

Report pursuant to s 42A Resource Management Act 1991

**In the matter of:**

A Notice of Requirement to construct, operate, use, maintain and improve approximately 11.5km of new State Highway connection between Ashhurst and Woodville

**And:**

A hearing by Manawatu District Council, Palmerston North City Council and Tararua District Council pursuant to s 102

**Requiring Authority:**

New Zealand Transport Agency

**Hearing date:**

25 March 2019

**Section 42A Technical Evidence: Social Impact Assessment**

**By: Kirsty Austin**

NJ-015652-992-520-V3:EM-e



# Executive Summary

1. I was commissioned to review the potential social impacts in relation to the Notices of Requirement for Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatū Tararua Highway Project (“**the Project**”) lodged by the New Zealand Transport Agency.
2. I have reviewed Technical Assessment #3 Social Impact Assessment, other technical assessments relevant to determining how people and communities may be affected by the Project, and background documents. I undertook a site visit to familiarise myself with the main townships, community facilities, the alternative east-west routes, and wider area affected by the Project.

## **Social effects from the construction-phase:**

3. The lengthy construction phase will create potential for local and regional communities to benefit from employment opportunities.
4. Ashhurst will be the most affected community during construction, as a result of construction vehicles accessing the Project through largely residential areas, and with uncertainty over the effect on residents from night time construction-related activities.
5. Woodville is not anticipated to be affected to the same extent, however, construction vehicles may reduce safety / perception of safety and connectivity.

## **Social effects from the operation-phase,**

6. The social effects will be mostly positive. Local and regional communities will benefit from a reliable, faster and safer route across the Ruahine Ranges. The quality of the environment, and associated amenity, wellbeing, safety and way of life, will largely improve in Ashhurst and Woodville as traffic volumes and routes along residential streets are predicted to revert to a similar situation that existed when the Manawatū Gorge Road was open. However, some residents in both townships will experience reduced amenity where greater traffic volumes and reduced connectivity are predicted.
7. The positive social effects from the operational phase will be somewhat reduced by two aspects related to wellbeing:

- a) Without the mitigation recommended by the Territorial Authorities' transport expert (Ms Fraser), the Project is expected to create / exacerbate an unsafe cycling and pedestrian environment.
- b) Recreation is an important component of the communities' values. There is an opportunity for the Project to create positive social effects by enabling cycling, walking and other leisure activities (such as viewing /rest areas).

**Mitigation and associated draft conditions:**

- 8. NZTA's proposed mitigation and associated draft conditions are appropriately focused on managing construction-related effects. Amendments are required to strengthen some aspects.
- 9. NZTA should be required to commit to engaging with the community on detailed design matters. This is appropriate because many aspects of the Project are not confirmed, but are important for communities to determine how they are affected and to influence these effects. It could also be a constructive way to realise positive social effects by improving recreation opportunities.

**Amendments to draft conditions:**

- 10. Amend draft condition 8 - Community Liaison Group to:
  - a) Clarify that the group will have an opportunity to contribute to detailed design discussions, not just share information about design decisions
  - b) Establish the group in sufficient time to contribute to engagement activities on detailed design matters;
  - c) Extend the lifetime of the group to 12 months after construction is completed, to align it with results from the final noise review; and
  - d) Resource the group with the services of a social impact assessor, to monitor and report back on construction-related effects. It is not the role of a community group to monitor the effects of a developer's construction activities.

11. Increase the scope of the Communications Plan (draft condition 7) to include construction vehicle route information (routes, times, vehicle numbers, proportion of heavy vehicles), construction progress and detailed design matters.
12. Specify all relevant groups / parts of the community who must be consulted (draft condition 7), have an opportunity to be included in the Community Liaison Group (draft condition 8), and have an opportunity to participate in engagement activities (recommended new condition).
13. Insert a new condition that requires an Engagement Plan, either combined with or in addition to the Communications Plan. The Engagement Plan must specify design matters the community will have input into, which Outline Plans the design matters relate to, which groups / parts of the community will be given this opportunity, the scope of this input and the timeframes for this input.

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# 1 Introduction

15. My full name is Kirsty Jane Austin. I hold the qualifications of Master of Regional and Resource Planning (distinction) and Bachelor of Science. I have completed a social impact assessment course endorsed by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (“EIANZ”).
16. I am a full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute (“NZPI”) and EIANZ.
17. I am a resource management planner, with approximately 20 years’ experience in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. I work as a sole practitioner in the fields of social impact assessment and resource management policy. For the past 15 years I have specialised in social impact assessment. I began working as a social impact assessor in 2002 in the United Kingdom, where I undertook social impact assessments on large regeneration Projects. In New Zealand, I have reviewed social impact assessments for local authorities, prepared social impact assessments for applicants, and undertaken social impact monitoring.
18. I have prepared this evidence on behalf of Palmerston North City Council, Manawatu District Council and Tararua District Council (the “**Territorial Authorities**”) in relation to the Notices of Requirement (“**NOR**”) for Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatū Tararua Highway Project (the “**Project**”) lodged by the New Zealand Transport Agency (“**NZTA**”). I understand that my evidence will accompany the planning report being prepared by the Territorial Authorities under section 42A of the Resource Management Act 1991 (“**RMA**”).
19. I have reviewed social impact assessments for councils, including a proposed extension to Waihi Correnso Underground Mine (for Hauraki District Council) and proposed water takes and associated consents for the Central Plains irrigation scheme (for Selwyn District Council). I have undertaken preliminary reviews social impact assessments for Phase 2B of Auckland Transport’s AMETI Project (for Auckland Council) and for a private plan change to enable a retirement village in Lower Hutt (for Hutt City Council).
20. I have prepared social impact assessments on Projects such as alternative routes for a new arterial road into Nelson (for Nelson City Council), after which I undertook a high-level assessment of social effects for NZTA for this new route (Whakatu Drive to Queen Elizabeth II roundabouts), as part of the Programme Business Case. I have also

prepared social impact assessments on an offshore iron sand mining operation (for Trans Tasman Resources), a private plan change to establish an 800 home mixed use neighbourhood on the Kāpiti Coast (for Waikanae North Ltd), and for proposed defence-related operations (Ministry of Defence and New Zealand Defence Force).

21. I have undertaken social impact monitoring in response to conditions on designations for Peka Peka to Ōtaki Expressway, Auckland South Corrections Facility, and Otago Corrections Facility.
22. In the past year I have run a two-day social impact assessment training course, with Dianne Buchan. I have also presented seminars on social impact assessment at NZPI and EIANZ branch events.

### **1.1 Expert Witnesses – Code Of Conduct**

23. I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and that I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that except where I state I am relying on information provided by another party, the content of this evidence is within my area of expertise.

## **2 Background and Scope of Evidence**

### **2.1 Background**

24. The Project is defined as the construction, operation, use, maintenance and improvement of approximately 11.5km of new State highway connection between Ashhurst and Woodville under the RMA. This proposed new section of State Highway will replace the indefinitely closed State Highway 3 route through the Manawatū Gorge. A detailed description of the Project is set out in Part C of the AEE submitted by NZTA and a summary description the s 42A Planning Assessment.
25. Aspects of the Project that are of particular relevance to social effects are:
  - a) The alignment of the new state highway, including provision for walking, cycling and rest areas, and the volume of traffic it will accommodate (as outlined in sections 9.2 and 9.3 of the AEE).

- b) The process for finalising the design using the Environmental and Cultural Design Framework and Outline Plans (as outlined in sections 9.2 and 38 of the AEE).
- c) Construction details, such as the length of the construction phase, hours of construction activities and construction vehicle routes (as outlined in section 10 and 9.3 of the AEE) and associated management plans, including the consultation plan (as outlined in sections 10 and 38 of the AEE).

## **2.2 Scope of evidence**

26. I have been asked to assess the social effects of the NOR. My assessment considers the following matters:

- a) Key issues in contention;
- b) The statutory context;
- c) An overview of the existing environment in terms of the local and regional / wider communities;
- d) Adequacy of NZTA's investigations and interpretation of the findings of those investigations;
- e) Likely key effects (positive and adverse) on the environment of allowing the Project;
- f) Appropriateness of any proposed mitigation measures or monitoring;
- g) Submissions relating to social effects; and
- h) Any other matters.

27. My evidence should be read in conjunction with expert evidence of the other experts that have contributed to the s 42A Planning Assessment. In particular, the evidence of Ms Harriet Fraser (transport), Mr Nigel Lloyd (noise) and Mr Jeff Baker (recreation) are relevant to the consideration of matters I address.

## **2.3 Reports and material considered**

28. As part of preparing this statement of evidence, I have read the following reports and documents:

- a) Te Ahu A Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project – Notices of Requirement for Designations - Volume 2 Assessment of Effects on the Environment and Supporting Material;
- b) Te Ahu A Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project – Technical Assessment #1 Transport;
- c) Te Ahu A Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project – Technical Assessment #2 Noise and Vibration;
- d) Te Ahu A Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project – Technical Assessment #3 Social Impact Assessment;
- e) Te Ahu a Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project - Section 92a response (15 January 2019);
- f) Joint Statement of Acoustics Experts (13 February 2019);
- g) 2016 Ashhurst Village Vision Process;
- h) Palmerston North 2028 – Te Mahere Turoa 10 Year Plan 2018 – 2028;
- i) Tararua District Council Long Term Plan 2018 – 2028; and
- j) Manawatū District Council Long Term Plan 2018 – 2028.

## **2.4 Site visit**

29. I undertook a site visit on 10 January 2019 to familiarise myself with the main townships, community facilities, the alternate east-west routes, and wider area affected by the Project. My site visit was limited to areas with public access. Therefore, it included the sites of the proposed western and eastern roundabouts, but did not include the full length of the proposed designation.

## 2.5 Statutory Context

30. The relevant statutory documents and provisions relevant to the evaluation of the NOR have been set out in the s 42A Planning Assessment. For the purposes of preparing this evidence, I have had particular regard to the statutory provisions and direction that provide an indication of community values, community processes and community infrastructure.

## 3 Existing Environment

31. For the purposes of assessing social impacts, the existing environment is considered in terms of the local community and regional community. I understand that the existing environment is to be taken as that currently experienced by the community, rather than the environment experienced when the Manawatū Gorge Road was open (pre - April 2017).
32. The local community principally consists of Ashhurst and Woodville as the areas most affected by the proposed state highway during construction and operation<sup>1</sup>. The regional community is the wider community dependent on State Highway 3 as an east-west link across the Ruahine Ranges and/or affected by the construction of the proposed state highway.
33. The main characteristics of these communities, which are of relevance to assessing potential social impacts, are summarised below. These are based on descriptions in NZTA's Social Impact Assessment, Transport Assessment and Noise and Vibration Assessment, my site observations and additional research, and Mr Baker's evidence.

