

**Name: Councillor Ann Court**

**Date: September 2023**

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### **Road Maintenance Operations and Renewals Contract**

FieldForce4 were engaged to undertake a review of the current Road Maintenance, Operations and Renewals Contract as a key part of the process of working towards new contract development and retendering. This is a legal requirement under the Waka Kotahi procurement guidelines prior to commencing any new tender processes.

As part of this process FieldForce4 have interviewed key NTA staff, contractors, CE's, Mayors and some Elected members. Contractor depots will be visited. My interview was Friday 18 August 2023.

A Section 17A review of delivery of Councils Transport Services is underway. This is being led by the GM Infrastructure Whangarei.

Waka Kotahi have announced that are extending the contract with Fulton Hogan for two years and are looking at operating an integrated delivery model.

### **Cyclone Gabriel Emergency Work Funding**

The initial deadline of 30th June for funding for Cyclone Gabrielle emergency works has been extended. Emergency Work for the District Council local roads currently has three classifications:

- Phase 1: Immediate event response to get roads open and safe
- Phase 2: Sites identified up to \$100k in value – work that can be delivered through the existing maintenance contract
- Phase 3: Sites identified over \$100k and require Geotech and more complex engineering work.

To date over \$20m worth of works activity has been completed over the region across Phase 1 and 2 activities.

Presently 165 sites are considered at Phase 3 with staff currently working through the initial site assessments, 45 initially identified as Phase 3 have moved to Phase 2, and 105 sites are still under investigation. Some sites have deteriorated further with each weather event and will need to be reassessed.

Funding for State Highway repairs was approved for \$35m with 42 major areas to address, 27 completed and the rest are complex requiring further review and design work.

State Highways 12, 14 and 15 still have areas of significant movement, with SH12 developing 4 new under-slips. Additional funding was obtained through Crown Investment funding for resilience work across the Northland network.

In August an additional \$567m was announced for maintenance/opex nation-wide. Based on our current FAR we would anticipate that Northlands share would be in the \$37-44m range. However, at the time of writing this is still fluid.

#### Impact on local work programme:

16km of last years programmed rehabs have been carried forward through the maintenance contracts to the 2023-24 season. Additional programme for this year is being put out to market allowing more contractor opportunities. CCNZ confident there is capability with local contractors to complete the work. Emergency works being the equivalent of a whole year's programme which will need to be staggered. Risks are if work gets deferred and rolled over to the following year, any changes in funding can result in reprioritisation so this work may not be completed. GPS (Government Policy Statement on Land Transport) not yet available, but team proceeding with LTP (3 year) on the basis that funding will be available.

Deviation route loadings are driving some rethinking in opex priorities.

Higgins are looking to establish a presence in Northland.

#### Kiwi Rail

Kiwi rail reported that over 2000 slips were due to Cyclone Gabriel and other weather-related events this year. It's not a lack of maintenance but bigger culverts are required to address storms and increasing climate change events. Rail line closed until the end of this year at the earliest – probably next year.

Route to Marsden: Land is being designated, route designed, Geotech reports commissioned.

#### Waka Kotahi

Waka Kotahi (WK) confirmed that while they have a large programme ahead their focus will be on quality rather than quantity, with the intention to start their programme earlier than usual with some work on SH12 and may look at the possibility of the Contractors working over the traditional Christmas/New Year moratorium period so momentum is not lost. This will lead to commuter disruption. We will need to ensure messaging to the public on the why and seek their understanding and support.

Asphalt resurfacing starts mid to late August two weeks ahead of schedule. WK stretch target is to complete their rehabs (246km) which may come at a cost of reseals. WIP

As stated, above WK advise they have secured some additional resilience fundings from Crown Investment Funds and have a 7-year pipeline of works. There are some resilience projects planned for Highway 16 including Lookout Hill.

WK have developed a subsidence strategy and have secured some funding to start addressing network failures in this space.

Arthur Webber (Kaikohe Lad) has been appointed to a new role in Waka Kotahi as Regional Advisor.

The drivers licensing trial has been extended until June next year.

### **Dome Valley to Whangarei Resilience Package**

The \$600-\$800k resilience options package went to Cabinet before they rose in August. At the time of writing this report the outcome of that deliberations have not been notified. As a heads up the package included:

- Upgrades to the two approved detour routes
- Enhanced under slip and over slip management on SH1 and local detour routes
- Preventative flooding management (e.g., culvert management)
- Non-Infrastructure Solutions (such as better signage)
- Short/medium enhancements to Brynderwyn Hills
- Confirming long-term infrastructure solution for the corridor through completing the Whangarei to Te Hana SSBC

### **Drainage**

Information supplied at recent RTC meeting highlighted the need for more investment in drainage work.

