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**FAST Submission on**  
**New Zealand Transport Agency SH1 Puhoi to Wellsford**

**1 Overview and key points**

This submission on the New Zealand Transport Agency's initial proposals concerning the SH1 Puhoi to Wellsford, a "road of national significance", is on behalf of the Forum for Auckland Sustainable Transport (FAST) formed in 2006.

**FAST supports:**

- A ensuring that SH1 between Puhoi and Wellsford is safe and reliable**
- B ensuring cost effective improvements to safety and reliability of SH1 between Puhoi and Wellsford**
- C investigation into the best interregional transport connections between Auckland and Northland in the long term with at least a 50 year time horizon.** This should take into account:
  - i the volatile nature of international oil prices and security of supply issues
  - ii support economic productivity and social cohesion, given i, iii, iv, v & vi
  - iii reduce rather than increases Auckland's & Northland's dependence on fossil fuels
  - iv support resilience, reliability and safety in the face of possibly continuing economic uncertainties
  - v consider the roles of state highway (SH) roading, rail, transport by sea and air, and the mix of private and public transport
  - vi avoids accelerating growth in outer areas reliant on lengthy commuter travel, and supports growth in areas well served by public transport
- D a strategic economic analysis comparing the economic benefits and costs of this proposed project with other projects in Auckland and Northland, and other interregional transport connection options**

**As regards the specific principles in the consultation brochure, FAST:**

- E opposes principle 1 which promotes a new highway "offline" from the existing SH1, and completely separate to it, unless the investigations and economic analysis in C and D demonstrate strong justification for it**
- F supports principles 2's access points at Warkworth and Wellsford, as other access points would be likely to accelerate inappropriate growth in other areas**
- G considers the proposed bypasses to the west of Warkworth and to the east of Wellsford in principle 3 should be located so as to best support the planned growth of Warkworth and Wellsford, and to reduce the likelihood of spillover growth into other areas.**

## **2 About FAST**

The Forum for Auckland Sustainable Transport or FAST is a forum of Auckland community groups committed to working together, and with local and central government and business, to achieve sustainable transport.

FAST acknowledges the importance of secure, resilient and safe inter-regional connections, including road, rail, sea and air transport between Auckland and other regions, including Northland. FAST also supports strong interregional links and a strong national transport system that focuses on long term sustainability outcomes, and supports economic, community and environmental resilience.

FAST seeks greater public, government, and business commitment to improve Auckland's transport system, to make it more supportive of economic productivity and community needs, as well as more sustainable through greater use of improved, enhanced public and active transport, increased use of travel demand management, and improved urban form and design to reduce people's transport needs.

## **3 Cost effective improvements to safety and reliability of SH1**

FAST strongly supports cost effective improvements to the safety and reliability of SH1 between Puhoi and Wellsford. FAST is aware that that this stretch of SH1 is well used, with significant volumes of freight, and that safety and reliability could be improved. FAST supports the current road works in Warkworth to ease congestion as long as these support sound urban design outcomes, including making provision for safe and attractive walking and cycling. **FAST supports:**

**A ensuring that SH1 between Puhoi and Wellsford is safe and reliable**

**B ensuring cost effective improvements to safety and reliability of SH1 between Puhoi and Wellsford**

## **4 Interregional transport connections between Auckland and Northland**

FAST supports a safe, strong, and resilient transport system that supports economic and social development efficiently and at least cost. There has been very substantial development of the SH roading network between Auckland and Northland over the last 50 years. The air transport system has also increased, but rail and coastal shipping have been left to languish.

FAST supports a comprehensive investigation into the most appropriate inter-regional transport connections between Auckland and Northland in the long term with at least a 50 year time horizon, taking into account a number of factors.

Between May 2007 and May 2008 the world price of oil doubled. It kept climbing until after mid 2008 when the stresses created by those high prices, and by liberal banking and lending regimes, led to negative global economic conditions.

Many countries and regions overseas, for example, in Europe responded to the 1970s and more recent oil price shocks, to refocus their transport systems on modes that are less reliant on oil. This is leading to greater development of a range of rail systems, including rapid rail between cities, and heavy and light rail within cities and regions. It also helps avoid road developments resulting in far flung growth that is

difficult to efficiently service, and requires long commutes. It also helps avoid creating further “induced traffic” that places further stress on the roading systems. Roothing and private cars still have a role to play, but these other transport modes help ensure there is transport choice, and the economy and society keep moving.

