

Project Notification Summary

Introduction

Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency (the Transport Agency) has lodged a Notice of Requirement and resource consent applications for the Warkworth to Wellsford Project, being the construction, operation and maintenance of a new state highway from Warkworth to north of Te Hana (the Project). The Project is the second stage of the Ara Tūhono Pū hoi to Wellsford project, to build a new highway from the Northern Gateway Toll Road at the Johnstone's Hill tunnels, to north of Te Hana. As the main inter-regional route connecting the Auckland and Northland regions, State Highway 1 (SH1) provides a vital lifeline connecting Auckland to Whangārei, and onto the upper North Island. The Project once constructed will become a section of SH1.

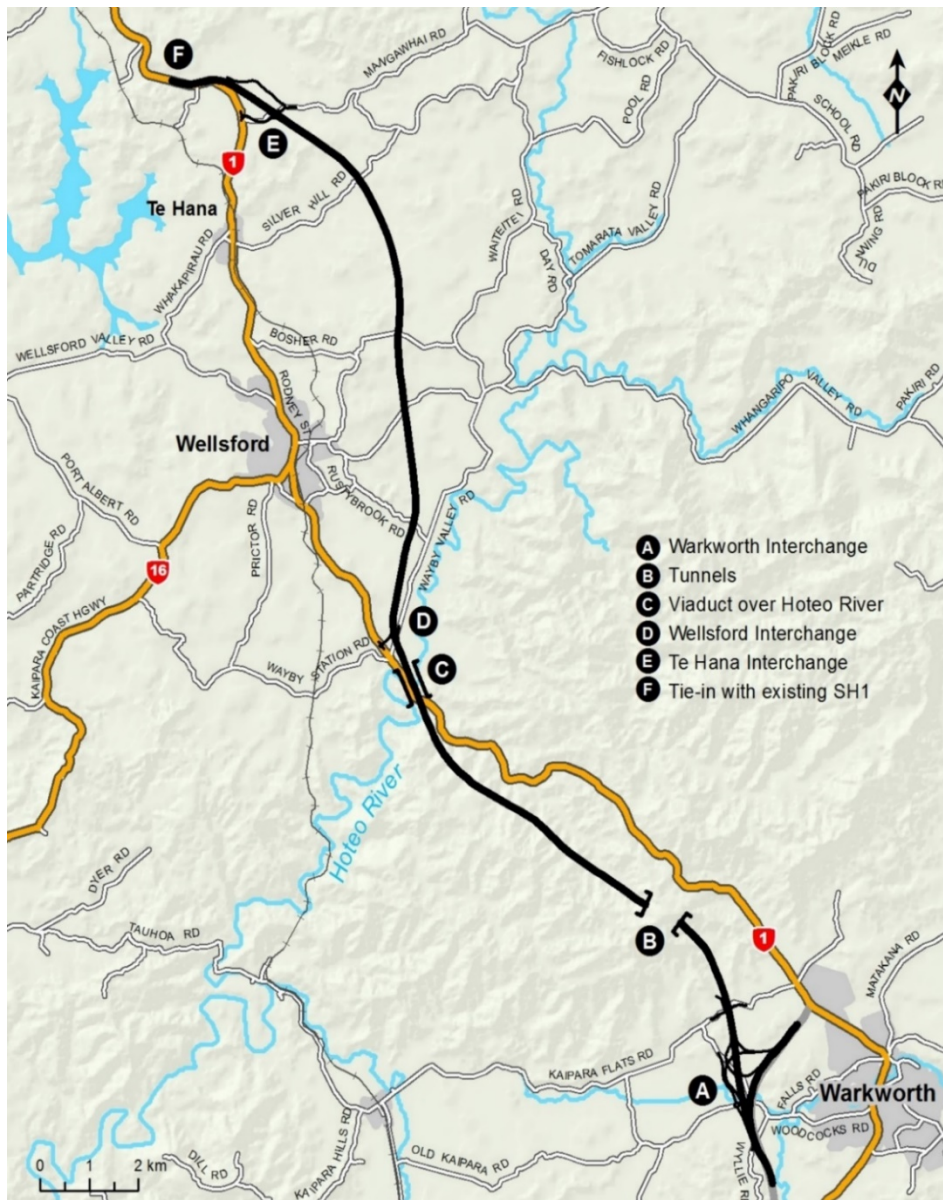
Project overview

The key components of the Project, based on the current Indicative Alignment, are summarised below and illustrated in Figure 1:

