**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.

Maintenance of existing road infrastructure is not impacted to the same degree, but NZTA funding assistance for our road maintenance programme – while higher than before – has still fallen short by $1.9m for the next three years. (This is equivalent to about 2% of our general rates and is now part of an early community consultation launched on our next Long Term Plan – read more below.)

There should be no effect on funding already promised by NZTA to Waikato District 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 shortly.

**Current Waikato District roadworks**

* Go to [www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/roadworks](http://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/roadworks)

**Planned NZTA roadworks**

* **Tauwhare Rd roundabout at the Tamahere interchange**

NZTA has 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](http://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 the Council now has to re-examine forward budgets. This includes considering reducing some levels of service if we are to keep to the rates originally proposed for the next two years – so the Council is now seeking early community feedback as we develop our LTP for full consultation next year.

**Long Term Plan early engagement**

A community survey is now open until 20 October to help shape our Long Term Plan (LTP) for 2025-2034. Please help guide your Council on how much to invest in services, projects and activities that matter to you and your community. The survey includes what services are most important to you, and what services you think could be considered for less investment, for example, whether rubbish and recycling could be moved from a weekly to a fortnightly collection, and whether to increase rates by about 2% to fully fund the shortfall in our road maintenance programme or not, and so on.

You can complete the survey online, pick up a form from the Council office in Tamahere, or request a form by calling the Council on 0800 492 452. To read all about it and fill in the survey online go to <https://shape.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/long-term-plan-engagement>.

**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](http://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/say-it)

**Rob McGuire, 1947-2024**

A Councillor for 39 years until retiring in 2022, Rob McGuire served the Eureka Ward before it was joined with Tamahere to form the enlarged Tamahere-Woodlands Ward. We wish to express our sympathy to Rob’s family following his death two weeks ago. An account of Rob’s service in his own words can be found here: [www.number8network.co.nz/2022/10/11/a-great-journey-rob-mcguire-looks-back](http://www.number8network.co.nz/2022/10/11/a-great-journey-rob-mcguire-looks-back).

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