

# Guidance on communicating information about major projects

## About this guidance

The New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) is responsible for managing the government's investment in the land transport system. As part of this, NZTA strives to keep the public, communities and stakeholders up to date about major capital projects we are managing on behalf of government and taxpayers.

We do this in a range of ways – including through newsletters, media reports, public announcements, investment plans and reports, and in reply to direct requests from the public.

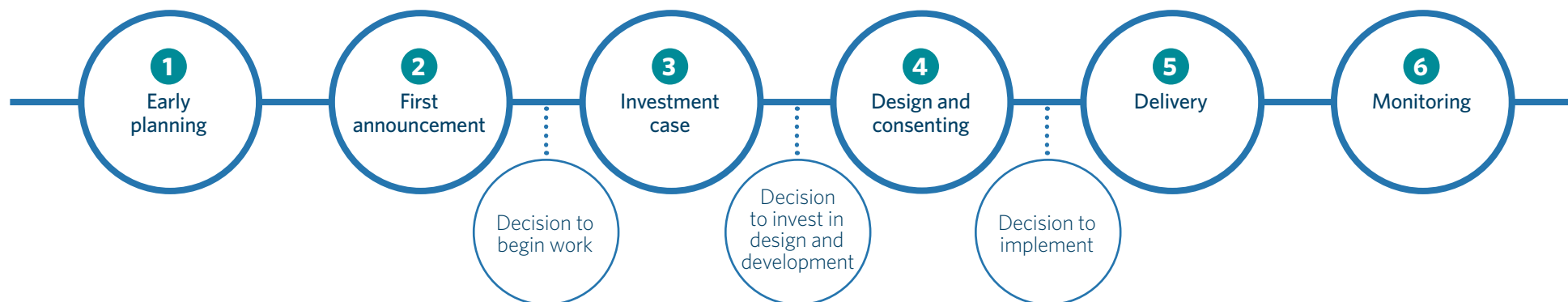
Information is gathered and refined throughout the process of planning, designing and delivering a project. We collect this information through discussions, investigations and analysis – working with affected communities, iwi/Māori, and other experts.

As information grows, our forecasts become more reliable. As we learn more, we can better understand the problem that needs to be solved and options for solving it. We can have increasing confidence about the best way to deliver and pay for the project – and that the project will deliver the benefits sought at the right cost.

It's important that the public can access timely and reliable information throughout this process. This helps to reduce confusion, cost and effort for everyone.

This document explains the stages of project development and the level of information the public can expect to see at each stage.

## Project lifecycle



# Guidance on communicating information about major projects

November 2025

**NZ TRANSPORT  
AGENCY**  
WAKA KOTAHU

**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

## 1 Early planning Outline the need for investment

The Government, NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) and its partners – such as councils and KiwiRail – identify a land transport problem and consider ways to address it. There is no defined project yet.

This is part of work nationally and regionally to identify medium- to long-term system needs, prioritise problems, and plan investments to meet system needs and address problems over time. It involves strategic transport planning at an area, network, corridor or outcome level.

Work at this stage draws on input from people and communities to help shape a range of strategic transport plans such as city plans, corridor plans, and strategic network assessments. It is often progressed in partnership between NZTA, local government and other key stakeholders (such as KiwiRail). It feeds into project business cases as well as investment plans and programmes such as the State Highway Investment Proposal (SHIP), Regional Land Transport Plans (RLTPs) and the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP).

**Scope** – a potential problem is identified but there is no defined project yet.

**Cost** – no cost information is provided – though the scale could be indicated and, if the project is large, the upper range could be constrained by long term funding availability.

**Timeline** – not yet known.

## 2 First announcement Identify the range of options in response

Government/NZTA identifies a need and makes an early commitment to a solution. It is too early to estimate cost or delivery timeframes as the scope is still being developed. However, other useful information can be provided about the need, scale, objectives, options and commitment to provide a solution.

Work at this stage includes developing a project plan and setting up processes for governance, assurance, risk management, and stakeholder engagement. At the end of this stage, funds are approved to develop an investment case.