Fast strongly supports:

- C investigation into the best interregional transport connections between Auckland and Northland in the long term with at least a 50 year time horizon.** This should take into account:
- i the volatile nature of international oil prices and security of supply issues
  - ii support economic productivity and social cohesion, given i, iii, iv, v & vi
  - iii reduce rather than increases Auckland’s & Northland’s dependence on fossil fuels
  - iv support resilience, reliability and safety in the face of possibly continuing economic uncertainties
  - v consider the roles of roading, rail, transport by sea and air, and the mix of private and public transport
  - vi avoids accelerating growth in outer areas reliant on lengthy commuter travel, and supports growth in areas well served by public transport

## **5 Strategic Economic Analysis Across Modes**

It is important that all major components of the national, interregional, regional and local transport networks are consistently and rigorously analysed and compared so that the projects that deliver over the long term the most economic and social benefits at the least cost are supported.

FAST is aware that what has been dubbed the “holiday highway” proposal between Puhoi and Wellsford is likely to have very high opportunity costs for the Auckland and Northland regions. This is because transport budgets nationally and regionally are stretched. If “optional” possibly “nice to do sometime in the future” projects receive top priority, other projects with more significant economic benefits are likely to find funding difficult.

The CBD rail tunnel loop between Britomart and Mt Eden is likely to deliver more economic benefits to the Auckland and New Zealand economies than duplicating the SH between Puhoi to Wellsford, for example. This is because the CBD tunnel unlocks capacity potential through ensuring Britomart is a through station and not a dead end. In addition, extra stations within the CBD will result in increased economic agglomeration benefits – a key advantage of well performing cities overseas.

It is also important that the costs associated with the proposed separate new highway in terms of further induced travel, and the impacts of that travel on the life of the current Auckland Harbour Bridge, be included in the assessment. Other costs include opportunity costs such as the lack of investment in rail and coastal shipping between these two and other regions.

FAST therefore strongly supports:

- D a strategic economic analysis comparing the economic benefits and costs of this proposed project with other projects in Auckland and Northland, and other interregional transport connection options**

## 6 Puhoi to Wellsford: Consultation Principles

There are three specific principles in the consultation brochure.

Principle 1 promotes a new highway “offline” from the existing SH1, and completely separate to it. However upgrades of the existing SH1 could achieve worthwhile improvements in safety and reliability at much lower cost, and should be considered. Developing a whole new option without regard to cost effectiveness is risky. It could mean a project that is simply too expensive to proceed, or tie up funding that would be better spent on other projects. This is why FAST supports A and B above.

Principle 2 is for only two access points at Warkworth and Wellsford. This means that other areas, such as Waiwera, Puhoi, Mahurangi West, Moirs Hill, Cowan and Wayby would continue to use the current SH1. FAST supports this.

However FAST is concerned that even the two access points at Warkworth and Wellsford would mean these areas would be likely to experience significantly greater growth than with the current SH and at a rate that would make managing growth challenging. There would also be likely to be pressure on growth at Snells/Algies and in other areas.

Principle 3 suggests bypasses to the west of Warkworth and to the east of Wellsford. A bypass to the west of Warkworth avoids the Maharangi Estuary, and is likely to be preferable on environmental grounds. A bypass to the east of Wellsford would provide better access to the Mangawhai area. FAST considers that the bypasses should be located so as to best support the planned growth of Warkworth and Wellsford, and also so as to reduce the likelihood of spillover growth into other areas.

### **As regards the specific principles in the consultation brochure, FAST:**

- E opposes principle 1 which promotes a new highway “offline” from the existing SH1, and completely separate to it, unless the investigations and economic analysis in C and D demonstrate strong justification for it**
- F supports principles 2’s two only access points at Warkworth and Wellsford, as other access points would be likely to accelerate inappropriate growth in other areas**
- G considers the two bypasses to the west of Warkworth and to the east of Wellsford in principle 3 should be located so as to best support the planned growth of Warkworth and Wellsford, and also so as to reduce the likelihood of spillover growth into other areas.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Andy Smith