### Ashhurst

34. Ashhurst is a small township on the western side of the Ruahine Ranges. The township had approximately 2,800 residents at the 2013 Census, with a large proportion of

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<sup>1</sup> The Social Impact Assessment identified a "project extent" community, which consists of the properties along the designated route. These properties are adjacent to the proposed roundabouts on the outskirts of Ashhurst and Woodville townships and approximately 20 properties along the proposed route. I have not referred to these properties as a separate community, but have included them in general, as part of the local communities of Ashhurst and Woodville communities.

family-age residents. The community's vision is that the *"village is a great place for families with young children. It's welcoming, peaceful, and relaxed; the young and old are connected; neighbours look out for each other"*.<sup>2</sup> The Social Impact Assessment notes that many residents moved to Ashhurst for a quiet lifestyle (page 28).

35. Ashhurst has experienced a significant increase in through-traffic (additional 6,000 vehicles per day) to access Saddle Road since the Manawatū Gorge Road closed in 2017. This traffic uses the predominantly residential streets of Cambridge Avenue, Mulgrave Road and Salisbury Street. These streets also provide direct access to community facilities such as Ashhurst School, Learning Adventures childcare and Ashhurst Domain.
36. The NZTA's impact assessments indicate this increase has created additional noise and vibration, causing potential disturbance and general nuisance for residents (such as sleep disturbance) and safety risks, particularly around Ashhurst School<sup>3</sup>. The Transport Assessment notes that *"A large number of Ashhurst residents have expressed a desire to maintain 'a quiet village' character, and the presence of additional general and freight traffic does not support this aspiration"* (page 22). The Noise Assessment also notes that traffic on Saddle Road is audible from the township (pages 11-12).
37. The main recreation facility within the township is Ashhurst Domain, near the southern entrance to the township<sup>4</sup>. Ashhurst Domain has picnic areas, a play ground, walking trails, sports fields and a campsite. Walking trails are also located on the outskirts of the township, such as trails through the Manawatū Gorge and a shared path between Ashhurst and Palmerston North. These do not provide a continuous trail to the township because Ashhurst bridge and Napier Road (State Highway 3) do not specifically cater for pedestrians or cyclists.

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<sup>2</sup> A Vision for Otangaki / Ashhurst 2040 (2016 Ashhurst Village Vision Process).

<sup>3</sup> Technical Assessment #3 Social Impact Assessment (page 13), Technical Assessment #1 Transport Assessment (page 22), Technical Assessment #2 Noise and Vibration Assessment (pages 11& 25).

<sup>4</sup> Accessed from Cambridge Avenue and Napier Road (State Highway 3).

## Woodville

38. Woodville township has a smaller residential population than Ashhurst, with 1,400 residents at the 2013 Census, but a larger and more diverse commercial centre and community facilities. The township serves the surrounding rural areas, and its location at the intersection of State Highway 2 and State Highway 3 attracts passing visitors. The population is typically older than Ashhurst's.
39. The centre of Woodville (Vogel Street SH2/SH3) has experienced a 40% reduction in traffic since Manawatū Gorge Road closed.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, significantly more vehicles are using Oxford Road and Pinfold Road as an informal bypass<sup>6</sup>. Cyclist safety along Vogel Street is poor and vehicle safety is poor around intersections.
40. The Social Impact Assessment notes that Manawatū Gorge provides an important environmental and social 'separation' from Palmerston North. The assessment notes differing perspectives about the Gorge. Most Woodville residents who were consulted, considered the drive through the Gorge an important gateway home, but others felt it was unstable and an ongoing risk to their wellbeing (page 30).

## Regional / wider community

41. An east-west link across the Ruahine Ranges is important to regional and local communities. Despite longer travel times since Manawatū Gorge Road closed, the number of vehicles per day using the alternative routes (Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track) is similar to the numbers who used Manawatū Gorge Road. Approximately 8,400 vehicles per day use the east-west routes across the Ruahine Ranges<sup>7</sup>.
42. Traversing the Ranges is a daily occurrence to access work, education facilities and for business, and it is an important route for social connections, recreation and accessing health, shopping and other services. Travel-to-work data from 2013 indicates

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<sup>5</sup> Traffic volumes for Vogel Street / State Highway are reported as 7,620 vpd prior to Manawatū Gorge Road closure, reduced to current volumes of 4,480 vpd (WSP Opus Memorandum, 14 January 2019).

<sup>6</sup> For example, traffic volumes for Pinfold Road have are reported to have increased from 240 vpd prior to Manawatū Gorge Road closure, to current volumes of 4,287 vpd (WSP Opus Memorandum, 14 January 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Transport Assessment (figure 1.6).

approximately 1,000 people per day cross the Ranges, with 65% living in the east and working in the west<sup>8</sup>.

43. Manawatū Gorge and the wider Te Āpiti area is an important recreation resource, centred on walking tracks through the Gorge, camping and water-based activities at each end of the Gorge, mountain biking and horse treks. Mr Baker's evidence provides a comprehensive description of current recreation provision and usage (section 3.3) and the Transport Assessment summarises walking and cycling provisions (pages 23-24). Te Āpiti Masterplan is currently being developed by the Manawatū Gorge Governance Group, which will be under-pinned by five principles, including recreation. The principle for recreation is to *“expand complementary activities that do not detract from environmental or cultural values given the close proximity to neighbouring towns of Ashhurst and Woodville and the City of Palmerston North”*<sup>9</sup>.
44. The Social Impact Assessment identifies various changes experienced by the regional / wider community since the closure of Manawatū Gorge Road, noting that there have been considerable economic and social consequences (pages 13 and 26). These have included increases in commuter and business time and costs, a decrease in travel time reliability, and an increase in traffic and road safety issues for communities in the vicinity of Pahiatua Track. Pahiatua Track, which is part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail Touring Route, has been closed for cyclists to address safety issues.

## **4 Data Collection and Assessment Techniques**

45. The Social Impact Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with accepted methodology. It demonstrates that the four principle elements of social impact assessment methodology have been undertaken: scoping, profiling, analysis of potential effects and identification of mitigation. It specifies the social impact assessment framework selected (International Association of Impact Assessment Social Analysis framework) and has applied that framework to the analysis at appropriate geographic scales and with clearly defined scales of impact.

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<sup>8</sup> Census 2013 data as reported in the Transport Assessment (pages 28-29)

<sup>9</sup> As described Mr Baker's evidence (s 42A Technical Evidence – Recreation) at page 38

## 5 Project Effects

46. I have considered the potential positive and negative social effects anticipated from the construction and operational phases of the Project. I have reviewed these using the categories of social effects applied in the NZTA's Social Impact Assessment, namely:
- a) Impacts on the quality of the environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety);
  - b) Impacts on way of life (undertaking daily activities, including leisure and recreation opportunities);
  - c) Impacts on community cohesion (particularly connectivity); and
  - d) Impacts on sustaining oneself (opportunities for employment or income).
47. For the purposes of my evidence, I have combined the discussion on impacts on the way of life and community cohesion. The impacts on these are largely caused by the same components of the Project - increased traffic from construction vehicles or traffic using the new state highway.

### 5.1 Construction Phase Effects

48. I have considered the potential social effects on local and regional communities from the 5 - 7 year construction phase of the Project. I conclude that there is potential for the local and regional communities to benefit from employment opportunities arising from a lengthy construction activity (categorised as 'sustaining oneself'). The remaining impacts are predominantly negative.
49. The Social Impact Assessment identifies potential negative social effects from the construction phase of the Project, noting that the "*construction of the Project has the potential to exacerbate negative social impacts that have been experienced by Woodville, Ashhurst and the wider region since the closure of the Gorge and the use of the alternate route*" (page 8). I largely agree with the range of impacts identified in the Social Impact Assessment, but I consider that the scale of effects are more severe in some situations.
50. I consider the most significant adverse social effect for local communities is the potential effect on the quality of their environment during construction, particularly from

construction vehicles. This is likely to be experienced as reduced amenity and resultant change in character (e.g. noisier, busier environment), reduced wellbeing (e.g. disrupted sleep) and reduced safety (e.g. less safe environment or an environment that feels less safe). I conclude that the effect is moderate negative for Ashhurst, very low negative for Woodville and neutral for the regional community.

51. There is the potential for adverse social effects on peoples' way of life and corresponding impact on connectivity (community cohesion) may occur as a result of construction traffic. This is likely to be experienced as people making changes to the way they carry out daily activities, including how children travel to school, how people access parts of their community, and how people access / undertake recreation or leisure activities. I conclude that the effect on peoples' way of life will be low negative for Ashhurst, low negative for Woodville and low negative for the regional community. The effect on connectivity will be low negative for Ashhurst, low-very low negative for Woodville and very low negative for the regional community.

### **5.1.1 Ashhurst**

52. I anticipate that Ashhurst residents will be the most affected community during the construction phase, as a result of construction vehicles accessing the Project site via Saddle Road and Napier Road (SH3).
53. The NOR documentation estimates 224 construction vehicles per day will travel through residential areas of the township to access Saddle Road (Salisbury Street, Mulgrave Street and Cambridge Avenue). In addition, an estimated 120 construction vehicles per day will pass residential properties at the southern end of the township along Napier Road (SH3 from York Road to Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve Car Park) to access site works at the western end of the Project<sup>10</sup>.

#### **5.1.1.1 Impacts on the quality of the environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety)**

54. The increase in traffic for 5 to 7 years has the potential to adversely affect the amenity of the township as a result of increased traffic noise and for residents who live along the

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<sup>10</sup> Indicative construction traffic demand (daily flows) as provided in Volume 2 Assessment of Effects on the Environment and Supporting Material (page 103)

routes. The Noise and Vibration Assessment concludes that construction traffic through Ashhurst may exacerbate existing traffic noise, but provided it consists of light vehicles with occasional heavy vehicles during the daytime, it will not be distinguishable from existing traffic and will have only a minor affect. However, the Noise and Vibration Assessment also indicates that the transportation of bulk imported materials through Ashhurst could materially increase existing noise disturbance, which could be potentially significant depending on the number of trucks, timing and duration (page 33). The NOR documentation does not clarify, with any certainty, how much night-time activity will be undertaken.

55. The increase in traffic also has the potential to reduce the safety / perception of safety for people using and crossing roads. Land uses are located along the construction route which attract vulnerable road users (such as children, cyclists and pedestrians) and will result in residents turning onto or crossing busier roads. For example:

- a) Ashhurst School, Learning Adventures childcare and Ashhurst Domain are located along the construction route. These facilities will be accessed by children, pedestrians and cyclists, many of whom will need to cross the construction route as well as travel along it.
- b) Napier Road (SH3) is used by people travelling from Ashhurst to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve walkway. There is no pathway for cyclists and pedestrians along Napier Road or Ashhurst bridge, which may affect their safety / perception of safety when construction traffic accesses the western end of the Project.
- c) Residents along the southern end of Ashhurst on Napier Road (SH3) will need to cross a busier road to get to the township and turn onto a busier road to travel to destinations in the east and west.

56. The Transport Assessment concludes that construction traffic through Ashhurst will have a minor negative effect on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The assessment indicates this will be managed via a Construction Traffic Management Plan (page 67).

57. The Social Impact Assessment concludes that construction effects on Ashhurst's environment will be low negative (page 43). It indicates the desired character of Ashhurst is a quiet, safe and peaceful village, which was impacted by the Manawatū

Gorge Road closure, and while the construction traffic will potentially exacerbate this situation the change will not be significant. The assessment also indicates there will be minimal night-time construction traffic.