Recently announced funding from Crown Infrastructure can only deal with specific drainage issues, and not on ongoing drainage maintenance. Generally, drainage activities are dealt with within the maintenance contracts – routine culvert clearance and standard ordered works. We have been advised that increased housing and development can seriously affect runoff and how drainage works on the network so bigger conversation needs to be had with developers and councils.

### **Northland Road Safety Meeting**

Quarterly meetings so nothing to report this month.

## **Road Safety**

In my last members report I covered:

- Mahimaru marae will have a 60km/h variable speed limit area to ensure the safe entry and exit of vehicles into the marae. At all other times, the speed limit will be 80km/h.
- Kareponia marae will have a 60km/h variable speed limit area around the marae to allow safe entry and exit of vehicles into the marae and a 30km/h variable speed limit area between Kareponia marae and the urupā to keep whanau safe as they walk along the state highway during tangi. At all other times, the speed limit will be 80km/h.

The variable speed limit uses electronic signs to lower the speed limit for a short period when vehicles are detected at the marae accessway or between Kareponia marae and the urupā when activated by Kareponia marae.

There has been some correspondence since this which has raised some interesting discussions:

- There were some schools on the State Highway network that had 30km/h VSL/s proposed in the Interim State Highway Speed Plan, but that is still going through its process following consultation, so no final decisions have been released yet.
- There was one marae in Northlands Interim State Highway Speed Plan (Waiora Marae) on State Highway 1, that was proposed for a 30km/h VSL.
- Ngataki School on State Highway 1 was also proposed for a 30 km/h VSL but then Pamapurua School and Umawera School were proposed for a VSL up to 60 km/h.
- Without a comprehensive understanding of the roading environment its hard to understand just looking at the numbers if the application of the guidelines is consistent.
- Are we clear what criteria is being used to determine whether a site should have a 30km/h or 60km/h variable speed limit?
- Does this set a precedent that all marae and schools on State Highways will have 30km/h VSL's?
- The legislation only provides for a distinction between Category 1 and Category 2 Schools. Category 2 schools have supporting infrastructure such as footpaths.
- From a practical perspective the question of who is operating the VSL has not been answered. Is it Waka Kotahi or the local school/marae and if so how is turned on/off and under what criteria. Should we be handing over the manual management of speed on our network to members of the public and school teachers?
- A 30km VSL is a big drop in speed. What is being considered in terms of advance warning signs.

- The AA have raised concerns that a 30km/h VSL on the State Highway Network may create an issue with heavy braking that in itself is a road safety concern. There are also concerns around compliance.

### **LOS and Speed Reviews**

I remain concerned that blanket speed limit reviews may be a proxy for reduced LOS (read funding) on the network. However, finding any qualitative or quantitative evidence is proving somewhat elusive.

I am advised informally this was raised by the Waka Kotahi board member some months back. It was reported back to me that the boards opinion at that time was that this outcome could be anticipated.

I put out a call via linked in and received the following reply from a transport planner:

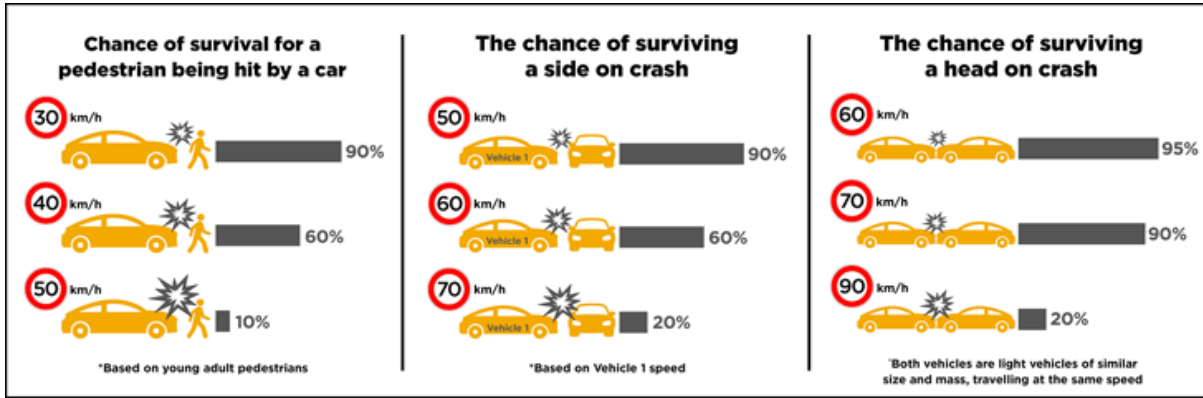
*“There is a direct correlation but you’d be hard pressed to get anyone in the industry to openly admit that they are exploiting the fact. The lack of answers to your question suggest to me that no one dare even have that conversation with you.”*

It seems axiomatic that if roads such as the Waikato Expressway or Transmission Gully are designed for 110 km/h then this means the carriageway features the most up to date safety features including, a minimum of two lanes in either direction with lane separation, a central median barrier, wider shoulders, no significant curves and asphalt vs bitumen for a better/safer running surface.