- a) A new state highway, offline from the existing SH1.
- b) Three interchanges as follows:
 - i. Warkworth Interchange, to tie-in with Ara Tūhono Pūhoi to Warkworth project (currently in construction) near Wyllie Road, and provide connections to the northern outskirts of Warkworth.
 - ii. Wellsford Interchange, located at Wayby Valley Road to provide access to Wellsford and eastern communities including Tomarata and Mangawhai.
 - iii. Te Hana Interchange, located at Mangawhai Road to provide access to Te Hana, Wellsford and communities including Port Albert, Tomarata and Mangawhai.
- c) Twin bore tunnels under Kraack Road in the Dome Valley area, each serving one direction, that are approximately 850 metres long and approximately 160 metres below ground level at the deepest point.
- d) A series of cuts and fills through the forestry area to the west of the existing SH1 (west of The Dome) and other areas of cut and fill along the remainder of the Project.
- e) A viaduct (or twin structures) approximately 485 metres long, to span over the existing SH1 and the Hōteoro River.
- f) A tie in to existing SH1 north of Maeneene Road, including a bridge over Maeneene Stream.
- g) Changes to local roads, where the proposed work intersects with local roads:
 - i. Maintaining local road connections through grade separation (where one road is over or under the other). The Indicative Alignment passes over Woodcocks Road, Wayby Valley Road, Whangaripo Valley Road, Mangawhai Road and

- Maeneene Road. The Indicative Alignment passes under Kaipara Flats Road, Rustybrook Road, Farmers Lime Road and Silver Hill Road.
- ii. Realignment of sections of Wyllie Road, Carran Road, Kaipara Flats Road, Phillips Road, Wayby Valley Road, Mangawhai Road, Vipond Road, Maeneene Road and Waimanu Road.
- iii. Closing sections of Phillips Road, Robertson Road, Vipond Road and unformed roads affected by the Project.
- h) Associated works including bridges, viaducts, embankments, culverts, stormwater management systems, soil disposal sites, signage, lighting as required to meet safety standards, landscaping, realignment of access points to local roads, and maintenance facilities.
- i) Construction activities, including construction compounds, borrow sites, lay down areas and establishment of construction access and haul roads.

Figure 1: Warkworth to Wellsford Project Summary Plan



The Indicative Alignment is a preliminary design of a state highway that could be constructed within the proposed designation boundary. The Indicative Alignment has been prepared for assessment purposes, and to indicate what the final design of the Project may look like. The Assessment of Effects on the Environment report assesses the effects that may occur as a result of the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the Project. The detailed design will occur at a later date and will be the final design used for construction purposes.

Notice of Requirement and resource consents

The Transport Agency has lodged a Notice of Requirement (NoR) to designate land for the Project and resource consents (together referred to as “the Application”) to construct, operate and maintain a new state highway from Warkworth to north of Te Hana.

The Notice of Requirement applies to an area of land of approximately 1348 hectares located between Warkworth and north of Te Hana. The requirement applies to 205 land parcels (including local roads).

Resource consents are sought under section 9 of the Resource Management Act for

- Earthworks
- Vegetation alteration and removal
- Stormwater detention and retention ponds

Resource consents are sought under section 13 of the Resource Management Act for

- New structures in, on, under or over the beds of rivers and streams

Resource consents are sought under section 14 of the Resource Management Act for

- Diversion and temporary damming of water associated with new structures
- Diversion of intermittent and permanent rivers and streams
- Diversion of groundwater
- Diversion of stormwater

Resource consents are sought under section 15 of the Resource Management Act for

- Discharge of stormwater into or onto water or land
- Discharge to air associated with rock crushing during construction

Application documents

The Application is supported by an Assessment of Effects on the Environment report which incorporates:

Volume 1 - Assessment of Effects on the Environment

Volume 2 - Supporting Technical Assessment Reports

Volume 3 - Drawing Set

Project Objectives

The Transport Agency's objectives for the Project are to:

- Increase corridor capacity, improve route quality and safety, and improve freight movement between Warkworth and the Northland Region;
- Provide resilience in the wider state highway network;
- Improve travel time reliability between Warkworth, Wellsford and the Northland Region;
- Provide connections to and from Warkworth, Wellsford and Te Hana;
- Provide a connection at Warkworth that optimises the use of infrastructure from, and maintains the level of service provided by, the Pūhoi to Warkworth Project; and
- Alleviate congestion at Wellsford by providing an alternative route for north – south through traffic.

Outcomes to be delivered by the Project

The Project will:

- Improve safety performance compared to the existing SH1 with the Indicative Alignment designed to motorway standards and therefore, with the intended diversion of traffic to the new road, a higher safety performance on the new road and reduced incidents on the existing SH1;
- Support safe cycling and walking by providing linkages where feasible as part of the Project scope (such as across interchanges, onto SH1 at the northern tie in, and on local roads where the Project passes over on a bridge structure);
- Improve freight performance in terms of improved journey times, improved route quality and safety, resilience and travel time reliability;
- Improve route security and resilience of the state highway network north of Auckland through reducing the reliance on one main route (the current SH1); and
- Improve journey times and improved journey time reliability along the state highway network north of Auckland increasing accessibility across many parts of the Regions' road network.

Other outcomes of the Project will be:

- Economic benefits to the local north Auckland area and the economies of the Auckland and Northland Region.
- Improvement to the amenity of Wellsford and Te Hana through the removal of heavy truck movements through the townships, including improved air quality and reduction in noise levels and improving walkability; and
- Treatment of stormwater, reduced contaminant loads for two catchments, reduction of sediment load over time and retiring of some land that contributes to the sediment load of the harbours, through landscaping and planting, and through design which will assist with more fuel-efficient travel (through better gradients and less need to brake, accelerate and/or decelerate).

Description of the Project

The Project involves the construction, operation and maintenance of a new four lane state highway, approximately 26 km in length.

The Project connects to the alignment of Pūhoi to Warkworth Project (P2Wk) and continues in a northerly direction. The proposed Warkworth Interchange is located to the north of Wyllie Road. The Project passes over Woodcocks Road and requires a diversion of Carran Road to the west of the alignment at the proposed Warkworth Interchange. The Project heads due north from the interchange, parallel with existing SH1 to the west of The Dome. Due to the terrain in this section of the Project, twin tunnels, approximately 850m long below Kraack Road, are proposed to carry north and south bound traffic. The alignment then passes through Matariki Forest to the west of SH1.

The Project alignment crosses the Hōteō River and the Waitaraire Stream on a viaduct. The proposed Wellsford interchange is located north of Hōteō River, centred on Wayby Valley Road. The proposed interchange provides access to Wellsford and includes a new (roundabout) intersection with the existing SH1. The Project crosses gas and fuel pipelines, passes under Transpower's high voltage electricity transmission line, and bridges Maeneene Stream.

The proposed Te Hana interchange is centred on Mangawhai Road. The Te Hana interchange will provide access to Te Hana and Wellsford from the north, to Mangawhai and the Twin Coast Discovery Highway i.e. State Highway 16.

Construction of the Project

The timing for construction of the Project is not certain. To enable an assessment of the potential effects of the Project on the environment, the assumed construction start date is 2030. However, the actual timing for construction could be sooner or later than this date.

Construction will include:

- Enabling works (for example: vegetation clearance, services relocation, site investigations, site access establishment, haul roads, construction yards, trial embankments, environmental controls);
- Access along the alignment and to specific sites (for example: stream culverting and access bridges);
- Ground improvements;
- Earthworks;
- Structures (including bridges, twin tunnels and three interchanges);
- Pavements and surfacing;
- Environmental mitigation; and
- Landscaping.

