

National's Upper North Island Infrastructure Package – Q&A



What is National's transport infrastructure package?

National's transport infrastructure package is just the first part of the Delivering Infrastructure theme of its Plan to Get New Zealand Working. Today initial announcements focus on the Upper North Island with announcements planned for across the rest of the country.

What projects are part of National's Upper North Island Infrastructure Package?

National's Plan would see the connections for Upper North Island built and upgraded from Whangārei to Tauranga.

Projects include:

Connecting the upper North Island

- Building an expressway between Warkworth and Wellsford.
- Building the Hamilton Southern Links project.
- Building the Cambridge to Piarere extension of the Waikato expressway.
- Upgrading State Highway 29 to an expressway between Piarere and the Kaimai Range.
- Upgrading State Highway 2 between Tauranga to Katikati, including the Tauranga Northern Link.
- Upgrading State Highway 1 between Ruakaka to Wellsford (including a tunnel under the Brynderwyn Hills).
- Upgrading the State Highway 29 route from Tauranga to the Kaimai Range including a tunnel through the range.

Building Auckland

- Constructing a Fourth Main Rail Line in addition to the Third Main Line.
- Constructing the East West Link.
- Delivering Bus Rapid Transit from Onehunga to the CBD.
- Building Northwest Bus Rapid Transit.
- Building the Puhinui to Airport Rail Link.
- Building rail from Onehunga to Auckland Airport.

- Electrifying the rail line to Pōkeno in Waikato.
- Adding a diesel rail shuttle to Huapai.
- Starting work on the Second Waitematā Harbour Crossing.
- Adding funding to upgrade Auckland's Ferry Network.
- Introducing additional funding for Auckland Local Board priorities.
- Investigating electrification of rail to Kumeu.
- Investigating rail between Avondale and Southdown.

This is a Plan that will connect the upper North Island, create jobs, support growth and allow for greater opportunities between Whangārei and Tauranga.

How much does National's transport infrastructure package cost?

Over the next ten years National will spend \$31 billion on additional transport projects across New Zealand. Of this, \$17.5 billion will be on additional transport projects in the upper North Island. This includes \$12.8 billion for Auckland and \$4.7 billion for the remainder of the upper North Island.

What is National's new 'intergenerational approach' to transport funding?

National is proposing a major change to transport funding to allow significantly more investment in infrastructure to create jobs and support growth across the country.

The intergenerational approach will let the New Zealand Transport Agency borrow significantly more on its own balance sheet, using the \$4 billion annual revenue from fuel tax and road user charges, to service the debt.

This would allow transport funding to operate on an intergenerational basis rather than year-to-year. The current approach is like a household trying to buy a house without a mortgage and does not make sense.

Our change allows NZTA to borrow \$1 billion per year for ten years to fund our massive new investment in transport infrastructure.

This allows us to properly develop a pipeline of projects around the country and invest ahead of time rather than after an investment is needed.

How is National paying for this package?

We will use National's intergenerational approach to increase the capacity of the NZTA to fund projects.

National will also restore state highway funding within the National Land Transport Fund, reallocating from the funding cut by the current Labour Government.

Finally, National will allocate funding from the Covid-19 Response & Recovery Fund, unallocated New Zealand Upgrade Programme funding and future capital allowances.

Will National increase fuel taxes?

No. National will not increase fuel taxes in our first term and will repeal the Auckland Regional Fuel Tax in our first 100 days in office – delivering savings of \$150 million per year into Aucklanders' back pockets.

When will work begin on these projects?

National will begin work immediately on delivering transport projects to benefit New Zealand from Northland to Southland.

The last three years have seen transport projects stall across the country as funding was cut from the state highway budget, projects were paused, re-evaluated and cancelled, and other projects had to wait in line for a light rail programme that never eventuated.

The Upper North Island package will see work beginning to prepare for construction through the decade. Projects that will begin within the decade include the Fourth Main Rail Line, Cambridge to Piarere, the East West Link, rail between Huapai and Swanson, City to Onehunga Bus Rapid Transit, Electrification of rail to Pōkeno, the Warkworth to Wellsford upgrade, Northwest Bus Rapid Transit, Tauranga to Katikati upgrade, the Puhinui to Airport Rail Link, and the Piarere to Kaimai Range upgrade.

Work will also begin in the Second Waitematā Harbour Crossing within the first decade.

Are the timings for these projects possible given lengthy Resource Management Act delays are standard for Infrastructure projects?

Over our first term, National will replace the RMA with an Environment Act and a Planning & Development Act, most likely with legislation closely aligned to the models adopted by South Australia and Scotland.

In Auckland and right around the country, we will work with local government to make existing RMA procedures more efficient – but we will also legislate to advance projects if necessary.

Will National continue with current projects in the upper North Island?

National is committed to progressing current projects like those in the Auckland Transport Alignment Project or underway within the upper North Island now.

The only major project National is not committing to is the light rail project in Auckland. Funding for this project will be reallocated to National's upper North Island priorities.

Why is National not committing to light rail in Auckland?

Light rail has been a failed concept in Auckland. Over the past three years, Labour has cut funding from state highways across the country to pay for a project they never delivered.

National will restore funding to state highways and begin work on delivering a proper rail connection between the CBD and the Airport by expanding rail from the Airport to Puhinui and from Onehunga to the Airport.

Will National be announcing projects in other parts of New Zealand?

Yes. This announcement is just the first of many National will be launching across the country.

National has already announced projects such as:

- The Cambridge to Piarere expressway.
- The Belfast to Pegasus expressway including the Woodend Bypass.
- The Christchurch to Ashburton expressway.