The idea is given a project name and may be included in the SHIP or NLTP at this point.

**Scope** – still being developed; high level options may be identified.

**Cost** – no formal cost estimate, although a funding ‘placeholder’ might be used (eg, in the NLTP) to indicate the potential scale of the project. Any cost information that is available would, at best, be known as a wide range.

**Timeline** – too early to estimate, though inclusion in the NLTP/SHIP may indicate that early funding may be sought to develop the investment case.

## 3 Investment case Assess options and determine the preferred option

NZTA develops and assesses a range of options (activities) that could address the problem, and that are affordable. It selects the preferred option. It engages with Māori partners and key stakeholders on outcomes and options and keeps the wider community informed.

At the end of this stage, NZTA has approved an investment case that includes a developed analysis of options and a preferred option. It knows what the project’s benefits and costs will be, how it will be paid for over time, and how it will be procured and delivered. There is also an agreed strategy for environmental planning, consenting and property acquisition. Funds are approved for the next stage of design and development.

Some steps, such as site investigation and design, may not yet have been done as they can be expensive and disruptive. The project budget and delivery timetable still need to be confirmed through further design, environmental planning and consenting work, and through the tender process.

**Scope** – a preferred option is identified.

**Cost** – expressed as an ‘investment envelope’ – an indicative range to plan and deliver the project. This is provided as a range to preserve commercial competitiveness in the procurement stage while keeping the community informed.

**Timeline** – to be confirmed through further work.

## 4 Design and consenting Protect the route and get the preferred option ready for delivery

At this stage, NZTA moves ahead with work to refine the preferred option and prepare the community, Māori partners, and affected parties for delivery. It engages with the community and affected stakeholders through statutory processes such as designation and consenting, tolling consultation, property acquisition, and other planning permissions.

Some projects may be paused once a designation and consents have been secured, enabling the route to be protected for future construction. This means detailed design work and preparation for delivery will occur later.

For projects proceeding through to delivery, NZTA invites the wider community to have their say on certain aspects of design and delivery plans. It also runs tender processes and awards contracts to deliver the project.

By the end of this stage, NZTA has a detailed design, has acquired the required property and consents, has a clear delivery model, and knows what further costs and risks to expect. It has engaged contractors and committed funding to deliver the project.

**Scope** – details of the preferred option, and how it will be delivered, are developed.

**Cost** – expressed as an ‘investment envelope’ – an indicative range to plan and deliver the project. Preferred funding and financing model (eg, PPP) can be shared.

**Timeline** – still subject to detailed design and discussion with possible contractors.

## 5 Delivery Deliver the project

At this stage, NZTA manages delivery of the project.

Even after a contractor has been selected and a contract signed, most contracts require further design work and some involve ongoing costing of specific elements. Some risks cannot be known until works commence, such as underlying site conditions. This can lead to further changes to the project’s scope and cost.

There is ongoing engagement with specific parties to meet statutory requirements and conditions, and to keep the wider community informed about progress and impacts of the works.

By the end of this stage, the project is largely complete and ready to go into service. There is a high level of certainty in final expected costs and timing. However, there are often some contractual claims that require resolution and usually defects that need to be fixed. Exact opening dates may depend on testing and commissioning activities.

**Scope** – the details are known and subject only to minor adjustments.

**Cost** – expressed as a ‘cost envelope’ – an indicative cost range to deliver the project.

**Timeline** – there are contracted deadlines, and penalties for these being breached.

## 6 Monitoring Check the project delivers as intended

At this stage, NZTA (or a contractor) manages and operates the new asset and monitors its performance to ensure the expected benefits and outcomes are realised. There may be late adjustments to maximise benefits and ensure risks are managed. There may also be reviews to ensure that lessons learned can be used to fine-tune future projects.

NZTA provides ongoing information to users — for example, about tolling and safety.

**Scope** – ongoing evaluation of benefits and outcomes realised.

**Cost** – the actual cost is known; there may be an indication of ongoing maintenance and operating costs.

**Timeline** – the project has been delivered; there are ongoing activities to maintain and operate the asset.