Construction works will be managed through the implementation of the proposed management plans which will outline specific measures to manage potential adverse effects during construction.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement is ongoing with various parties who have an interest in the Project including Mana Whenua, property owners, Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, the Rodney Local Board, business and community representative groups and the wider community. Engagement has been undertaken in accordance with recognised good practice through a number of channels,

including one-on one meetings, workshops, hui, public open days, newsletters and online information.

Description of the Environment

Built Environment

There are a number of settlements and businesses within the vicinity and wider area of the Project. The land use surrounding the Project area is rural and primarily zoned Rural Production Zone. Some land zoned Mixed Rural Zone is located around the proposed Warkworth Interchange location. Rural residential properties are also scattered throughout the Project area, between the more concentrated areas of settlement at Warkworth, Wellsford and Te Hana.

Regionally and/or nationally significant utilities are present within the Project area and its surrounds, including transmission and distribution networks for gas, fuel, electricity, water supply, wastewater, telecommunications and rail.

Nine known archaeological sites of low to moderate significance are located within the proposed designation boundary. There are also sites of known value to Mana Whenua, and potential for unrecorded Māori sites within the Project area.

Natural Environment

The key landscape characteristics of the Project area are:

- A mixture of pastoral farming, native bush, and exotic forestry;
- Large land holdings;
- Rural residential and lifestyle blocks; and
- Varied landforms.

The Project traverses three major drainage catchments: the Mahurangi River catchment; the Hōteio River catchment; and the Oruawharo River catchment.

There is one Outstanding Natural Feature (ONF) identified in the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) (ID 49, Hōteio River incised meander) within the Project area, located to the south of the existing SH1 bridge across the Hōteio River. There are six Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) located within the Project area.

High value wetlands occur in the upper Kourawhero Stream valley northwest of Warkworth and low value wetland habitats occur throughout the Project area.

Several threatened species inhabit the Project area, including native land snails, native birds, native long-tailed bat and Hochstetter's frogs.

At its closest point, the Project is approximately 1 km upstream of the coastal marine area at the northern end of the Project, near Maeneene Road.

Commercial plantation forestry is a significant land use in the Project area with approximately 35% of the Project area (468 ha) in commercial plantation forestry. Extensive tracts of pasture are present near Warkworth, largely used for mixed grazing, and to the north around Wellsford, which is predominately dairying / grazing land.

Assessment of effects on the environment

The actual and potential effects on the environment have been identified as:

Construction water – The Project will involve approximately 310 ha of earthworks.

During construction of the Project, there is a potential that changes may occur to water quality, hydrology and flooding within receiving watercourses. Proposed mitigation measures have been identified to mitigate adverse effects on water quality, water users, hydrology and flooding.

With proposed mitigation measures in place, adverse effects associated with the construction of the Project on water quality, water users and hydrological impacts are assessed overall to be minor and temporary.

Groundwater / Hydrogeology – Groundwater drawdown effects are anticipated from proposed cuts and confined to a narrow 230m (approximately) corridor parallel to the Project. Groundwater drawdown of any significance (i.e. 5 m or greater) is constrained to the immediate vicinity of the cut along the Project. With proposed mitigation measures in place any potential adverse effects on groundwater level or flow are assessed overall as being less than minor.

Ground settlement – Ground settlement is a potential effect arising from cutting and filling of ground surface at various locations along the Project. Ground settlement effects will be mitigated by specific geotechnical measures or by other appropriate measures, such that effects on infrastructure and assets within the proposed designation boundary will be manageable in relation to relevant engineering criteria and no more than minor. With proposed mitigation measures in place any potential adverse effects relating to ground settlement are assessed overall as being less than minor.

Terrestrial and freshwater ecology – Approximately 13 ha of native vegetation will be directly impacted by the Indicative Alignment. Of this, approximately 1.5 ha of high value indigenous wetland and kahikatea-dominated swamp forest is directly impacted through clearance. A further 7 ha comprises 'moderate' value vegetation, mostly kanuka forest and scrub and totara-dominated podocarp forest remnants.

Construction activities have the potential to result in a loss of indigenous vegetation, degradation and loss of terrestrial habitat for snails, lizards, frogs, bats, and birds; degradation and loss of freshwater habitat and changes to fish passage.