58. I consider the effect of construction on the quality of Ashhurst's environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety) to be moderate negative. This is a more severe rating than the Social Impact Assessment provided. In my view this is a more appropriate rating for the following reasons:

- a) There is uncertainty about night-time construction and related mitigation, without which it is not possible to determine the scale to which Ashhurst residents will be affected;
- b) There will be a reduction in cyclist and pedestrian safety or perceived safety, and no mitigation is proposed to address this matter; and
- c) The effects differ to the community's vision for the township.

*Uncertainty in night-time construction vehicle movements*

59. It is unclear how often Ashhurst residents will be exposed to night-time activities (transport of bulk imported goods through the township and works to 'tie in' the western roundabout). Without this information and the ability to assess noise implications, it is not possible to understand how significantly residents' wellbeing and the amenity of their environment will be affected.

60. As noted earlier, the Noise and Vibration Assessment considers this could have a significant effect. As a result of expert conferencing there is now agreement between the noise specialists that construction traffic "*will be avoided through Ashhurst and Woodville at night, other than essential movements such as continuous concrete pours and over dimension loads*"<sup>11</sup>. Mr Lloyd recommends that draft condition 22 be strengthened as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Statement of Acoustics Experts (13 February 2019).

*“describe methods to limit the movement of heavy vehicles through Ashhurst at peak times and to avoid the movement of heavy vehicles through Ashhurst at night” (page 28).*

*Reduction in cyclist and pedestrian safety*

61. As noted earlier, the NZTA’s impact assessments identify potential safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians getting to/from Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve when construction traffic uses Napier Road (SH3) and Ashhurst bridge, but no mitigation is proposed. I note that Ms Fraser’s conclusion upon reviewing the Transport Assessment is that the Construction Traffic Management Plan should include measures to provide for the safety of vulnerable road users along the busiest construction traffic routes, and in particular across Ashhurst bridge and along Salisbury Street and Cambridge Avenue (page 52).
62. Ms Fraser recommends the following mitigation to address safety issues:
  - a) Alter Ashhurst bridge to provide pedestrian and cyclist separation before construction starts, or reduce speeds to 30 km/h (pages 79);
  - b) Route heavy construction traffic onto Wyndham Street and Cambridge Avenue rather than Salisbury Street (page 102) and
  - c) Improve the Napier Road SH3/ Cambridge Avenue intersection before construction starts (page 98).

*Community vision for Ashhurst*

63. I also consider a moderate negative rating is more appropriate given the community’s vision is for a quiet, peaceful township as noted in the NZTA’s impact assessments and Ashhurst Village Vision Process<sup>12</sup>. While the construction phase is a temporary activity, five to seven years is still a long time to experience an environment significantly different to the character a community values and has not long ago experienced.

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<sup>12</sup> Social Impact Assessment (pages 28-30), Transport Assessment (page 22), 2016 Ashhurst Village Vision Process.

64. In my opinion, the community has had relatively little time to adjust to the significant increase in traffic that it currently experiences as a result of the Manawatū Gorge Road closure (less than two years). There is no evidence in the NOR documentation to suggest the community has adjusted to the effects from increased traffic when Saddle Road became the main east - west route, and to then conclude that the additional construction traffic will have a minor adverse effect on the community because the community is experiencing it as an incremental change.

**5.1.1.2 Impacts on way of life and community cohesion (carrying out daily activities, recreation / leisure opportunities and connectivity)**

65. The estimated increase in traffic through Ashhurst to Saddle Road (224 construction vehicles per day) and to the western end of the Project (120 construction vehicles per day) also has the potential to adversely affect residents' way of life and connectivity as follows:

- a) An increase in traffic may affect daily activities that require residents to cross Salisbury Street, Mulgrave Street, Cambridge Street or Napier Road (SH3) to access schools/pre-schools, other facilities in the centre of the township and Ashhurst Domain. This is more likely to impact on vulnerable residents such as children and elderly and has knock on effects for community cohesion / connectivity;
- b) An increase in traffic may reduce recreation pursuits and associated benefits to wellbeing if the road environment dissuades cyclists and pedestrians from undertaking these activities. This may affect those who cycle or walk to Ashhurst Domain or Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve;<sup>13</sup> and
- c) An increase in traffic may reduce recreation pursuits when Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve car park is temporarily closed for construction activities.

66. The Social Impact Assessment concludes that effects on the way of life for Ashhurst residents from construction traffic will be low negative and effects on community

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<sup>13</sup> I acknowledge that without an existing pathway over the bridge this is limited, particularly for pedestrians.

cohesion will be low to very low negative (page 39-41). In terms of effects on recreation pursuits, the Social Impact Assessment notes that the Project design includes a commitment to maintain access to Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve car park at nearly all times.

67. The Transport Assessment concludes that construction traffic through Ashhurst will have a moderate negative effect on road efficiency. It also concludes that construction activities will have a minor adverse effect on access to recreation opportunities via Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve car park and proposes mitigation to address this (page 66). I note the Manawatū Gorge Governance Group submission requested the continued provision of access to Te Āpiti Manawatu Gorge facilities during construction.
68. I agree with the Social Impact Assessment that the effects on Ashhurst's way of life and community cohesion / connectivity will be low negative.

### **5.1.2 Woodville**

69. The NOR documentation indicates an estimated 296 construction vehicles per day will travel through the centre of the township (Vogel Street SH2/SH3). Woodlands Road, on the outskirts of Woodville, is estimated to carry 224 construction vehicles per day. Half of this traffic is expected to be heavy vehicles.<sup>14</sup>

#### **5.1.2.1 Impacts on the quality of the environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety)**

70. The quality of the environment experienced by Woodville residents may be affected during the construction phase, as a result of construction vehicles accessing the Project site. The Social Impact Assessment concludes that there will be no impact on the quality of the environment in Woodville during construction, because construction activities/traffic are unlikely to change the character, amenity value or wellbeing of residents (page 46). The Noise and Vibration Assessment concludes that while the increase in heavy vehicle traffic may be noticeable, the noise effects should be minor (page 33). The Transport Assessment concludes that construction traffic may have a

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<sup>14</sup> Indicative construction traffic demand (daily flows) as provided in Technical Assessment #1: Transport (Figure 1.33) and Volume 2 Assessment of Effects on the Environment and Supporting Material (page 103).

minor adverse effect on central Woodville, particularly Woodville Primary School (page 46).

71. I agree that the construction impact on Woodville will be less than Ashhurst because the route of the construction traffic is largely along an existing state highway with many non-residential properties that are less sensitive to noise (Vogel Street SH2/SH3), and semi-rural roads with few residential properties (Woodlands Road). However, I consider the potential effect to be more appropriately rated as 'very low' for the reasons set out below.
72. Construction vehicles, particularly heavy vehicles, may have an impact on safety/perceived safety for children attending Woodville Primary School and Te Kohanga Reo Atawhai if construction vehicles use Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) during drop-off and pick-up times. I note that Ms Fraser's conclusion upon reviewing the Transport Assessment is that the Construction Traffic Management Plan should include measures to provide for the safety of vulnerable road users along the busiest construction traffic routes, and in particular along Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) between Woodland Road and Pinfold Road. Ms Fraser also recommends that heavy construction vehicles avoid Oxford Road and Pinfold Road (page 97).
73. Construction of the western roundabout may also impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties (albeit few properties). I note in Mr Lloyd's evidence that there is agreement between the noise experts that Hope Road will not be used by heavy construction traffic because of the potential significant noise impacts on residents of 29 and 75 Hope Road (paragraph 50). I also note that five submissions identified amenity (noise and dust) and safety concerns for the Woodville community during construction.

**5.1.2.2 Impacts on way of life and community cohesion (carrying out daily activities, recreation / leisure opportunities, and connectivity,)**

74. The estimated increase of 296 construction vehicles per day through the centre of Woodville (Vogel Street SH2/SH3) and 224 vehicles per day on the outskirts (Woodlands Road)<sup>15</sup> has the potential to adversely affect residents' way of life and connectivity. This

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<sup>15</sup> Indicative construction traffic demand (daily flows) as provided in Technical Assessment #1: Transport (Figure 1.33)

may be experienced differently to Ashhurst residents in that it may not impact on daily activities and cohesion / connectivity within the township as much, but is more likely to impact on daily activities and connectivity for residents accessing regular activities to the west of the Ruahine Ranges (such as school, work or sporting activities in Palmerston North).

75. The Social Impact Assessment concludes that effects on the way of life for Woodville residents from construction traffic will be low negative and effects on community cohesion will be low to very low negative (pages 44-45). I agree with this conclusion.

### **5.1.3 Regional / wider community**

76. I consider it unlikely that there will be effects on the quality of the environment for regional communities (communities beyond the local Ashhurst and Woodville communities). The Social Impact Assessment notes that there may be a knock-on effect for residents in the vicinity of Pahiatua Track and Gorge Road / Ballance Gorge Road if drivers choose to avoid construction-related delays on Saddle Road. This may reduce the amenity (by increased noise) and safety for residents and the three primary schools in the vicinity (school children getting to and from school). I note that draft condition 8 refers to monitoring effects of construction, and I believe this would be a useful situation to monitor.

77. The construction phase has the potential to disrupt people's lives who regularly traverse the Ruahine Ranges. Daily or weekly activities that involve commuting to work and accessing health and education services across the Ruahine Ranges may take longer and the travel times may be unpredictable, as a result of construction-related delays on Saddle Road. Businesses that rely on access across the Ruahine Ranges for products, services and/or employees may also be affected by delays. I agree with the Social Impact Assessment that this will be a low negative impact.

78. There is also the potential that connectivity will be reduced, and hence, social connectedness/cohesion between communities to the east and west of the Ruahine Ranges as a result of construction-related delays on Saddle Road. I agree with the Social Impact Assessment that this will be a very low negative impact.

#### **5.1.4 Positive Impacts on sustaining oneself (opportunities for employment / income)**

79. The AEE estimates that approximately 250 people will be directly employed at the peak of the construction (page 153). The Social Impact Assessment identifies the potential for increased employment opportunities and business activity as a positive socio-economic effect from the construction phase of the Project. This effect is anticipated to be experienced at the regional and local (Ashhurst and Woodville) levels, where residents may gain construction employment (direct jobs), employment in businesses supplying services to the Project (indirect jobs), or employment generated from increased numbers of employees or spend in the area as a result of the construction (induced jobs).
80. I understand that no economic assessment has been undertaken on the construction phase of the Project to assist in verifying potential positive socio-economic effects. Based on the information provided in the Social Impact Assessment and my social impact and monitoring experience on other large-scale infrastructure projects, I agree there is the potential for low positive socio-economic effects due to the long duration of the construction, the timing of the construction which will coincide with other construction projects finishing, and the skills and services available in the region and within the local communities.

## **5.2 Operational Phase Effects**

81. I have considered the potential social effects on local and regional communities from the operational phase of the Project, and conclude that these will be almost entirely positive. I largely agree with the conclusions reached in the Social Impact Assessment. In one instance I differ on the scale of effect and I discuss two aspects raised by submitters that were not assessed in detail in the NOR documentation (cyclist safety and recreation / leisure opportunities).

