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Committee Regional Transport Committee
Author Natasha Hayes, Senior Transport Planner

Proposed variation to the Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme 2012 – 2015: SH58 Safety Improvements

1. Purpose

To seek the Regional Transport Committee's (the Committee) support for a variation of the Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme 2012-15, at the request of the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA).

2. Background

2.1 The Regional Land Transport Programme

The current Regional Land Transport Programme 2012 – 2015 (RLTP) was prepared by the Committee, and subsequently approved by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) in June 2012.

The RLTP contains all the land transport activities proposed to be undertaken throughout the region over 3 financial years, the regional priority of those activities, indicative activities over the following 3 financial years, plus a 10 year financial forecast.

The activities in the RLTP are submitted by the NZTA and 'Approved Organisations' (including the eight territorial authorities and GWRC). The activities in the programme relate to passenger transport, walking and cycling, local roads, state highways, and the movement of freight.

3. Process for considering a variation

The Land Transport Management Act 2003 (the Act)¹ includes provision for changes to some types of activities without the need for a variation to the RLTP. However, this provision does not apply to the proposed new activity outlined below. As a transitional provision the existing RLTP can be varied

¹ As amended by the Land Transport Management Amendment Act 2013.

following the procedure as if it were a RLT Plan (refer section 156 of the Act). As such, the process for dealing with requests for variations must be followed.

Section 18D of the Act states that if a good reason exists to do so, the Committee may prepare a variation to its RLTP during the three years to which it applies. This can be at the request of an Approved Organisation or the NZTA, or on the Committee's own motion. In this case, the request has been made by an Approved Organisation and the NZTA.

Section 18D(4) of the Act requires the Committee to consider any variation request promptly.

Section 18D(5) of the Act notes that consultation is not required for any variation that is not significant.

4. Proposed variation

The proposed variation is to include the design stage of a new activity called 'SH58 Safety Improvements' within the final year of the current three year programme. The three year 'design' element of the new activity has an estimated cost of \$2m.

The existing regional programme 2012-15 includes the investigation and design stages of a project called 'SH58 Haywards Substation Curves Safety Improvements' with a description to 'improve the safety of SH58 by realigning three existing curves on the Haywards Hill' and an indicative 'Total Project Cost' of \$3.7m.

However, the 'SH58 Haywards Substation Curves Safety Improvements' activity has now been incorporated into this new wider project 'SH58 Safety Improvements' involving a package of safety improvements along the length of SH58 from SH2 through to the intersection with the proposed Transmission Gully motorway.

The package of improvements proposed under this new project includes curve re-alignment, guard rail upgrades, wire rope median barriers, shoulder widening, speed limit reductions (from 100km/h to 80km/h), some restricted turning movements (left in left out) and a roundabout at the SH58/Moonshine Road intersection. The total construction cost is estimated to be around \$31m.

The construction phase of the new project is included as a 'significant activity' that has been prioritised in the programme as part of the draft Regional Land Transport Plan currently being development.

The project will be nationally funded and the NZ Transport Agency advises that it will not affect any other projects in the current NLTP.

Details of the proposed variation for inclusion in Table 3 of the existing RLTP are set out in **Attachment 1**.

4.1 Reason for the variation

Work carried out by the NZ Transport Agency (after the regional programme 2012-15 was adopted) as part of the 'Roads and Roadside Strategic and Programme Business Case' identified SH58 as being in the top ten highest priority corridors nationally in terms of safety risk.

The key issues and deficiencies along SH58 associated with the high crash rate and low KiwiRAP star rating (2.7/5) include:

- A high number of 'out of context' curves. A number of these are in succession, which reduces forward sight distance.
- High speed environment with curves requiring a reduction in speed greater than 15% which increases the risk of loss of control crashes occurring.
- A narrow carriageway, with 73% of shoulders along the section being below 1.5m. Provides limited recovery space for errant vehicles and limited space for cyclists.
- 80% of the subject section of SH58 has moderate to severe roadside hazards, consisting of steep slopes, power poles and drops offs. The roadside hazards and narrow shoulders have resulted in approximately 61% of injury crashes involving hitting an object (cliff, fence and tree etc.).

The crash history on SH58 has resulted in the road having both a high collective and personal risk. In the five year period from 2008-2012 there were a total of 138 crashes, including two fatal and 13 serious injury crashes. Two recent fatal crashes have also occurred on SH58 that are not included in the 2008-2012 statistics.

Traffic volumes are projected to increase on this section of SH58 following the opening of Transmission Gully Motorway, therefore it is important that this project be completed before Transmission Gully Motorway opens. Including the design phase in the final year of the current programme (2014/15 financial year) will help to ensure the construction can commence as soon as possible in the next programme period.

5. Determination of Significance

Officers have assessed the significance of the proposed variation, for the purpose of consultation, against the RLTP significance policy.

The significance policy is set out in section 7 (page 36 and 37) of the RLTP 2012-15.

In making a determination of significance (against the criteria set out in section 7.3 of the RLTP), officers considered the following factors:

- The proposed cost variation of \$2.0 million for the new activity is not considered to materially change the overall balance of strategic investment in the context of the \$1.3 billion programme cost.
- The proposed variation would make a positive contribution towards the Government Policy Statement objectives as the subject activity will lead to construction of improvements that will have a significant contribution to road safety in the region.
- Consultation with key stakeholders, including affected local property owners, is currently being carried out by the NZ Transport Agency. Feedback from this consultation process will help inform the next detailed design phase, subject of this variation. Feedback to date has been largely supportive of the proposals.
- The proposed variation is not expected to affect the integrity of the RLTP or its overall affordability.

Consideration has also been given to the likely consequences, cost and benefits of carrying out consultation in relation to the subject variation and it is considered that the benefits of full public consultation in relation to the programme variation would be minimal. The cost of a public consultation process and potential delays to this activity are considered to significantly outweigh the benefits.

As such, officers consider that the proposed variation to the RLTP is not significant and does not trigger the requirement to carry out consultation.

6. Next Steps

If the Committee agrees to the variation request, it will then be forwarded to GWRC for approval at its Council meeting on 10 December 2014. As is the case with the RLTP itself, GWRC must either accept the recommendation or refer the variation back to the Committee, with a request that it be reconsidered.

Once the variation has been approved by GWRC, the variation is then forwarded to the NZTA for consideration of inclusion in the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) for funding.

There is no obligation for the NZTA to vary the NLTP by including the new activity. However, it must give written reasons for any decision not to do so. In this case, the NZTA has made the request and has indicated that it will look to add the SH58 Safety Improvements project to the current NLTP.

7. The decision-making process and significance

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act). Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

7.1 Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report are subject to the legislative requirements of the Act. Section 18D(5) of the Act requires the Committee to determine if a proposed variation to the RLTP is significant, in accordance with its significance policy adopted under 106(2) and included in the programme.

An assessment of the variation against the RLTP significance policy is set out in section 5 of this report and concludes the matter does not trigger the requirement to carry out consultation.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Agrees to recommend to Greater Wellington Regional Council that the Regional Land Transport Programme 2012 – 2015 be varied to include the proposed activities to Table 3, as set out in Attachment 1.*

Report prepared by:

Natasha Hayes
Senior Transport Planner

Report approved by:

Luke Troy
Manager, Corporate Planning

Report approved by:

Jane Davis
General Manager Strategy
and Community
Engagement

**Attachment 1: Variation to Wellington Regional Land Transport Programme 2012 – 2015:
SH58 Safety Improvements**