There will be ecological benefits arising from the Project which include increased ecological resilience and adaptive capacity and enhanced ecosystem connectivity. The operational phase of the Project may result in permanent disturbance to fauna from light and noise from vehicles and the mainline carriageway will provide a physical barrier to less mobile fauna (i.e. lizards). Priority ecological sites have been identified where site-specific attention is required, these sites will be avoided to the extent practicable.

Proposed mitigation measures have been identified to mitigate adverse effects on terrestrial and freshwater ecology. With proposed mitigation measures as recommended, the potential adverse effects on freshwater and terrestrial ecological values are assessed overall as being minor.

Marine ecology and coastal avifauna – There are no works within the coastal marine area. Potential adverse effects on marine ecology and coastal avifauna arise from sediment-laden runoff from open earthworks in large storm events, and stormwater runoff from the road during operation of the Project. This temporary construction discharge has the potential to adversely affect marine ecological values if not managed appropriately. A large rain fall event may result in high levels of sediment laden water being discharged from the Project and eventually into the coastal marine area.

With proposed mitigation measures in place, the potential adverse effects on marine ecological values are assessed overall as being minor.

Construction traffic - The construction of the Project has the potential to impact the surrounding transport network.

The preparation of CTMP and SSTMPs will be undertaken by the contractor prior to construction works commencing to manage traffic flows and potential safety hazards. With proposed mitigation measures in place, the potential adverse effects on freshwater and ecological values are assessed overall as being minor.

Construction noise and vibration - Construction of the Project will result in temporary increases in noise and vibration levels. The Project area is sparsely populated and being a predominantly rural area, the ambient noise levels in the Project area are often low. Minor exceedances of the daytime criteria are possible but likely to be complied with in most cases.

Construction air quality - The construction phase of the Project has the potential to generate dust. There are some specific receivers (i.e. dwellings) in the vicinity of the Project with potentially high sensitivity to air quality effects from construction dust. With proposed mitigation measures in place, the potential adverse effects from construction dust is assessed overall as being minor.

Heritage and archaeology - The Project extends through some known sites and has avoided some sites, reducing adverse effects on known archaeological and historic heritage sites. None of the affected or potentially affected sites within the Project area are of more than moderate historic heritage significance. With proposed mitigation measures in place, the potential adverse effect on heritage and archaeology is assessed overall as being minor.

Land contamination - An interim Preliminary Site Investigation has been undertaken which identifies existing areas of known and potentially contaminated land within the Project area and outlines the typical contaminants likely to be present. Additional contamination investigations prior to any soil disturbance are proposed to determine the actual levels of contamination within the Project area. Once the Project detailed design is complete, and if site investigations identify contaminated land that will be affected, appropriate consents will be sought.

Permanent works in watercourses and water discharges – The Project has the potential to create adverse effects on water quality, water takes, streams and increased flood risk. Approximately 27 km of intermittent and permanent streams will be directly affected by the Indicative Alignment within the proposed designation boundary.

With proposed mitigation measures in place, the potential adverse effect on watercourses and water quality once the Project is complete is assessed overall as being minor, with a moderate level of effects on the hydrology of natural wetlands.

Landscape and visual - The Project has the potential to result in landscape and visual effects including effects on wetlands, rivers and their margins; identified sites of Outstanding Natural Features and Significant Ecological Areas; and visual amenity. Landscape and visual effects can be minimised through design development guided by the proposed Urban Landscape Design Framework, and an integrated mitigation approach. The integrated mitigation approach maximises the landscape and ecological outcomes. With mitigation in place the landscape and visual effects of the Project overall will be less than minor.

Operational transport - the Project will deliver significant positive effects. These are:

- Improved safety performance compared to the existing SH1 with the Indicative Alignment designed to motorway standards and therefore, with the intended diversion of traffic to the new road, a higher safety performance on the new road and reduced incidents on the existing SH1;
- Supporting safe cycling and walking by providing linkages where feasible as part of the Project scope (such as across interchanges, onto SH1 at the northern tie in, and on local roads where the Project passes over on a bridge structure);
- Improved freight performance in terms of improved journey times, improved route quality and safety, resilience and travel time reliability;
- Improved route security and resilience of the state highway network north of Auckland through reducing the reliance on one main route (the current SH1); and
- Improved journey times and improved journey time reliability along the state highway network north of Auckland increasing accessibility across many parts of the Regions' road network.

