

Manawatū Tararua Highway Should Open as a Toll Road

The opening of Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway is a significant milestone for the lower North Island, with safety and travel times both set to improve.

However, the decision not to toll the route is disappointing, says Infrastructure New Zealand.

“Not tolling the Manawatū Tararua Highway is a missed opportunity to help fund the ongoing maintenance and future resilience of this critical transport route through a ‘user pays’ approach,” says Chief Executive Nick Leggett.

“Tolling a new highway isn’t about penalising the users of that road or the communities in the area. It’s about being honest about the ongoing costs required to ensure the responsible management of the asset and ensuring that those who benefit from the road are making a direct contribution to its delivery and maintenance.”

“New Zealand’s problem is that nobody thinks about maintaining a new road when it’s nice and new, other than those who are responsible for building it. Those people don’t control the money, though.”

“New infrastructure such as the Manawatū Tararua Highway comes with significant ongoing costs. Choosing not to use tolling doesn’t make those costs disappear, it simply shifts the burden onto all New Zealand road users, including those who will never use the road,” Leggett says.

“If we want high-quality, modern infrastructure that is well maintained and resilient, we need to be smarter in how we manage and fund it. Having an annual amount of money generated from the road, means that New Zealanders can transparently follow that the money goes back into maintaining the road which generates it.”

“Tolling is one of the few tools we have that can directly link use with funding. It also helps protect the sustainability of the National Land Transport Fund so further investments can be made in critical transport projects into the future.”

“We need to be more inventive with how we fund and maintain infrastructure. Nothing should get off the ground without pricing road usage properly,” Leggett says. “If New Zealand wants better infrastructure, it’s going to need to do things differently at every stage of design, build and operations. That includes funding through tolls.”

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Media Statement

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Infrastructure New Zealand is Aotearoa's peak membership organisation for the infrastructure sector. We promote best practice in national infrastructure development through research, advocacy, and public and private sector collaboration. We promote public and media discussion on issues of importance to the infrastructure sector. Our membership is comprised of around 140 organisations, including government agencies, consultants, contractors, financiers, utilities, and academics. These organisations employ approximately 150,000 people in infrastructure-related roles and are united in their commitment to creating a better New Zealand through outstanding infrastructure.

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