or combination of activities that has previously been consulted on in accordance with section 18 of the Act; or*
- *A scope change that does significantly alter the original objectives of the activity; or*
- *Variations to timing, cash flow, duration or total cost of an activity that does not substantially change the balance of the programme; or*
- *Addition of business case phases of a new activity that has not been previously consulted on in accordance with section 18 of the Act.”*

9. NEXT STEPS

- 9.1. Should the Committee recommend this project be included in the RLTP, it will be forwarded to Horizons Regional Council for final approval.

10. SIGNIFICANCE

- 10.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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& INFORMATION**

ANNEXES

- A Pahiatua Track Safety Improvements