

Speech Notes

Completion of the Hamilton section of the Waikato Expressway

Speech for: Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport

Tuesday 12 July 2022

Event begins at 6.45am

speech length allocated: 5 minutes

Speaking points

- This is a milestone day for the Waikato region as the completion of the 22km Hamilton section also marks the completion of the entire 102km Waikato Expressway which means State Highway 1 is now four- laned from Bombay to south of Cambridge.
- This section and the others combine to deliver major safety benefits – as each section has opened, the number of people dying or being seriously injured have significantly reduced.
- The Hamilton section, just like the earlier sections north and south, takes the highway out of built-up areas, providing a safer and more efficient way to move people and freight.
- The Hamilton section provides links to and from the city and will reduce the volume of heavy and through traffic in the city.
- The Hamilton section is the longest, hardest and most expensive of all of the sections – taking SH1 east of the city, across flat land, soft peaty soils, over streams and a railway line, crossing local roads, gullies and streams.
- 16 bridges, an underpass and five interchanges have been built to enable this.
- A cast of thousands have been involved in the Hamilton section and the wider expressway project – from its initial planning stretching back to the 1970s, gaining designations, funding, property, consents and finally construction and completion in 2022.
- As each section has opened the benefits have increased – for travellers, freight operators and people living in towns bypassed by growing traffic flows.
- Because of the cost and complexity, the expressway was developed in sections – starting in the north where the need to improve safety was urgent, and widening and straightening was much easier to achieve, at places such as Pokeno (completed in 1997), Ohinewai (2003) and Mercer (2006) .

- Since 2009 the remaining seven sections at Te Rapa (opened 2012), Ngāruawāhia (2013), Cambridge (2015), Rangiriri (2017), Longswamp (2020), Huntly (2020) and now Hamilton have all been completed.
- Many people will recall the twisting two-lane version of SH1 running through the main streets of Waikato towns. Today the journey is a much safer and more reliable one.
- Thank you for the ongoing leadership of Waikato-Tainui, Ngaati Koroki Kahukura, Ngaati Hauaa, Ngaati Wairere and Ngaati Mahanga, who have brought the interests of our whenua and awa, and ensured preservation of culturally sensitive sites has been kept at the forefront of all decision making.
- The close relationship between Crown and iwi has been integral to the success of the overall project – and is on display today in the cultural symbolism at the Tamahere reserve, the storyboards and bridge names, scholarships to encourage iwi into big-project skills and the magnificent artwork we have just seen along the route.
- Another example of the partnership is the interchange at Ruakura – Serving the ambitious inland port development of Waikato-Tainui, enabling economic growth for the city and the upper north island.
- This isn't just a project of roading infrastructure, it's also about the shared paths that are incorporated in all interchange connections to encourage walking and cycling.
- The whole expressway project provides for planning and growth along the expressway corridor and has led to residential growth at Pookeno and Te Kauwhata, and industrial development at Horotiu (Te Rapa–Ngāruawāhia sections), Ruakura (Hamilton) and Hautapu, adjacent to the Cambridge section.
- These safer roads also allow for a higher speed limit with Cambridge to Hampton Downs speeds to be set at 110km/h (already announced by 12 July). The infrastructure means that the Waikato Expressway can safely operate at this higher speed.

Key attendees to acknowledge

- Kiingi Tuuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII
- Iwi (in particular Ngati Koroki Kahukura, Ngati Hauaa, Ngati Wairere, Ngati Mahanga)

- Mayor Paula Southgate, Hamilton City Council
- Mayor Allan Sanson, Waikato District Council
- Mayor Jim Mylchreest, Waipa District Mayor
- Jamie Strange MP, Hamilton East
- Dr Gaurav Sharma MP, Hamilton West
- Cassandra Crowley, Waka Kotahi Board Deputy Chair and Victoria Carter Waka Kotahi Board member
- Nicole Rosie Waka Kotahi Chief Executive
- Hugh Vercoe, Chair, Waikato Regional Transport Committee

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