### **5.2.1 Ashhurst**

82. When the new state highway is operational in 2025, it is estimated there will be a significant reduction in vehicles per day through central residential areas of Ashhurst (Salisbury Street, Mulgrave Street and the southern end of Cambridge Avenue) and a significant increase in vehicles per day along Napier Road (SH3) towards the western

end of the new state highway<sup>16</sup>. The travel time from Ashhurst to Woodville is estimated to halve, taking 10.3 minutes in comparison to the current time of 20.2 minutes<sup>17</sup>.

#### **5.2.1.1 Impact on the quality of the environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety)**

83. Removing through-traffic to Saddle Road will create a quieter, less busy environment for the township, similar to the character experienced prior to Manawatū Gorge Road closing. The Noise and Vibration Assessment concludes that there will be a significant positive effect from this reduction, with approximately 250 houses having a 7dBA reduction in noise (page 8). The Transport Assessment concludes that it will be a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists (page 51).
84. In contrast, traffic levels and corresponding noise levels are predicted to increase for the smaller number of properties at the southern end of Ashhurst along Napier Road (SH3). The Noise and Vibration Assessment indicates this would be significant without mitigation for approximately 24 properties, but concludes this can be appropriately mitigated<sup>18</sup>.
85. The Transport Assessment does not specifically refer to safety issues in the vicinity of these properties, but notes that increased traffic levels across Ashhurst bridge has the potential to affect cyclist safety (p52). No mitigation is proposed by NZTA to address this matter.<sup>19</sup> I note that Ms Fraser recommends the following mitigation to address road safety:

- a) a separated two-way shared path along the northern side of Napier Road (SH3) to cycle and walk from Ashhurst to Manawatū Gorge, including across the Manawatū River; and

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<sup>16</sup> Estimated decrease of approximately 6,530 vpd along Salisbury Street and an increase of 6,740 vpd along Napier Road (SH3) as reported in Technical Assessment #1 – Transport (Appendix 1.B, revised 2 February 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Technical Assessment #1 – Transport (Appendix 1.C).

<sup>18</sup> Mitigation includes a quieter road surface along Napier Road, landscaping and setbacks near the proposed roundabout (Technical Assessment #1 – Transport, page 38).

<sup>19</sup> At a recent stakeholder consultation exercise, NZTA gave a commitment to addressing cyclist safety on Ashhurst bridge by constructing a clip-on (Walking and Cycling Stakeholder Presentation, February 2019, slide 15). However, at the time of writing my evidence, no formal notification of this change had been received to confirm that it will form part of the Project.

- b) safe access for vehicles turning to and from Napier Road (SH3) and Ashhurst Domain and from properties along the southern side of Napier Road (SH3) (pages 80 and 100).

86. Overall, I consider that this change to Ashhurst will have a moderate to high positive effect on the quality of the environment if the above mitigation is implemented.

**5.2.1.2 Impacts on the way of life and community cohesion / connectivity (carrying out daily activities, connectivity, recreation and leisure opportunities)**

87. Removing through-traffic through central areas of the township will have a corresponding improvement in the way residents experience daily activities within Ashhurst, such as getting to and from Ashhurst School, pre-school facilities, Ashhurst Domain and other services and facilities in the town centre. This will also improve connectivity within Ashhurst.

88. I note that this improvement will not be the case for the smaller number of residential properties on the southern side of Napier Road (SH3) that will experience greater traffic volumes when the new state highway operates. While the Transport Assessment identifies the need to improve the Napier Road / York Street intersection and Napier Road / Cambridge Avenue intersection, and considers this could be accommodated within the existing road reserve, it does not form part of the Project design or mitigation (page 46). As I referred to above, Ms Fraser recommends addressing this concern by providing safe access across Napier Road (SH3) for properties along the southern side of Napier Road (SH3) (page 98).

89. The opportunity to undertake recreational cycling and walking within Ashhurst will be improved with reduced traffic through residential areas. However, the increase in traffic along Napier Road (SH3) may act as a barrier for cycling and walking to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve, as I have mentioned in relation to road safety. I discuss this further as part of the wider impacts on recreation opportunities for the regional community (section 5.2.3.2).

90. I agree with the findings in the Social Impact Assessment that overall the operational phase will have a high positive effect on peoples' way of life and low positive effect on connectivity (pages 40-41).

### **5.2.1.3 Impacts on sustaining oneself (opportunities for employment / income)**

91. A more reliable route across the Ruahine Ranges, with faster travel times (approximately 10 minutes faster between Ashhurst and Woodville), has the potential to improve access to employment and income for Ashhurst residents who work on the eastern side of the Ruahine Ranges and local businesses reliant on the movement of goods and services to the east.
92. There may be a decrease in business activity that benefitted from through-traffic to Saddle Road, and hence employment opportunities. This is not quantified in the NOR documentation.
93. I agree with the conclusion in the Social Impact Assessment that there will be a low positive effect on sustaining oneself (page 42).

### **5.2.2 Woodville**

94. When the new state highway is operational, the NOR documentation indicates there will be an increase of approximately 2,820 vehicles per day along Woodville's main road (Vogel Street SH2/SH3), as most traffic ceases to use Saddle Road and less traffic bypasses the township via Pinfold Road. I note, however, that Ms Fraser has queried the assumption behind the estimated reduction in use of the bypass ((page 35).
95. The Transport Assessment estimates that the travel times from Woodville to locations to the west of the Ruahine Ranges will halve when the new state highway is operational. For example:
  - a) Woodville to Ashhurst – reduced from 20.2 minutes to 10.3 minutes;
  - b) Woodville to Aokautere - reduced from 28.5 minutes to 14.9 minutes (Appendix 1.C).

#### **5.2.2.1 Impacts on the quality of environment (amenity, wellbeing and safety)**

96. Reducing traffic along roads on the outskirts of Woodville (Woodlands Road, Oxford Street, Pinfold Road) has the potential to return these areas to a similar character prior to Manawatū Gorge Road closing (depending on the extent to which the informal bypass becomes less popular). The Noise and Vibration Assessment concludes that there will be a significant positive effect from a reduction in this traffic, with approximately 25

houses gaining a 10dBA reduction in noise (page 8). I note that Mr Lloyd anticipates that engine braking will potentially disturb residents at two properties (49807 SH3 and 75 Hope Road) (page 19).

97. The predicted increase in traffic along Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) has the potential to reduce its amenity and safety / perceived safety.
98. Residents on Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) and people working or visiting the shops, schools/pre-schools and other facilities may be adversely affected by a noisier environment. The Noise and Vibration Assessment identifies a total of 50 noise-sensitive properties that are anticipated to experience high noise levels (39 of these currently experience high noise) (page 16). The assessment recommends the use of a low-noise road surface on Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) as mitigation. I note Mr Lloyd's conclusion that other than creating a detour around the centre of Woodville, a low-noise road surface is the best practicable method for controlling road noise (page 27).
99. The Transport Assessment indicates that increased traffic on Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) could have an impact on the safety for all road users (page 50). I note Ms Fraser's evidence concludes that additional mitigation is required to address safety concerns for all road users in central Woodville (page 89). This includes a safe design for the Project's eastern roundabout, speed reductions, signalised intersections and pedestrian crossings, medians and consistent footpath provisions.
100. The Social Impact Assessment notes that the former visual connection to Manawatū Gorge from driving on the Manawatū Gorge Road contributed to the character of the area and sense of identity for Woodville residents in particular. There is limited ability to reinstate these views with the new state high way. The assessment proposes mitigation in the form of opportunities for a public viewing point of Manawatū Gorge from the new Manawatū River bridge and public viewing points to areas of the Ruahine Ranges where there has not previously been public access / viewing (page 96).
101. The Social Impact Assessment concludes that the effect on the quality of the environment for Woodville will be moderate positive. I consider a low positive to neutral effect is more appropriate. While there will be a reduction in noise levels experienced by properties that currently have higher traffic volumes on the outskirts of the township, this will be off-set by the greater number of properties along the main road (Vogel Street). Properties along the main road are likely to experience a noisier environment

and reduced safety/perception of safety for pedestrians crossing Vogel Street to access the shops, schools/pre-schools and other services and facilities.

**5.2.2.2 Way of life and community cohesion / connectivity (carrying out daily activities, recreation & leisure opportunities, and connectivity,)**

102. A more direct and faster route across the Ruahine Ranges will have a positive effect on Woodville residents' way of life. Regular activities such as travelling to work, school, or health facilities in Palmerston North will become easier.

103. There is little information available in the NOR documentation on current cycling and pedestrian activities in Woodville and the impact of the project on them. Two submitters raised safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians getting to recreation activities in Manawatū Gorge (such as Ferry Reserve) via the eastern roundabout. I note that Ms Fraser addresses this concern by recommending that the proposed roundabout be designed to include safe provision for cyclists and pedestrians, including movements to and from Manawatū Gorge (page 91).

104. Connectivity within Woodville (across Vogel Street) may be more difficult as a result of additional traffic. I note that Ms Fraser addresses this concern by recommending mitigation that will provide for "*safe and continuous provision for vulnerable road users*", which includes provision for cyclists and pedestrian through the proposed roundabout and additional pedestrian crossing facilities across Vogel Street (pages 91 and 99).

105. I agree with the Social Impact Assessment that, overall, there will be a moderate to high positive impact on the way of life and a low negative effect on connectivity within Woodville (pages 44-45).

**5.2.2.3 Impact on sustaining oneself (opportunities for employment / income)**

106. A more reliable route across the Ruahine Ranges with faster travel times (approximately 11 minutes faster between Woodville and Palmerston North), has the potential to improve access to employment and income for Woodville residents who work on the western side of the Ruahine Ranges and local businesses reliant on the movement of goods and services to the west. This potentially benefits a significant number of residents in Woodville as the dominant travel-to-work pattern across the Ruahine

Ranges is east to west (from Tararua District to Palmerston North)<sup>20</sup>. I agree with the Social Impact Assessment that there will be a moderate positive impact.

### **5.2.3 Regional / wider community**

107. I consider that the operational phase of the Project will have significant positive social effects as a result of re-instating an east-west route that the regional community values.

108. As identified in the Social Impact Assessment, an east-west route across the Ruahine Ranges provides access to places of employment, education and health services, recreation and leisure destinations, food, shopping and other commercial services, and for business operations (page 26). The Transport Assessment illustrates the high demand for this route, estimating that the new state highway will accommodate 9,700 vehicles per day when it opens in 2025, and 14,000 vehicles per day by 2041 (pages 9 & 44). The Transport Assessment concludes that the new state highway will have a significant positive effect on the transport network by creating a more reliable, faster and safer route (page 9). Given this importance to the regional community, I consider that there will be a high positive effect in terms of community cohesion/connectivity, way of life and the ability to support oneself.

109. Notwithstanding this significance, there are two aspects of relevance to the regional community that I believe should be considered further. These have arisen out of a Project design that does not provide a dedicated pathway for cyclists and pedestrians:

- a) Safety for cyclists and pedestrians (impact on the 'quality of the environment'); and
- b) Potential missed opportunities for recreation and recreation-based economic benefits (impact on the 'way of life' and 'sustaining oneself').

