

Councillors' update Oct 2024

Roading budgets cut

Lower than expected roading subsidies from the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) for local roading projects will leave Waikato District Council tens of millions short for planned new roading projects over the next three years. So far it's been reported that the Council will be about \$35m short - and this is likely to force the Council to defer some projects until 2027-28.

The shortfall is not expected to impact maintenance of existing infrastructure. Nor is it expected to affect the funding already promised by NZTA to Waikato DC and Hamilton City for developing the pedestrian facilities and other infrastructure required to turn the section of SH26 Morrinsville Rd that runs from the Hillcrest roundabout to the LIC corner into a local road.

However the shortfall could force delays on most other new capital projects and is likely to heavily impact the roading work required to support Waikato District's fast growth trajectory which – with 654 new dwellings consented in the year to 30 June 2024 – is 3rd highest of any Council in the North Island, surpassed only by Hamilton and Auckland.

While the Government's \$1.9 billion investment for the Waikato region through the National Land Transport Plan is at record levels, much of this is committed to two new "Roads of National Significance" in the region: SH1 Cambridge to Piarere and Hamilton Southern Links.

It is not yet clear what NZTA proposes to do with regards the Telephone Rd railway crossing on SH1B which has been closed and under review since April 2022, but we expect to hear more news about this soon.

Current Waikato District roadworks

- Go to www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/roadworks

Planned NZTA roadworks

- **Tauwhare Rd roundabout at the Tamahere interchange**
NZTA has also advised that for the first three nights of October (1st – 3rd) Fulton Hogan will be resealing the Tauwhare Rd roundabout at the Tamahere interchange. This means the SH1 southbound on and off ramps at Tamahere will be closed and access from Tauwhare Rd to SH1 and SH21 will also be closed. The work is weather dependant, so may be delayed or extended. Detours will be in place along Bruntwood and Matangi Rds.
- **SH26 roadworks from mid-September – detours planned**
NZTA is undertaking roadworks on SH26 near Eureka until early November. Repair work between Tauwhare and Friedlander Rds will operate with a single lane stop/go for two weeks. Then from 30 Sept to 8 Nov the work is expected to progress to an 800m stretch east of Platt Rd. East bound traffic will be managed through the site, but a detour for west bound traffic will operate along Tauwhare and Platt Rds. Watch for updates on NZTA's website here: www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz/regions/waikato/roadworks

Local Waters Done Well

Waikato District Council has entered a non-binding agreement to investigate a proposed joint waters entity with seven other Waikato councils (with two more Councils still to decide on their position), and has also committed to the design of a joint waters CCO (Council Controlled Organisation) with Hamilton City Council alone.

The scale of both proposals is expected to deliver substantial savings, but both proposals will need careful analysis, and any final decision included in our 2025-34 Long Term Plan which will go out for consultation early next year (see below).

A third option – a Waikato District Council CCO - will also be investigated.

Waikato District Council already operates cross-border agreements with Hamilton City including the supply of drinking water to most of the Tamahere-Woodlands ward via a trickle supply system.

Long Term Plan

Your Council has started discussing the development of the next Long Term Plan (LTP) – a nine-year plan spanning 2025-2034 – which will also establish rates for the next two years (2025/26 and 2026/27). The LTP was deferred last year in favour of a single year Enhanced Annual Plan to allow time for greater certainty over implementation of the Government’s “Local Water Done Well”.

Before pivoting into a single year plan for the current financial year, the work programmes and budgets originally developed for a 10-year plan would have resulted in a general rate increase of 6% in 2025/6 and 2026/27. The original plan was based on starting with a general rate increase of 13.75% this year, but as a result of cutting the general rate increase to 11.9% this year your Council will now have to re-examine forward budgets – and may even have to consult with you on reducing some levels of service – if we are to keep to the rates increase originally proposed for the next two years.

Proposed fees and charges updates

Consultation is now open until 11 October on proposed changes to fees related to land planning charges, motorsports events on district roads, and roading usage charges. For more information and to have your say go to www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/say-it

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