

SOUTH ISLAND'S ECONOMIC LIFELINE



Since the February 2011 earthquake, Lyttelton Tunnel has become even more of an economic lifeline for Canterbury and the South Island. It is critical for getting fuel supplies to Christchurch and beyond and for exporters to get their product to markets.

The long-term closure of Evans Pass because of rockfall means the tunnel will remain the only viable access route for freight vehicles to get to the Lyttelton Port of Christchurch until late 2017/early 2018 when it is expected Evans Pass will re-open.

While Dyers Pass Road and Gebbies Pass can be used by some heavy vehicles, these are not preferred routes because of the greater safety issues relating to steep grades and narrow, windy roads.

The additional freight vehicles through the tunnel, which includes those carrying demolition rubble to the Port for its reclamation programme, are contributing to the sometimes general lack of cleanliness of the tunnel, i.e. grime on the white tiles.

Up to eight tonnes of dirt and dust can be removed from the tunnel every month. This compares with 235kg a month before the earthquakes, sweeping of the tunnel having increased from once a month to three times a week.

Cleaning of the tunnel often came second in the early days following the earthquakes, with the tunnel being kept open for freight vehicles, particularly dangerous goods, which require the tunnel to be closed to all other traffic, including

the cleaning machines, for periods of up to 10 minutes. Dangerous goods vehicles include tankers carrying petrol, gas and other highly flammable goods.

On average, 600 tankers travel through the tunnel each month and up to 30 on some nights. This means the tunnel can be closed for several hours a day as the tankers arrive at varying times, depending on schedules, the number of closures differing each hour. These closures, however, are at night, from 6.30pm to 7am.

The NZ Transport Agency works hard to balance the needs of everyone who requires access through the tunnel, keeping delays to a minimum but always being mindful of the need to undertake regular maintenance to protect the 51-year-old structure.

Lyttelton Tunnel bylaw

The NZ Transport Agency is bringing in a revised bylaw to better manage Lyttelton Tunnel and ensure the safety of all users.

The biggest change under the revised bylaw will be mandatory covering of truck and trailers carrying bulk goods through the tunnel. This is a result of dust and dirt from these vehicles which has become both a safety and maintenance issue.

While the Land Transport Act requires all vehicles secure their loads, the new bylaw specifies that all loose bulk loads must be covered in a way that minimises dirt and material escaping.

The area over which the bylaw can be enforced is also being extended to cover State Highway 74 from the intersection of Norwich Quay and Oxford Street, in Lyttelton, to the old layover bay, 200 metres north, of the Bridle Path Road on-ramp on the Heathcote side.

For safety, the revised bylaw reconfirms that dangerous goods and over dimension vehicles will not be allowed to use the tunnel. This will be enforced once Evans Pass re-opens late 2017/early 2018.

Under the revised bylaw, the maximum height and width limits for the tunnel will be:

- Any vehicle more than 2.6m wide needs permission to enter the tunnel
- No vehicles more than 4.27m in height can use the tunnel.

The new bylaw will come into effect 28 days after it is advertised in the NZ Gazette, which is likely to be next month.



Restoring access via Evans Pass

Work is underway to get earthquake-damaged Evans Pass re-opened by late 2017/early 2018. This will enable dangerous goods and over dimensional vehicles to be re-routed via Evans Pass, reducing the number of closures of Lyttelton Tunnel.

Work began repairing the road and retaining walls and reducing the risk to road users of geotechnical hazards at the end of last year and is progressing well.

This work, being undertaken by the Christchurch City Council, will cost \$40 to \$60 million. The NZ Transport Agency is funding 83 per cent of the cost, recognising the importance of Sumner Road/Evans Pass as a lifeline route and in getting freight to the Port of Lyttelton.

Work underway includes scaling to remove loose surface materials; blasting to remove boulders and outcrops; and earthworks including the engineered removal of soil and rock to reshape the land. Bunds may also be required to contain any future rock fall.

Keep up-to-date with this work by signing up for the Christchurch City Council's newsletter by emailing: slcorridor@ccc.govt.nz

MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

Lyttelton Tunnel celebrated its 50th birthday in 2014 and cosmetically the tunnel is beginning to show its age.

Following the earthquakes, regular cleaning of the tunnel came second to keeping the road open in the early days, in particular to provide access for freight vehicles to the Port of Lyttelton.

In the last two years, the NZ Transport Agency has reinstated its regular cleaning programme. To lessen the disruption for everyone, this is now going to be mainly on Thursday nights from 9pm to 2am. That's so everyone knows when there are likely to be delays and to plan their journeys. What will impact on this timing, will be when bulk ships are in Port and unload their cargo around the clock.

During the next couple of months, we will also be replacing the cat's eye lights in the centre of the road. This will be done at night and reduce the tunnel to single lane. Vehicles will be escorted through during this time and there could be delays. These delays will be advertised.

Towards the end of this year, the Transport Agency is looking to begin installing a deluge system which will activate sprinklers in the tunnel in the event of a fire. This work could result in the need for some lengthy closures but it is critical to improve safety within the tunnel. The Transport Agency is currently working through ways to minimise closures and keep everyone moving during this time.



HOW DO YOU KEEP INFORMED?

Closures of Lyttelton Tunnel can be frustrating for all users. The NZ Transport Agency does work to minimise the disruption and make it easier for everyone to get to where they need to go on time.

Regular planned maintenance work is carried out throughout the week, usually on a Thursday night from 9pm to 2am when access is single-lane and vehicles are escorted through; other closures are limited to 10 minutes for dangerous goods vehicles to travel through the tunnel.

To keep better informed about what is happening at Lyttelton Tunnel and when closures for maintenance are likely:

- Visit our website: www.highwayinfo.govt.nz/traffic/regions
- Phone 0800 4 HIGHWAYS (0800 44 44 49)
- Register for traffic updates at: www.onthemove.govt.nz

You can also follow us on Facebook:

📘 www.facebook.com/nztasouthisland and

🐦 twitter.com/NZTACWC

The latest traveller information is also available on the www.tfc.govt.nz website.