110. I address these two matters below.

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<sup>20</sup> Technical Assessment #1 - Transport (Table 1.2, pages 29)

### **5.2.3.1 Impacts on the quality of the environment – safety for cyclists and pedestrians**

111. Safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians was the most common matter raised in submissions (nearly 700 submissions). These concerns arose from the lack of a dedicated cycle and pedestrian pathway along the length of the proposed state highway. Some submitters' concerns applied to the existing roads, including Ashhurst bridge, that will feed into the new state highway. Most submitters requested a separate pathway as mitigation.

112. While the safety of road users is a technical matter most appropriately addressed by transport specialists, it is also relevant to social effects because of the potential effect on peoples' wellbeing. In my view, the potential effects on people's wellbeing as a result of the Project's impact on cycling and walking should be considered in two ways. Firstly, consideration should be given to the potential for people's health to be directly affected if an unsafe environment is created (that is, will people be hurt?). Secondly, consideration should be given to peoples' wellbeing if they are dissuaded from undertaking active recreation because they perceive the environment to be unsafe (that is, will people stop cycling or walking, or decide not to take-up cycling or walking?)

113. The Transport Assessment indicates that the new state highway is not intended as a substitute for the Pahiatua Track, which is a NZ Cycle Trail. The assessment indicates that the proposed design allows sufficient width to accommodate cyclists on the road. The assessment also states that the new state highway will be a significant improvement on the existing situation for cyclists (p 51).

114. However, I note these findings on cyclist safety differ to Ms Fraser's and an independent road safety audit. Ms Fraser does not consider that the proposed new state highway design, or the alternative cycling routes along Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track, will be safe for cyclists as set out in section 5.2 of her evidence. Ms Fraser recommends additional mitigation to address these safety issues as follows:

- a) Either a wider shoulder or a separated two-way shared path alongside the entire route.
- b) Separate pedestrian and cycling provision on Ashhurst bridge before the new state highway opens.

- c) Cycling and pedestrian measures through the proposed roundabouts and along existing roads at the eastern and western ends of the Project that will join the new state highway. That is, along Vogel Street through central Woodville (SH2/SH3), and to/from Ashhurst to Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve.

115. An independent road safety audit was undertaken in 2018, to inform NZTA's detailed business case. The audit identified significant concern for cyclist safety and applied a severity rating of "*death or serious injury is very likely*". The audit recommended a high quality / high-speed off-road path separated from the highway, or shoulders widened in accordance with best practice.<sup>21</sup>

116. Research indicates that perceived traffic danger is an important deterrent to cycling<sup>22</sup>, including Hull and O'Holleran's research which states that the "*perception of conflict can be more important than actual conflict in determining whether people will use a route*". Given the number of submitters who are concerned that the proposed shoulder and alternatives are unsafe, and given Mr Baker's evidence that only highly experienced, fearless cyclists will use the route, there is potential that cyclists will choose not to use the new state highway or the existing routes that will be affected by it. Consequently, this has potential implications for people's wellbeing (physical and mental health) if they stop their active recreation pursuits or the Project dissuades them from taking it up.

117. Based on the expertise of Ms Fraser and Mr Baker, and findings of the safety audit, I consider there is a potential negative social effect on wellbeing in relation to cyclist and pedestrian safety without suitable mitigation (categorised as an impact on 'quality of the environment'). Impacts on 'way of life' and associated wellbeing – recreation / leisure opportunities

118. Recreation and leisure are important contributors to peoples' physical and mental wellbeing. As such, the effects on recreation values are considered a social effect.

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<sup>21</sup> Manawatu Gorge Alternatives Detailed Business Case, Appendix N – Road Safety Audit, WSP-Opus, 17 April 2018 (pages 978-979)

<sup>22</sup> For example, refer to findings and literature review provided in Angela Hull & Craig O'Holleran (2014) *Bicycle infrastructure: can good design encourage cycling?*, Urban, Planning and Transport Research, 2:1, 369-406

119. The NOR documentation provides a limited assessment of the potential effects of the Project on recreation; the documentation largely focuses on managing access to Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve via the Reserve's car park. However, Mr Baker has undertaken a review on behalf of the Territorial Authorities to assist in understanding the effects on recreation values.

*Benefits to recreation values*

120. Mr Baker's evidence identifies the main benefits for recreation as follows:

- a) The new state highway will re-introduce easy and fast vehicle access to existing recreation facilities on both sides of the Ruahine Ranges;
- b) Viewing areas and rest stops will provide passive/leisure opportunities with views of the region, rivers and bush areas; and
- c) The new state highway will provide an opportunity to cycle along the proposed shoulder.

121. The above recreation benefits have the potential to positively affect peoples' way of life and associated wellbeing. However, with the exception of the first bullet point, I consider that the positive effects are likely to be minimal without suitable optimisation.

122. Firstly, there is little detail in the NOR documentation on the proposed provision of viewing areas / rest spots, because NZTA intends to address this during detailed design processes. This makes it difficult to determine whether the Project will actually create opportunities for people to view and enjoy the scenery.

123. Secondly, as I have referred to previously, Ms Fraser's evidence and the road safety audit indicate that the proposed 2 metre shoulder will not provide for safe cycling. I also note that Mr Baker is unconvinced that a shoulder-based cycle route will provide any more than marginal recreation benefit because of the poor-quality experience it will offer. In his view, this will limit its use to few people; only highly experienced, cyclists (page 54).

*Criticisms of provision for recreation*

124. Mr Baker's evidence identifies the main criticisms of the Project's approach in respect of recreation impacts:

- a) Only a small proportion of the cycling population will use Pahiatua Track and Saddle Road because these routes are steep and windy;
- b) The Project does not provide links to existing recreation provision. For example, it does not cater for pedestrians and cyclists across Ashhurst bridge to access Manawatū Gorge, or from Woodville to Ferry Reserve;<sup>23</sup>.
- c) The Project does not recognise proposed recreation provision. For example, it does not provide links to planned extensions to Manawatū Gorge walking and mountain bike tracks (e.g. Te Āpiti Loop Track); and
- d) The Environment and Cultural Design Framework (“ECDF”) establishes a promising set of high-level principles for walking, cycling and access for recreation, but does not provide any certainty of outcome for walking and cycling facilities along the route, including pedestrian access up to the proposed new bridge from the Gorge carpark.

125. I note that the first two of the above points are closely related to the safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians referred to earlier in my evidence. Without the mitigation proposed by Ms Fraser, there are potential adverse effects on existing and future recreation opportunities and associated social effects.

*Increasing the potential for positive social effects*

126. Based on the available information on the implications for recreation values as summarised above, I consider that overall, the Project will result in neutral social effects on ‘way of life’.

127. Without addressing safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians, the Project is likely to have an adverse effect on some existing recreation provision (such as access from Ashhurst and Woodville to Manawatū Gorge) and a minor improvement on other cycling provision (less traffic on the alternative routes and a limited shoulder on the new state

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<sup>23</sup> As noted earlier, NZTA has recently given commitments to addressing cyclist safety on Ashhurst bridge (by constructing a clip-on) and to address cyclist and pedestrian safety for the Lindauer Arts Trail (by changes to the proposed Woodville roundabout and some of SH3) (Walking and Cycling Stakeholder Presentation, February 2019, slide 15). However, at the time of writing my evidence, no formal notification of these changes had been received to confirm that they will form part of the Project.

highway). The Project is unlikely to achieve community aspirations for recreation and active transport, or align with statutory provisions on these matters as set out in statutory and non-statutory documents.<sup>24</sup>

128. In my view, there is an opportunity for the Project to increase the potential for positive social effects. It is appropriate that NZTA pursues opportunities to realise this potential, because recreation is an important component of the communities' values (particularly cycling, walking and access to Manawatū Gorge). This is evidenced by:

- a) The number of submissions received on this matter (nearly 700), most of which were from people living locally or from the wider regional community;
- b) The range of statutory transport and land use documents that establish objectives for active transport and recreation (as described in Ms Fraser's and Mr Baker's evidence);
- c) The preparation of a Te Āpiti Masterplan, which will articulate the vision for the wider Manawatū Gorge area, including a comprehensive network of recreation activities and opportunities to link these to tourism and accommodation ventures;
- d) The vision statement for Ashhurst, which includes aspirations for developing recreation opportunities that are grounded in the local environment, and being connected to the wider region, especially in terms of active and public transport;<sup>25</sup> and
- e) The large numbers of people walking and cycling on existing routes, as described in Mr Baker's evidence (section 3.3).

129. To maximise the potential for positive social effects, I believe it is appropriate that the community has the opportunity to contribute to design processes on recreation matters.

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<sup>24</sup> Ms Fraser's and Mr Baker's evidence assesses the Project against statutory documents, such as the Regional Land Transport Plan and relevant Long Term Plans, and non-statutory documents such as Te Āpiti Masterplan. A Vision for Otangaki / Ashhurst 2040 is also relevant.

<sup>25</sup> A Vision for Otangaki / Ashhurst 2040 (2016 Ashhurst Village Vision Process) and Palmerston North City's Long Term Plan.

This will enable the community to continue to plan for its recreation needs. This should include exploring options for providing safe cycling provision along the proposed state highway, for providing connections to other cycling and walking routes (existing and planned), and for providing rest / viewing areas at appropriate locations. I propose mitigation on this matter in section 7.2 of my evidence.

### 5.3 Summary of social effects

130. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the scale of potential social effects from the construction and operational phases respectively.

**Table 1 – Potential social effects from construction phase**

Construction Phase	Ashhurst	Woodville	Regional Community
<b>Quality of the environment</b> (amenity, wellbeing, safety)	Moderate negative	Very low negative	Neutral / no impact
<b>Way of life</b> (daily activities, recreation/ leisure opportunities)	Low negative	Low negative	Low negative
<b>Community cohesion/connectivity</b>	Low negative	Low-very low negative	Very low negative
<b>Sustaining oneself</b> (employment / income opportunities)	Low positive	Low positive	Low positive

**Table 2 – Potential social effects from operational phase**

Operational Phase	Ashhurst	Woodville	Regional Community
<b>Quality of the environment</b> (amenity, wellbeing, safety)	Moderate-high positive	Low positive to neutral	Positive (influenced/reduced by cyclist and pedestrian safety)

<b>Way of life</b> (daily activities, recreation/ leisure opportunities)	High positive	Moderate-high positive	Positive (influenced/reduced by the impact on recreation values)
<b>Community cohesion/connectivity</b>	Low positive	Low negative	High positive
<b>Sustaining oneself</b> (employment / income opportunities)	Low positive	Moderate positive	High positive

## 6 Consideration of alternative sites, routes or methods

131. A summary of the social impacts identified during NZTA's consideration of options is provided in the NOR documentation<sup>26</sup>. While the information is high-level, it indicates that social impacts were considered for each option, and options that had a high risk of creating negative social impacts were discounted. For example, social effects were identified for the following discounted options:

- a) Do minimum - impact on Ashhurst community from high traffic volumes continuing through the township, inadequate safety;
- b) Northern option 5 (long option) / short list option 1 - impact on Ashhurst residents along the route, effects on landscape amenity;
- c) Southern option 4 (long option) - large number of directly affected landowners; and

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<sup>26</sup> Technical Assessment #3 Social Impact Assessment (pages 20-21) and Volume 2 Assessment of Effects on the Environment and Supporting Material (Part E).