Operational noise - Once constructed, the Project will result in an overall reduction in noise levels currently experienced by sensitive receivers adjacent to the existing SH1 as a result of a reduction in traffic. An increase in noise levels is predicted for residents within proximity to the Project. Proposed mitigation measures are based on the practicable option approach and will mitigate effects on sensitive receivers (i.e. dwellings) which enable specific noise categories to be achieved and comply with relevant standards.

Operational air quality - The operational air quality impacts of the Project on the nearest highly sensitive receptors have been evaluated and the assessment demonstrates that the Project will maintain air quality at acceptable levels. The Project will improve air quality at locations along the existing SH1, particularly at Wellsford and Te Hana. Potential air quality adverse effects are assessed as being less than minor.

Social impacts - The Project has the potential to generate both significant positive and adverse social effects. The key positive regional and local community effects are the result of improved transport safety, reduced congestion, improved journey time reliability as well as economic benefits for Northland and north Rodney. The Project does not sever community access or affect any community facilities such as parks, schools, hospitals, police and fire stations.

The Transport Agency will continue to communicate with directly affected landowners and early acquisition of land may be possible in some circumstances for those meeting the criteria within the Transport Agency's Advance Purchase Policy. Additionally, there is mitigation proposed to maintain open lines of communication and provide stakeholder liaison up to and during construction. Overall adverse social effects are assessed as being moderate. At a wider local and regional level, the effects are assessed overall as significant positive.

Cultural values - The Project is recognised both as having potential adverse impacts on values important to Mana Whenua and providing opportunities to reflect cultural values in the Project through design and mitigation. Cultural values that may be affected by the Project include on waterways, loss of vegetation and wetland areas, on loss of plant species and on fauna habitat and feed sources and changes to the landform through earthworks. The Project has been identified as having positive effects for Mana Whenua through improving access and the ability to undertake travel safely.

Economic - The Project will deliver significant benefits to the local north Auckland area and the economies of the Auckland and Northland Regions. Some individual businesses located on the existing SH1 alignment may lose some passing trade from through traffic. Overall, economics effects are assessed as being significant positive.

Land use and property - The Project traverses land uses primarily for forestry and/or farming with an area of rural residential and lifestyle blocks north west of Warkworth. Construction effects have the potential to disrupt farming operations. Commercial plantation forestry within the proposed designation is likely to be felled prior to construction. Construction activities will require the establishment of construction yards, haul routes, temporary road works and traffic management. Permanent effects of the Project include loss of farm infrastructure and potentially severing primary production lots such as farms.

Network utilities will be avoided, relocated and/or bridged to avoid permanent adverse effects on their functionality. With mitigation in place the potential adverse effects on land use and property overall are assessed as moderate.

Management of effects on the environment

The Project to date has sought to avoid adverse effects through the route selection process, Project design and the preliminary construction methodology. Where adverse effects have not been avoided, an integrated approach to mitigation has been adopted. At a high level this approach is informed by the philosophy of Ki Uta Ki Tai (from mountain to sea) which aligns with Mana Whenua values.

The proposed mitigation and monitoring measures are set out in the proposed designation conditions and resource consent conditions. These have been developed to ensure that potential adverse effects that might arise from the final design and construction/operation of the Project will be adequately avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Statutory Framework

The Project has been assessed against the relevant planning documents. The development of the Project has had regard to the relevant objectives and policies of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) Regional Policy Statement, regional and district plan provisions and the Northland Regional Policy Statement. The Project is assessed as being generally consistent with the relevant provisions and is not contrary to them.

The Project will have significant transportation and other benefits, and can be constructed, operated and maintained in a way that avoids, remedies or mitigates potential adverse effects. Accordingly, the statutory assessment concludes that appropriate regard has been had to the relevant provisions and that the Project is consistent with Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991. The conclusion confirms that the Notice of Requirement should be confirmed, and the resource consents be granted.