

National's Bay of Plenty and Coromandel Transport Package

Our Vision

National's vision is to transform Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga into one economic powerhouse, unlocking their potential so the upper North Island becomes Australasia's most dynamic region.

Good transport connections will be critical to this vision – allowing the efficient movement of freight to and from the Port of Tauranga and inland ports in the Waikato, as well as facilitating much-needed new housing supply in the Western Bay of Plenty to cope with the growing population.

Overview

National will:

1. Build the Tauranga to Katikati Expressway, including the Katikati bypass.
2. Build the Pokeno to Mangatarata improvements project.
3. Upgrade three one lane bridges in the Coromandel.

Tauranga to Katikati Expressway

Background

Between 2014 and 2018 this section of SH2 experienced a 28 per cent increase in traffic flow and traffic volumes are expected to continue to grow in line with the region's growth.

Horticulture, particularly kiwifruit, is growing strongly in the Western Bay of Plenty, and the resulting freight and population increases have put pressure on existing road infrastructure. The population is expected to grow from 190,000 to 260,000 in the next fifty years. The Western Bay is also a key connector for tourists through to the Coromandel.

This is one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the country. In the past 20 years there has been 42 fatal crashes between Tauranga and Katikati, and from 2012 to 2016 there were 18 fatalities, the highest death toll of state highways listed by NZTA as the most dangerous.

In 2017, the National Government committed to the Katikati bypass as part of the SH2 Waihi to Tauranga Corridor upgrade. This project was cancelled as part of the changes to funding under Labour in 2018.

The total stretch of road has been dubbed the "horror highway" and there is strong community support for an upgrade.

Labour's Failure

National announced a new four lane expressway from Tauranga through to Katikati as part of its Next Generation Roads of National Significance package at the 2017 election. The first stage of this project, the Tauranga Northern Link, was out for tender for construction by NZTA at the time of the 2017 election. Upon coming to office, Labour slashed \$5 billion from the state highway budget, forcing the Northern Link to be "re-evaluated". After community protest led by National MPs Todd Muller and Simon Bridges, the Government belatedly agreed to fund both the Tauranga Northern Link and the next stage (Te Puna to Omokoroa) as part of the 2020 NZ Upgrade Programme.

Project Scope

National will build the Tauranga to Katikati expressway in three stages:

1. Tauranga Northern Link – connecting State Highway 29 (SH29) Takitimu Drive through to SH2 near Loop Road, west of Te Puna. This has been funded by the NZ Upgrade Programme and will cost \$478 million. Construction will run from 2020 to 2023.

Te Puna to Omokoroa Extension – a new 7km, four lane corridor from Te Puna to Ōmokoroa. This has been funded by the NZ Upgrade Programme and will cost \$455 million. Construction is scheduled from 2023 to 2027.

2. Constructing the Katikati bypass, providing for a high quality route around the Katikati township.
3. Omokoroa to Katikati – an extension of the road from Omokoroa, estimated to cost \$855 million. Construction will commence from 2027 once the Te Puna to Omokoroa section of the new road has been completed.

By the end of the project, Tauranga to Katikati will feature a four-lane expressway including:

- The Katikati bypass to provide safer transport options around Katikati
- Separation from traffic coming from the other direction.
- Wide lanes and wide, sealed shoulders.
- Mainly grade separated intersections.
- Safe roadsides clear of obstacles and ditches.

National will build the Pokeno to Mangatarata Improvement Project

Context

State Highway 2 between Pokeno to Mangatarata is one of the most important roads in the country, linking the high growth areas of Auckland and Tauranga with the popular holiday area of the Coromandel.

The road is at capacity with an average of more than 15,000 vehicles using the corridor daily, with peaks of more than 25,000 vehicles. This can lead to large delays for drivers.

Historically this road has had a poor safety record. In 2011 the speed limit was reduced to 90kmh as an interim safety measure. Nine years later this interim measure remains in place. From 2011 to 2016 there were 18 crashes resulting in 34 deaths and serious injuries.

Labour's Failure

National started a project in 2016 to address these issues and upgrade the safety of this road from KiwiRAP 2.5 to 4, which would have made it one of the safest roads in the country. NZTA estimated these improvements would reduce death and serious injury by 80 per cent over 20 years.

Labour's slashing of the state highway budget by \$5 billion saw these plans "re-evaluated" and three years later no progress has been made, with no costing and no start date planned for the improvement work.

National's Commitment

We will upgrade the road according to the original, 2016 plan. This will include:

- Two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound, with futureproofing to allow for a second eastbound lane if required.
- Four grade-separated intersections.
- Other safety improvements.
- Returning the speed limit to 100kmh.

Cost

National estimates the cost of this project will be \$300 million, based on the 2016 cost of \$278 million.

Timing and sequencing

Work will begin in National's first term and be completed in stages.

Upgrading One-Lane Bridges

The Coromandel's one-lane bridges, particularly on main roading corridors like SH25 into Tairua, have long been a source of frustration. The bridges become heavily congested particularly at peak holiday period times. The local council is in the unfortunate position of having a low rating base (due to a small resident population) but with infrastructure that requires a higher standard due to the regular influx of tourists to the area, particularly during the summer months.

National will begin work on upgrading the following one way bridges in our first term:

- The Hikuai River (Bailey) Bridge - State Highway 25 South.
- The Pepe Stream Bridge - State Highway 25 South of Tairua Township.
- The Grahams Stream Bridge - State Highway 25 North of Tairua Township.

NZTA said in 2018 that upgrading one lane bridges would not occur for at least a decade, from 2029 onwards. National will bring these forward and begin them in our first term.

National's Bay of Plenty and Coromandel Transport Package - Q&A

Why has National announced these particular projects?

SH2 is a key link from Auckland to Tauranga and the Coromandel. However, parts of the road are dangerous and are at capacity.

The stretch of SH2 from Pokeno to Mangatarata has a poor safety record. Peak time capacity is also a major issue, leading to queuing and delays. Three-laning the highway with two lanes for Auckland-bound traffic, with the scope to add a fourth lane in the future, will greatly improve capacity.

Safety improvements, including central wire rope barriers and side barriers, and for local roads four grade-separated intersections and a new roundabout, will make this road safer for all users.

Aren't some of these projects already announced?

National was progressing projects such as the Tauranga Northern Link in 2016.

After wasting two years the Government announced the Tauranga Northern Link and an upgrade of the Te Puna to Omokoroa section. This is a scaled down version of National's commitment at the last election. We are committed to completing the full project from Tauranga to Katikati, including the Tauranga Northern Link and Katikati bypass.

The Government has also stated it will upgrade the Pokeno to Mangatarata section of State Highway 2 but reassessed National's 2016 plan. Since then no progress has been announced and the road is stuck at the design phase with no costing or start date available.

How is National funding these projects?

These roads and one lane bridge upgrades will be funded as part of the \$31 billion transport infrastructure project announced last week. The package is funded by a combination of the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), allowing the NLTF to borrow, the Covid Recovery Fund, and future capital allowances.

How soon will these projects start?

The Tauranga Northern Link will begin in 2020 with construction expected to take about four years. In 2023, work will begin on the Te Puna to Omokoroa section and the Omokoroa to Katikati sections in 2027.

The Pokeno to Mangatarata Improvement Project and the Katikati bypass will begin in National's first term with work progressing from there.

One way bridge upgrades in the Coromandel will begin in National's first term.