- d) Southern option 5 (long option) / short list option 4 – large number of directly affected landowners, effect on residential amenity from operational noise.

132. Notwithstanding the above, there are some matters that do not appear to have been considered during the options analysis, but would have an influence on social effects. Mitigation will be required to reduce adverse social effects and to pursue positive social effects for these matters:

- a) Safety and amenity from construction traffic - construction considerations focused on costs and time, but not amenity or wellbeing;
- b) Cycling and walking provision - the effect of options on cycling/walking provision, or an option(s) that specifically provided for cycling/walking was not included; and
- c) Woodville bypass – there was no option proposed to address safety and amenity effects within the township.

## **7 Mitigation and environmental offsetting**

133. The greatest potential for adverse social effects arises during construction, and for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians when the state highway is operational. Mitigation recommended in the Social Impact Assessment focuses on addressing construction effects, and supports mitigation specific to noise and traffic as recommended in the respective assessments. I largely agree with this focus and recommend some additions as outlined in section 7.1 below.

134. In section 7.2, I discuss the need for NZTA to commit to engaging with the community on detailed design matters before the design is finalised. This is necessary, in my view, because many aspects of the Project are not confirmed but are important for communities to be able to determine how they are affected and influence the effect on them. I also believe this will be a constructive way to realise positive social effects by improving recreation opportunities.

## **7.1 Mitigating social effects of construction by informing and involving the community**

135. The main adverse social effects anticipated during the construction phase are on peoples' wellbeing and the amenity of their environment as a result of noise from construction vehicles, peoples' accessibility / connectivity within and between communities along the route used by construction vehicles, and on peoples' access to recreation opportunities. Mitigation proposed by NZTA to address these effects are:

- a) Appointing a Community Liaison Person;
- b) Establishing a complaints management register;
- c) Preparing a Communications Plan;
- d) Establishing a Community Liaison Group; and
- e) Preparing a Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve Car Park Management and Reinstatement Plan.<sup>27</sup>

136. The technical assessments on noise and transport propose mitigation to address the effects of noise and road safety on the environment. Evidence from Ms Fraser and Mr Lloyd strengthen this mitigation. Mitigation to address the social aspects of these effects recognises that construction effects can be reduced by the flow of timely and appropriate information to communities. This can address frustration that arises from the uncertainty and unpredictability of a situation (such as when, where and how long construction will occur near someone's house), opportunities to have a say on problems that arise, and opportunities to influence aspects of a project that have not been decided but are important to them.

### **Establishing a Community Liaison Person**

137. The Social Impact Assessment recommends that NZTA appoint a Community Liaison Person. This is included as draft condition 6. I agree with this mitigation.

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<sup>27</sup> As set out in Social Impact Assessment (paragraphs 148-161) and/or in Assessment of Environmental Effects Volume 2 (section 29.6).

138. The Community Liaison Person will be the primary point of contact for the community about construction matters. In my experience of large-scale infrastructure Projects, the creation of this position is effective for addressing and responding to construction-related concerns, and for building a relationship between the community and developer to enable other matters to be constructively discussed (such as changes to design, or detailed design considerations).

#### **Establishing a construction complaints register**

139. A requirement to establish a construction complaints register is included as draft condition 9. I agree with this as a means of providing rigour in receiving, recording and addressing community concerns about the construction phase. The use of a complaints register also provides transparency that concerns are being considered and actioned, particularly if it is reported back to the community on a regular basis.

140. The Project team can use a complaints register to determine any trends and adapt construction and communication activities to reduce those issues arising again. It can also form useful information for monitoring the social effects of construction.

#### **Developing a Communications Plan**

141. The Social Impact Assessment recommends that a Communications Plan be developed prior to construction. This is included as draft condition 5 (matters to be included in an outline plan) and draft condition 7 (communications plans). The purpose of the Communications Plan is to set out procedures for communicating with the community throughout the pre-construction and construction phases.

142. The Social Impact Assessment specifies what the Communications Plan should include, such as a list of stakeholders to be involved, what types of information should be communicated, and how the information will be communicated. Draft condition 7 is an abridged version of the detail in the assessment.

143. I agree with the need for a Communications Plan to be developed and implemented. It covers matters relevant to managing potential adverse social effects from construction, such as construction hours and construction activities that may affect businesses, residential properties and access to existing recreation facilities. However, I recommend that it also includes the following:

- a) Construction routes – construction traffic is the main cause of adverse effects. Therefore, the community must be informed about the routes, the number of vehicles (particularly the number of heavy vehicles), and the times of the day the vehicles will utilise these routes, to determine when and where they may experience disruption or changes to their environment from construction.
- b) A more detailed list of potential stakeholders is required to provide a comprehensive starting point when drafting the Communications Plan. For example, I note that cycling, pedestrian and wider recreation groups are consistently missed as stakeholders. Iwi and schools/pre-schools are not always referred to.
- c) Detailed design matters - much of the detailed design will be of interest to the community because of the effect on individuals' properties and community values and processes. For example, the design matters listed in draft condition 8 b) i. (such as landscaping, rest areas and viewing points) should be included in draft condition 7 c) iii.
- d) An update on construction progress in relation to expected milestones and the completion date.

144. Notwithstanding the above changes to the Communications Plan, I believe there should be a requirement for NZTA to specify the engagement activities that will be undertaken to finalise the design of the new state highway. That is, the opportunities for the community to be involved in the design of aspects of the Project that have not been determined, but will affect the community. This is broader than the Communications Plan which focuses on informing the community about construction-related matters. I discuss this in section 7.2 of my evidence.

#### **Establishing a Community Liaison Group**

145. The Social Impact Assessment recommends that a Community Liaison Group is established prior to construction. This is included as draft condition 8. The purpose of the Community Liaison Group is to report and respond to construction concerns, share information on detailed design and construction progress and planning, and monitor effects on the community from construction activities.

146. I agree with the intent of this mitigation. Establishing a Community Liaison Group is good practice for large scale infrastructure Projects. However, I consider changes are required to address the following matters:

- a) It is unclear whether the Community Liaison Group has a role in providing input on detailed design matters (and hence an ability to influence them). One of the purposes of the Community Liaison Group is to “share information” on detailed design matters such as landscaping, rest areas and viewing points, integration with walkways to areas such as Manawatū Gorge and provision of pedestrian access across the new Manawatū Bridge. These are matters appropriate for a Community Liaison Group to consider and provide feedback on. However, it is unclear whether that is the intent of the words “to share information on” and how the groups’ feedback would be incorporated in design decisions. I recommend that the draft conditions on the Communication Plan and Community Liaison Group clarify this matter.
- b) The proposed membership of the Community Liaison Group is specified in the Social Impact Assessment (paragraph 155) and draft condition 8 d). This list should be broadened to provide the opportunity for all relevant groups to contribute to mitigating adverse social effects. For example, I note the membership listed in draft condition 8 c) is an abridged version of the detail in the Social Impact Assessment; it does not include tangata whenua / iwi representatives or the same schools. I also note that neither document provides a comprehensive list. For example, neither document includes groups representing cyclist, pedestrian or wider recreation interests. Representatives from these groups will be necessary to input into effects on pedestrian/cyclists and on access to recreation facilities and recreation opportunities.
- c) Draft condition 8 a) requires a Community Liaison Group to be established “at least 30 working days prior to the commencement of construction”. I recommend this is amended to ensure the group is established with sufficient time to contribute to relevant detailed design matters. That is, the group is established sufficiently early in the pre-construction stage.

- d) Draft condition 8 b) requires the Community Liaison Group to “monitor any effects on the community arising from construction activities”. In my view, it is NZTA’s responsibility to monitor effects from construction, not a community group. I recommend the conditions are amended to require NZTA to provide the Community Liaison Group with the services of a social impact assessor to undertake this monitoring and report back to them. This is common practice.
- e) Draft condition 8 c) requires the Community Liaison Group to hold meetings until six months after the construction is completed. I recommend this is extended to 12 months after construction is completed to ensure that the results of the post-construction noise review can be fed back to the group (as recommended in Mr Lloyd’s evidence).
- f) I understand that the ECDF will be subject to a design review process. Consideration should be given to involving the Community Liaison Group in this process.

## **7.2 Mitigating social effects by involving the community in detailed design**

147. There are some aspects of the Project that are not sufficiently detailed for the community to determine the implications. This is a result of NZTA’s approach to finalising the design using the outline plan process and management plans, and unanticipated matters raised by submitters. Examples include:

- a) Safe cycling provision along the route of the new state highway, including the new bridge over Manawatū River;
- b) Safe cycling and walking provision along existing roads that will be affected by the new state highway, including Ashhurst bridge;
- c) Rest areas and viewing areas;
- d) Landscaping to address effects on landscape values and visual amenity;
- e) Integration with wider recreation / leisure facilities or planned facilities;

- f) Construction details, particularly night-time works and associated traffic; and
- g) Relevant management plans, including the Construction Traffic Management Plan and Noise and Vibration Management Plan.

148. Technical mitigation to address cyclist and pedestrian safety concerns, visual connections to the landscape, and recreation opportunities are recommended in the evidence of Ms Fraser, Mr Hudson and Mr Baker. From a social impact perspective, I consider that the community should have an opportunity to be involved in these detailed design matters. This is particularly important given that many details of relevance for communities to understand and influence effects on them, are not available at the notice of requirement stage, and may not be available for public input in the future.

149. Therefore, I recommend that an Engagement Plan is required. It should specify the design matters the community will have input into, which Outline Plans these relate to, what groups / parts of the community will be given this opportunity, the scope of this input, and the timeframes for this input. The Engagement Plan could be separate from the Communications Plan or combined with it.

150. I note that draft condition PN2.b) specifies the involvement of community representatives in developing the Manawatū Gorge Carpark Reinstatement Plan. For continuity, this plan should also be referred to in the Engagement Plan.

## **8 Review of submissions**

151. Most submissions received on the Project raised matters relevant to social effects. Submitters were concerned about the effects on peoples' wellbeing, recreation opportunities, amenity and property values, and about community engagement. I have reviewed the submissions and address each of the matters below.

### **8.1 Peoples' wellbeing**

152. The most common matter raised in submissions was the effect of the Project on peoples' wellbeing. These relate to the safety of road users, wellbeing derived from cycling and walking, and changes to amenity.

153. Approximately 700 submissions expressed concern for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians using the new state highway, crossing it, or the access to / from their properties to it. Most of these submissions were concerned about safety along the whole route, and requested a separated biking and walking path. Some of these also noted safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians using the existing Ashhurst bridge, which will be exacerbated when the new state highway is operational, and requested that the Project include separate cycle/pedestrian facilities across the bridge<sup>28</sup>. Two submitters noted safety concerns getting to / from Ferry Reserve at the eastern end of Manawatū Gorge, including for people following the Lindauer Arts Trail. They requested a separate track for these users, including safe connection at the eastern roundabout<sup>29</sup>.