Roads designed for 30km (say in a CBD) might have footpaths and streetlights but by design they would be narrower and could have cheaper pavement materials because the forces applied are different.

Whilst no one would expect any immediate change in LOS, I remain unconvinced that in the longer-term blanket speed limit reductions will not be exploited as a proxy for decreased capital investment.

In terms of road safety, we know driving too fast is the single biggest contributor to road crashes. Other factors at play include distraction, alcohol, drugs (impairment), not driving to the conditions, no drivers licence, driving a class of vehicle your not licensed to drive, unroadworthy vehicles... Sadly what often leads to an adverse outcome is failure to be properly restrained, what you hit and how and the safety rating of your vehicle.



So why do drivers speed? There are lots of research papers which suggest speeding is primarily attitudinal and circumstantial. It is related to opinions, maturity and personality and well as the prevailing conditions on the road. Psychologists suggest the road layout and characteristics that are engineered for a higher speed coupled with increasing capabilities and design of a vehicle leads people to drive in a comfort zone regardless of the posted speed limit. This behaviour is often attributed to why people speed up on passing lanes.

We all drive fast from time to time. Most people don't think twice about going five to ten over the speed limit.

Arbitrary speed limit reductions in lieu of road improvements using elements such as incorporating walking and cycling, signs, road marking, geometry, road surfacing, lighting, urban landscaping and design are significant elements we should be looking to incorporate into the roading corridor to moderate driver behaviour where there is a known risk.

**Disability Action Group**

The Disability Action Group met 14 August. Huge shout out to Kim Hammond who managed to co-opt the entire SLT team to attend.

The group spent some time talking though the challenges of get their disability strategy embedded into BAU in the Council and were disappointed to learn that some staff have never seen or heard of the document.

The group spoke to the need for communication to be two way and meaningful.

One specific area of concern raises its head at every meeting and that is the condition of our footpaths and extension of the footpath network so that it is fit for purpose for multi modal needs. Repairs if not done properly create trip hazards for those in mobility devices or those with limited physical mobility including vision. The group understands the financial constraints but do not wish to see momentum lost in extending and improving our network.

Crossing points need work as we currently have a number of crossing points that are on angles or at grade that are unsafe and have been known to tip users out of walkers.

The Engineering Standards and Guidelines appears to have been a missed opportunity to engage with the group to ensure our adopted standards meet the needs of the sector.

SLT undertook to consider the points raised and come back to the group. Thank you.

### **Te Puawaitanga**

Codes have requested a briefing on where this project is at in terms of capital delivery and how we are tracking on the constitution and governance paper. An email was sent to the group manager to facilitate.

The proposed governance structure is still a work in progress.

### **Whangaroa Catchment Working Group**

I was unable to attend the working group meeting as it clashed with an FNDC workshop day. However, I thought members might be interested in the agenda:

- Stage 1 Kaeo Flood Mitigation – Review
- Options for investigating a weir behind the community hall
- Tauranga Bay works
- Taupo Bay works

### **Liquor Licensing**

Year to date 384 applications have been received. 50 decisions were written in August

Commissioner Clearwater has been an incredibly valuable contribution to the team picking up some of the more complex hearings.

At the time of submitting this report I am preparing for 3 hearings all set down to be heard on Friday 1 September.

### **Regional Land Transport Committee**

The draft GPS has now been released. The risk we now face is that the public consultation will not be able to be completed in the current term of Government. Should there be a change in the October election there is a suggestion the GPS will be rescoped.

### **New Zealand Automobile Association**

Thank you to Mayor Tepania and Cr McNally for meeting with Chairperson Risetto and opening the door to future engagement and advocacy.

### **Did You Know**

According to a recent UK survey 'MoneySuperMarket' the most common time drivers speed on the road is in the early hours of Sunday morning. 78% are male in the 18 – 29 year age group followed by the 41 to 60 year old age group and owners of BMW's were more likely to speed followed by Jaguar, Land Rover and Mercedes.