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TO Gary Clark
COPY Michael Kargar
FROM Matt Lord
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FILE 5-G650.AW 317NC
SUBJECT Swamp Road Closure Report



1 PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Appleby Straight (SH60) safety improvement study and seek the Committee of Council's approval to draft a recommendation for consideration of the full Tasman District Council to approve the temporary closure of the SH60 / Swamp Rd Intersection under the Section 342 of the Local Government Act.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 National Safety Co-ordination Site

The Appleby Straight has been identified as a Network Safety Coordination (NSC) site due to the consistently poor crash history for this section of the state highway network. The crash history for this section of the network is worse than comparable sections at other locations within the region.

The NSC Group is comprised of representatives from the New Zealand Transport Agency, the Tasman District Council, the NZ Police, the Accident Compensation Commission, the Road Transport Association, the Automobile Association of New Zealand, and the Network Management Consultants (Opus).

2.2 Side Road Closure Investigation

The high number of crashes is directly related to the number of side road connections along this section of the network. Reducing the number of side road connections has a corresponding positive effect in reducing the level of risk to highway users. Closure of a side road intersection completely eliminates the potential for future crashes involving turning vehicles turning into or from the side road and negates the intersection deficiencies identified within the NSC Study Report.

The objective is to improve highway safety by reducing the number of conflict points along this high speed, high volume section of the State highway network. Side roads that have been selected for this study are Swamp Rd, Bartlett Rd, River Rd and Redwood Rd (south). Options include closure or modification of turning movements from each intersection. Where modification is proposed as an option the preferred option is to eliminate right turn in and out movements from the side road as these have a higher risk than left turn movements.

A preliminary study was conducted in July 2008 to identify if any of the side road connections could be considered for closure, and if so, what impact this may have on landowner / land occupiers situated on these side roads. Four roads were identified as having potential for further investigation.

The outcome of this investigation was presented to the NSC stakeholder group on the 30th of October, 2008 and the group endorsed the study. The New Zealand Transport Agency subsequently provided approval to proceed with a more detailed study involving consultation with affected land owners and a wider group of stakeholders.

The investigation, including consultation with directly affected landowners and land occupiers was instigated with the aim of achieving the following objectives:

- Reducing the potential for serious crashes.
- Avoiding disruption to the school bus route or access for emergency services.
- Minimising disruption to local residents and landholders whilst achieving improvements in safety and sustainability of the transportation network.

The purpose of the consultation process was to gauge the level of support or opposition for the proposed changes and to identify any issues or enhancement opportunities.

Consultation was undertaken concurrently with residents along Swamp Rd and Bartlett Rd. This report focuses on Swamp Rd as consultation with landowners along Bartlett Rd identified a majority view in opposition to the closure of the Bartlett Rd / SH60 Intersection. A brief description of the Bartlett Rd consultation outcome is provided.

2.3 Other Safety Improvement Opportunities

Other improvement options are also being considered for this section of the highway network. These include:

- Infilling of some side drains to remove the hazard to motorists and increase shoulder width.
- Improved line marking, including yellow 'no-overtaking' centre lines and 200mm wide edgelines.

- Improved signage.
- Possible relocation of power poles or undergrounding of power to eliminate all roadside poles.
- Reduction of the posted speed limit.

2.4 Methodology

A letter outlining the general nature of the study and inviting landowners / occupiers to meet with representatives from NZTA and Opus was sent out to residents along Swamp Road and Bartlett Road on the 17th of November 2008. Recipients were provided with two dates when representatives would be available for face-to-face meetings and asked to advise which day and time was suitable. Matt Lord (Opus Senior Environmental Planner) followed up with phone calls where details were available.

Mark Edwards (NZTA Traffic Safety Engineer) and Matt Lord met with landowners / occupiers on the 24th and 25th of November 2008. These meetings provided an opportunity for residents to express their support or opposition to the proposal and to raise related safety issues.

A detailed consultation letter and a questionnaire were prepared and these provided to residents at each of the meetings, as was a pre-paid return envelope. Properties where there had been no response were also visited between organised meetings and impromptu meetings were held with residents where possible. Where residents weren't home a package containing the consultation letter, the questionnaire and a pre-paid return envelope was left in the letterbox.

Another round of meetings was held on the 12th of December to capture people who were unavailable to meet with project team representatives on the earlier dates. Some landowners / occupiers were also contacted by phone or provided with additional information via email.

The questionnaire responses were recorded in a database

3 FEEDBACK FROM SWAMP RD LANDOWNERS

3.1 Summary

There are 31 properties that are accessed from Swamp Rd. A number of titles are under the same ownership, so the total number of landowners is 18. Fifteen landowners returned the questionnaire. Nine of the 15 owners expressed support for the closure of the Swamp Rd / SH60 Intersection, six expressed reservations

regarding the proposed closure, with three of the six expressed strong opposition to the closure. Two landowners couldn't be contacted.

The reasons for opposition as expressed by individual respondents are summarised below.

3.2 Concerns Regarding Adverse Effects

Adverse effects cited by individual respondents, either at the meeting with project team representatives, or via the feedback forms, were as follows:

- Increased travel time when travelling to work (cited by one resident who works in Brightwater).
- One landowner indicated that he transports heavy earthmoving machinery from his property on Swamp Rd to sites to the south via the SH60 Intersection. Closure would adversely affect his business.
- Increased travel time for business activities, e.g. movement of farm machinery, plant, produce or goods.
- Slow moving agricultural / horticultural traffic will be forced to take a more convoluted route and may travel greater distances on the highway network.
- Perceived reduction in property values.
- Perceived adverse impact on the potential to sell or lease properties in the future.
- Possible reduction in the level of maintenance of Swamp Rd by council if the road becomes a cul-de-sac.
- The proposed upgrade to Lower Queen St will make access via the Swamp Rd / Lower Queen St Intersection more difficult and dangerous (based on the respondent's assumption that Lower Queen St was to be upgraded to a four lane carriageway configuration).
- Concern that freight operators will charge more to deliver or pick up from properties as the route will be longer.