154. Other safety concerns related to the operation of the new state highway were raised. *G Y & J Tan (107)* are concerned at safe access into / out of properties along Napier Road (SH3) and children crossing the road to get to school buses. *K Connell (169)* is concerned at safe access along Mulgrave Street and Hillary Crescent, which will be used by people travelling from Bunnythorpe to the new state highway. *K Connell (169)* requests an Ashhurst bypass between Ashhurst Road and Napier Road, or the closure of Hillary Crescent Road. *W Bly (245)* and *Manawatū Chamber of Commerce (375)* are concerned about road safety where traffic enters Woodville (Oxford Road / Woodlands Road) and along Vogel Street. *W Bly (245)* requests a decrease in vehicle speed to 80 km per hour to address road safety. *Manawatū Chamber of Commerce (375)* requests the opportunity for NZTA to consider a ring-road in collaboration with Woodville's businesses and residents, to determine a solution that will not compromise existing businesses.

155. Ms Fraser has considered submitters' concerns about safety in her evidence (page 80 - 81) and recommends that the Project design be amended to address the following matters:

- a) The width of the shoulder proposed for cyclists' along the new state highway is not safe. Ms Fraser recommends a separated two-way shared path alongside the route;

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<sup>28</sup> *Build the Path (316), Manawatū River Source to Sea (360), A C Watt (315), H Jones (294), R J Keedwell (244), Shannon & Co Ltd (246), Horizons Regional Council (292/371)*

<sup>29</sup> *Woodville Domain Board (738), R Winter (441)*

- b) Cycling and pedestrian safety may be compromised across Ashhurst bridge, through the proposed roundabouts and along roads feeding into the route;
- c) The lack of consideration for a Woodville bypass is a shortcoming of the NOR. As a consequence, additional mitigation is required to address safety through central Woodville.

156. Submissions were received on wellbeing more generally. *H Jones (294)* noted that the wellbeing of residents in Ashhurst will improve with the detour through Ashhurst ceasing, because it has been “*a major impediment to decent and sound sleeping patterns*”. In contrast, *C Cudby (239)*, *B C M Cooke (105)* and *N M Shoebridge (103)* submit that increased noise and dust/fumes in Woodville will have implications on residents’ health and wellbeing.

157. In section 5.2.2 of my evidence, I have identified the potential for adverse effects for some residents in Woodville as a result of increased traffic noise through Woodville. I note Mr Lloyd’s evidence which indicates that health impacts from noise are factored into the noise assessment standard that was applied (page 27).

158. Fourteen submissions refer to health benefits that will not be realised without a design that caters for cyclists and pedestrians<sup>30</sup>.

159. I agree with submitters that without a design that is safe and convenient for cyclists and pedestrians, there will be a missed opportunity to realise health benefits associated with outdoor recreation.

## 8.2 Cycling, walking and bridleways

160. Approximately 700 submissions request a separate cycleway / walkway as part of the Project, to support recreation activities<sup>31</sup>. Approximately 65 of these requested that the

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<sup>30</sup> *Sport Manawatū (300)*, *B Barrett (317)*, *G Hutching (368)*, *C M Cudby (239)*, *Build the Path (316)*, *M McKenzie (247)*, *R Boyle (87)*, *A Beban (662)*, *E Frauenfelder (209)*, *K Walker (55)*, *F O’Connor (193)*, *F Gordon (556)*, *G Dawson (569)*, *R Baan-Mathias (643)*

<sup>31</sup> *Build The Path* - based submissions, plus *Manawatū Gorge Governance Group (374)*, *R J Keedwell (244)*, *P Stevens (609)*, *R Winter (441)*, *Woodville Domain Board (738)*, *Palmerston North City Council (237)*, *Shannon & Co Ltd (246)*, *Sport Manawatū (300)*, *B Brrett (317)*, *H Jones (294)*, *M McKenzie (247)*, *Horizons Regional Council (292/371)*, *M Fosberrey Stillwell (299)*, *B Hutton (297)*, *Build the Path (316)*, *Manawatū Mountain Bike Club (373)*, *NZ Chamber of Commerce (375)*, *Manawatū Gorge*

separate pathway also cater for horses. Most of these submissions were of the view that providing recreation opportunities would have consequential economic benefits by attracting more visitors to the area.

161. Submitters are concerned that cycling and walking will not be encouraged if the design does not include separate provision for cyclists and pedestrians. *R J Keedwell (244), P Stevens (609) and M McKenzie (247)* note that the alternative routes (Pahiatua Track and Saddle Road) are not safe or realistic recreation and tourism routes for cyclists and pedestrians.

162. Submitters are also concerned at the lost opportunity to connect to, and build on, other recreation activities in the Manawatū Gorge area. For example:

*“The lack of such facilities could detrimentally impact on the ability of the recreational development of the Te Apiti Manawatū Gorge Project area from what it is now and could possibly be in the future. Note the lack of walking/cycling facilities (including on the existing bridge) and increasing traffic volumes could negatively impact on access to the Te Apiti Manawatū Gorge area as a result of a design that does not specifically cater for cyclists and pedestrians.”* - Manawatū Gorge Governance Group (374).

*“Te Apiti has the perfect environment for an iconic [mountain biking] trail of national significance. This trail could become a link in the national cycleway, linking to the Wairarapa, where there are trails connecting to Wellington. Currently there is no connection between Wanganui and Wellington”.* - Manawatū Mountain Bike Club (373).

*“Provision of this shared path will link into the safe separated shared path network extending from Ashhurst to Longburn, and which is the subject [of] an active campaign on the western side to extend the trail to the Tasman Sea. Thus, a path Ashhurst Woodville would enable a significant active transport and recreation asset of approximately 65 kilometres in length, and the only shared path in the Southern Hemisphere to traverse a dividing range, doing so near a river that also uniquely traverses the dividing range.”* - Build the Path (316).

*“It is imperative that Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū-Tararua Highway takes this shared walkway [Lindauer Arts Trail from Woodville to the Ferry Reserve] into account, as the*

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Governance Group (374), J Altenburg (3), W M Bly (241), Wellington Conservation Board (204), J G Jefferies (245)

*construction of the new road will impact on the original walkway route. The proposed walkway will improve resident's way of life by providing them with increased recreational opportunities. As well, increased economic activity for Woodville will be generated through better connectivity and visitor activities. The walkway will create access to the town's historic cemetery, a major recreational spot (Ferry Reserve), and connect to the departure point of the existing walking track across the Tararua Ranges." - R Winter (441).*

163. I agree with submitters' views that the Project will not encourage cycling and walking along the new state highway, and may reduce these pursuits along existing routes that will be affected by the new state highway.

164. While the new state highway will provide a shoulder for cyclists, I note Ms Fraser's and Mr Baker's evidence that the limited width of the shoulder and steep topography of the route will not create a safe or pleasant cycling or walking environment. I also note that they do not consider Saddle Road or Pahiatua Track to be safe cycling environments either.

165. As referred to earlier in my evidence, research also suggests that the perception of safety is one of the strongest influences on whether people will cycle or walk (section 5.2.3.1). The number of submissions received on cyclist and pedestrian safety, most of which were made by residents in the local and regional community and relevant user-groups, suggest that perceptions of safety is a common concern and may limit the extent to which cycling and walking will occur as a result of the Project.

166. Based on Mr Baker's evidence, I also agree with the view that the Project could be considered a lost opportunity to effectively connect to other recreation activities.

167. The following mitigation should be considered to address submitters' concerns:

- a) Provide the community with an opportunity to contribute to design processes on recreation matters, including options for providing safe cycling along the new state highway, connections to other cycling and walking routes (existing and planned), and rest / viewing spots along the route (as recommended in section 7.2 of my evidence);
- b) Provide either a wider shoulder or a separated two-way shared path alongside the whole route (as recommended by Ms Fraser);

- c) Provide for cyclist and pedestrian safety at the Ashhurst end of the Project, including along Napier Road (SH3) and Cambridge Avenue, across Ashhurst bridge and through the proposed roundabout (as recommended by Ms Fraser); and
- d) Provide for cyclist and pedestrian safety at the Woodville end of the Project, including along Vogel Street (SH3) and through the eastern roundabout) (as recommended by Ms Fraser).

168. *Manawatū Gorge Governance Group (374)* requested the continued provision of access to the Te Apiti Manawatū Gorge facilities, such as tracks, during construction to ensure visitor experience will not be affected. As noted earlier in my evidence, NZTA is intending to limit any closures and manage disruption via a management plan.

### **8.3 Amenity**

169. Submissions raised concern about amenity effects as a result of noise, dust, light and visual changes during construction and operation.

#### **Noise**

170. Three submitters are concerned at the noise Woodville will experience during construction. *N Shoebridge (103)* and *B Cooke (105)* have a property close to the eastern roundabout and heavy machinery compound which they believe will experience unacceptable noise.<sup>32</sup> *N Shoebridge (103)* requests that the property be purchased at a fair value or the roundabout moved. The *Manawatū Chamber of Commerce (375)* is concerned at noise from construction vehicles along Vogel Street and in the vicinity of Woodville School, and requests that a ring-road be considered in collaboration with Woodville's businesses and residents.

171. Nine submissions were received about the effects from noise when the state highway is operational. *H Jones (294)* supports the Project because Ashhurst's quiet residential streets will return to normal. In contrast, *N R and T Wendland (366)* are concerned at the noise on their Ashhurst property which is close to the western roundabout, near the

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<sup>32</sup> 49846 Napier Road, Woodville

Fitzherbert East Road (SH57) and SH3 intersection. They request that the roundabout be moved and noise mitigation measures be implemented.

172. The other seven submissions apply to Woodville. *N Shoebridge (103)*, *B C M Cooke (105)*, *J & W Napier (296)*, *M Ramage (170)* and *C Cudby (239)* are concerned at the noise their properties will experience due to the proximity to the proposed route. Submitters requests included that their properties be purchased, financial compensation provided, and noise mitigation. *J S McHugh (238)* and *Manawatū Chamber of Commerce (375)* are concerned at the effects Woodville's main street (Vogel Street). *J S McHugh (238)* states that residents of Vogel Street have a right to propose a ring-road to detour heavy vehicles away from residential properties. *Manawatū Chamber of Commerce (375)* requests that a ring road be considered in collaboration with Woodville's businesses and residents, to mitigate the social impacts of noise from 12,000 vehicles per day travelling through Woodville High Street and past the primary school.

173. In sections 5.1 and 5.2 of my evidence, I have identified the potential for adverse effects on some residents' amenity as a result of construction-related noise, and in section 7 I discuss mitigation. I also note that Mr Lloyd has addressed these submitters' noise concerns and has recommended mitigation specific to some submitters.

#### **Dust**

174. *N Shoebridge (103)* and *B C M Cooke (105)* are concerned at the potential for dust to be generated in Woodville during the construction of the new state highway, which will adversely affect their amenity and wellbeing. Their property is close to the eastern roundabout and the heavy machinery compound. *N Shoebridge (103)* requests that the property be purchased at fair value or the roundabout moved.

175. I have not specifically considered the effects of dust on peoples' amenity. However, I note that section 10.5 of the AEE outlines the measures that will be undertaken to manage construction-related dust. Dust nuisance is also a matter that I envisage would be identified and managed through the complaints management register proposed by NZTA as draft condition 9.

## Character

176. Four submissions indicated concern that the new state highway will reduce the character, including visual amenity, of the area for residents, cyclists and pedestrians. *N Shoebridge (103)*, *M Ramage (170)* and *G Y Tan & J Tan (107)* believe it will reduce the peaceful, rural scenery they enjoy. *N Shoebridge (103)* requests that the property be purchased and *M Ramage (170)* requests a discussion with NZTA on mitigation. The Wellington Conservation Board (204) requests extensive native planting to address amenity concerns for residents and visitors.

177. The character of the area in the vicinity of the new state highway will change for residents who will view it or hear traffic on it. The noise and visual evidence of Mr Lloyd and Mr Hudson, respectively, indicate that this will be limited to a few properties. I note that these experts have both recommended mitigation to address specific submitters' concerns on character.

## Light

178. *N Shoebridge (103)* and *B C M Cooke (105)* are concerned at the potential for light to affect their amenity and wellbeing from traffic travelling down the realigned Troup Road in the vicinity of the eastern roundabout. *N Shoebridge (103)* requests that the property be purchased at fair value or the roundabout moved.

179. There does not appear to be technical information available in the NOR documentation on the effect of new road lighting for adjacent properties. Therefore, I am not in a position to determine the extent to which peoples' amenity may be affected by lighting. This matter should be addressed by NZTA.

## 8.4 Property values

180. Six submitters from Woodville are concerned their property values will be reduced as a result of the Project.<sup>33</sup> They believe this will occur because of a reduction in amenity

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<sup>33</sup> J & W Napier (296), B C M Cooke (105), C M Cudby (239), J G Bolton (739), N M Shoebridge (103), Anonymous (740)

and/or part of their property being acquired for the new state highway. Some submitters requested noise insulation or the purchase of their property at a fair value.

181. If property values are affected by reduced amenity, this may have a negative social effect if it impacts on peoples' standard of living. I understand from the NOR documentation that NZTA are negotiating about property purchase with property owners who are directly affected. I also note that Mr Lloyd recommends NZTA undertake further mitigation to address the noise concerns of some submitters, such as *J & W Napier (296)*, *B C M Cooke (105)* and *N M Shoebridge (103)*.

## **8.5 Community engagement**

182. Two submitters from Woodville were concerned at the lack of community engagement prior to notifying the application. *J S McHugh (238)* stated that Vogel Street residents have not been allowed input into a proposal that will result in about 7,000 vehicles per day passing their properties. An anonymous submitter (740) stated that he/she has recently bought an affected property and there was no information about the proposal.

183. This matter is best addressed by NZTA. I note that the AEE summarises consultation activities undertaken prior to lodging the application, which indicates there was an opportunity for Woodville residents to provide feedback on the options during public events in 2017. It also indicates that NZTA has had regular communication with landowners (section 19 and 20).

184. A submission from *Manawatū River Source to Sea (360)* is concerned at the level of detail that has been made available on biodiversity during the current phase of the Project. The submitter considers it a weakness of the process, noting that "*there is no way a party can evaluate the feasibility of the Project in meeting statutory provisions*". The submitter requests additional consultation phase(s) when more details can be provided, to make consultation more authentic and meaningful.

185. I agree with the submitter's concern that it is difficult to determine how something or someone may be affected when detailed design and associated mitigation, is not available at the time an application is publicly notified. As described earlier in my evidence, I have recommended the development of an Engagement Plan, on relevant detailed design matters, to provide the community with an opportunity to participate in design considerations before these details are confirmed (section 7.2)

## 9 Draft Requirement conditions

186. Based on my conclusions to mitigate or increase potential social effects, I recommend that the draft conditions be amended as set out below.

### Draft Condition 7 - Communications Plan

187. Amend clause c)ii to provide a more comprehensive list of potential stakeholders as discussed in paragraph 143 my evidence.

188. Amend clause c)iii as follows

Methods of consultation and matters to be discussed, including:

A. proposed hours of construction activities where these are outside of normal working hours or on weekends or public holidays

Aa proposed routes for construction vehicles, including the total number of vehicles, proportion of heavy vehicles, and the times of day these routes will be used

...

F. detailed designs on matters such as landscaping, rest areas, viewing points, and public access / walkway opportunities across the new Manawatū River bridge and to recreation areas.

G. progress of the construction works in comparison to key Project milestones and the completion date.

F. feedback on the ECDF design review process.

189. Amend clause c)iv as follows:

Details of communication activities proposed including:

...

D. notification and consultation with business owners and operators and individual property owners and occupiers with premises/dwellings within 100

metres of active construction, and for all businesses and pre-schools and schools in Woodville and Ashhurst, and groups representing cycling and walking interests in the vicinity of Woodville, Ashhurst and Manawatū Gorge.

### Draft Condition 8 – Community Liaison Group

190. Amend draft condition 8 as follows:

a) The Requiring Authority must establish a Community Liaison Group in sufficient time during the pre-construction stage to contribute to engagement on detailed design. at least 30 working days prior to the commencement of construction.

b) The purpose of the Community Liaison Group is to:

i. share information and provide input on:

A ...

F results of the monitoring undertaken to identify any effects on the community arising from construction activities

~~iii monitor any effects on the community arising from construction activities~~

c) The Community Liaison Group must hold meetings at least once every three months throughout the construction period and until 12 months ~~6 months~~ after following completion of construction so that on-going monitoring information can be shared, discussed and responded to.

d) In addition to the Project Liaison Persona and representative of the Requiring Authority and the construction contractor, the Requiring Authority will invite representatives of the following entities (at least) to be members of the Community Liaison Group:

i. Ashhurst community ...

ii. local schools, including Ashhurst School, Learning Adventures, Woodville School, Te Kohanga Reo Atawhai

iii. respective Councils, and including Horizons; ~~and~~

iv. the Department of Conservation

v. tangata whenua

vi. groups representing cycling, walking and wider recreation interests.

g) The Requiring Authority will ensure that the Community Liaison Group is resourced with at least one person appropriately qualified in social assessment and community development.

### **New Draft Condition - Engagement Plan**

191. Insert a new condition that requires the development and implementation of an Engagement Plan as described in section 7.2 of my evidence. In summary, an Engagement Plan must specify:

- a) The design matters the community will have an input into (refer to paragraph 147 of my evidence for a starting point);
- b) Which Outline Plan each design process relates to;
- c) Which groups / parts of the community will have an input to each design process;
- d) The scope of the input for each design process; and
- e) The timeframes for input to each design process.

### **Landscape, Visual Amenity and Natural Character Draft Conditions**

192. Amend conditions 11d) and 12d) as follows:

take into account the outcomes of consultation with tangata whenua, the Department of Conservation, the Councils, Horizons, the QEII National Trust, the Te Āpiti Governance Group, the Community Liaison Group and Meridian;

## 10 Conclusions

193. The lengthy construction phase will create the potential for local and regional communities to benefit from employment opportunities (categorised as 'sustaining oneself'). The remaining construction-related social effects are anticipated to range from moderate negative to neutral.

194. Ashhurst will be the most affected community during construction, as a result of construction vehicles accessing the Project through the township (Salisbury Road, Mulgrave Road, Cambridge Avenue, Napier Road SH3). This is likely to be experienced as:

- a) Reduced amenity and a resultant change in character, such as a noisier, busier environment;
- b) Reduced wellbeing if construction traffic dissuades outdoor recreation / leisure activities such as walking and cycling, or if construction-related noise disrupts sleep or creates anxiety; and
- c) Reduced safety and connectivity if construction traffic creates a less safe road environment, or a road environment that feels less safe.

195. Woodville is not anticipated to be affected by construction to the same extent as Ashhurst. Construction vehicles may reduce safety / perception of safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the main road (Vogel Street SH2/SH3) and for children attending the school and pre-school along that road.

196. The social effects anticipated when the new state highway is operational are almost entirely positive:

- a) A reliable, fast and safer route across the Ruahine Ranges will have a positive effect on the regional community's way of life, ability to support oneself and community cohesion / connectivity;
- b) The quality of Ashhurst's environment and associated amenity, wellbeing, safety and way of life of the community, will significantly improve as a result of removing much of the through-traffic. This will be reduced by a few

properties along Napier Road (SH3) that will experience significantly more traffic; and

- c) The way of life for the Woodville community will significantly improve with the reinstatement of an efficient east-west route. In addition, residents on the outskirts of Woodville will experience improved amenity, wellbeing and safety as a result of reduced traffic (Oxford Street, Pinfold Road, Woodlands Road). In contrast, residents along Vogel Street (SH2/SH3) will experience a noisier environment and a potentially less safe road environment.

197. While the overall social effects anticipated when the new state highway is operational, are positive, these are somewhat reduced by two aspects:

- a) The creation / exacerbation of an unsafe cycling and pedestrian environment - without the mitigation recommended in Ms Fraser's evidence, the potential risks to cyclists' and pedestrians' wellbeing is a negative social effect; and
- b) The impact of the Project on recreation values – implications of the Project for recreation values will result in neutral social effects. However, there is an opportunity for the Project to create positive social effects by enabling cycling, walking and other leisure activities (such as viewing / rest areas). It is appropriate that NZTA pursues this opportunity because recreation is an important component of the communities' values.

198. I agree with the focus of the mitigation proposed in the Social Impact Assessment, which addresses construction-related effects. In addition to construction-related mitigation, I consider it appropriate for NZTA to commit to engaging with the community on detailed design matters. This is appropriate because many aspects of the Project are not confirmed, but are important for communities to determine how they are affected and to influence effects on them. I also believe this will be a constructive way to realise positive social effects by improving recreation opportunities.

199. I recommend the following amendments to the draft conditions to strengthen the mitigation:

- a) Clarify that the Community Liaison Group will have an opportunity to contribute to detailed design discussions (not just share information about design decisions);

- b) Establish the Community Liaison Group with sufficient time to contribute to engagement activities on detailed design matters;
- c) Extend the lifetime of the Community Liaison Group to 12 months after construction is completed, to align it with results from the final noise review;
- d) Require NZTA to resource the Community Liaison Group with a social impact assessor, to monitor and report back on any construction-related effects. It is not the role of a community group to monitor the effects of a developers' construction activities; and
- e) Specify all relevant groups / parts of the community who must be consulted with, have an opportunity to be included in the Community Liaison Group, and have an opportunity to participate in engagement activities.
- f) Increase the scope of the Communications Plan to include construction vehicle route information (routes, times, vehicle numbers, proportion of heavy vehicles), construction progress, and detailed design matters; and
- g) Require the development of an Engagement Plan, either combined with or in addition to the Communications Plan. It should specify the design matters the community will have input into, which Outline Plans these relate to, what groups / parts of the community will be given this opportunity, the scope of this input, and the timeframes for this input.



Kirsty Austin

1 March 2019