It is likely that some of these concerns have been overstated. As an example, the additional travel time to access SH60 via Lower Queen St and McShane or Lansdowne Rd is approximately 2min 40sec, whereas the person who raised this concern suggested an additional 10 minutes. There was no evidence of regular movement of plant / equipment from the property of one objector, and the suggestion that Lower Queen St will be formed as a dual carriageway appears to be incorrect. It is not anticipated that property values will be adversely affected by the proposal.

3.3 Perceived Positive Effects

Whilst the questionnaire didn't make provision for positive feedback or suggestions, positive effects cited by respondents and at meetings with landowners were as follows:

- The project will address road safety concerns.
- Lower Queen St is utilised for access to Richmond as the intersection with SH60 is dangerous.
- The proposed closure may be a deterrent to 'boy racers' who currently use the road on a regular basis.
- Heavy truck traffic would have to use an alternate route, thus improving local road safety and amenity.
- The road will be safer for children and they will be able to safely walk or cycle on the road, an option that is currently unavailable due to the speed and volume of traffic using Swamp Rd.
- There will be a reduction in traffic noise and a marked reduction in traffic volumes, including heavy vehicles.
- Swamp Rd is currently used as a 'test circuit' for prospective car buyers and is travelled at high speed during 'testing'. Closure would alleviate the risk posed by this activity.
- Closing Swamp Rd would force truck drivers to stop at the Bartlett Rd / SH60 Intersection, thus improving safety. Currently some truck drivers do not come to a complete stop at the stop sign.
- Moving dairy cattle between properties on either side of Swamp Rd will be less hazardous with a reduction in traffic volumes.

The first six points were raised by two or more residents.

4 FEEDBACK FROM BARTLETT RD LANDOWNERS

There are 29 properties that are accessed from the section of Bartlett Rd that is most affected by the proposed closure. There are additional properties owned by 'Ranzau Horticulture Ltd' to the south of the Bartlett Rd / Ranzau Rd Intersection with whom consultation has not yet taken place.

A number of titles are under the same ownership, so the total number of landowners is 15. In addition several properties are leased for horticultural production and in some cases both the owner and the lessee returned questionnaires. Five of the 15 owners or occupiers who returned the questionnaire expressed support for the closure of the Bartlett Rd / SH60 Intersection, 10

expressed opposition, and four couldn't be contacted. Interestingly, seven of the 15 Bartlett Rd respondents supported closure of the Swamp Rd / SH60 Intersection.

This response appears to reflect the more intensive use of land adjoining Bartlett Rd for horticultural production. It is also apparent that most vehicle movements from Bartlett Rd are to or from Richmond via the intersection with SH60. Closure of this intersection would require traffic to utilise Ranzau Rd and Pugh Rd in order to access Richmond or Nelson.

Residents who used their properties for residential or lifestyle purposes were generally supportive of the proposed closure as it was seen to provide positive benefits such as a reduction in traffic volume, fewer heavy vehicle movements, a deterrent to 'boy racers', improve ambience, etc. Land owners and business operators tended to oppose the proposed closure based on commercial considerations.

In addition to horticultural production, Bartlett Rd is the site of a commercial quarrying operation and the bulk of truck movements are via the Bartlett Rd / SH60 Intersection. Discussions were held with representatives from the quarrying operation. Whilst they didn't express outright opposition to the proposed road closure, they did indicate that the proposal would affect their operating costs.

5 SUMMARY

The proposed closure is supported by a majority of Swamp Rd land owners / occupiers, albeit strong opposition was expressed by several respondents.

Many landowners / occupiers in Bartlett Rd were opposed to the closure of either the Bartlett Rd or Swamp Rd Intersections, albeit some residents were strongly supportive of closure.

The reduction of risk to road users appears to outweigh the inconvenience to some property owners along Swamp Rd. Furthermore, the perception amongst some landowners regarding the degree of inconvenience appears to be unwarranted. Many stated that most of their current trips are to Richmond or Nelson via Lower Queen St, and some stated that they don't use the intersection with SH60 due to safety concerns.

The worst case in terms of increased travel time, i.e. for those residents / landowners closest to SH60, is an increase in travel time of less than 3 minutes. One interesting finding from the consultation is that several landowners who would experience the most inconvenience, i.e. those who are closest to the Swamp Rd / SH60 Intersection, were supportive of the proposed closure of the intersection.

Closure of the Swamp Rd connection near the junction of SH60 on a trial basis is therefore recommended. It is recommended that provision for pedestrian and cyclist access be retained.

6 CLOSURE MECHANISM

Section 324 of the Local Government Act 1974 (10th Schedule, Clauses 11 (b) and (d)) permit Councils, in consultation with the Police and the Ministry of Transport, to temporarily close roads for no specific time limit and without the need for public consultation.

As consultation has been carried out, albeit by NZTA, and some objection was received to the proposed road closure, Council may be required to show that public benefit outweighs private benefit.

Any objector would have recourse to the Ombudsman, or the District Court for a review of the decision.

7 RECOMMENDATION

That the Engineering Services Committee receives this report and approves in principle closure of the Swamp Rd / SH60 Intersection for a trial period of 2 years.

Prepared by Opus International Consultants on behalf of NZTA.



Michael Kargar
Senior Asset Manager