

25 September 2009

TRANSPORT FUNDING CHANGE ANGERS PAPAKURA COUNCILLORS

Papakura residents are being short-changed by a reduction in funding from the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), and the cut has angered members of Papakura District Council.

The Chair of the Operations and Monitoring Committee, Mark O'Connor, says a change in policy between outgoing and incoming Governments has resulted in a reduction in funding for road maintenance, renewals, community programmes and walking and cycling initiatives.

“That means we have to decide either to fund this work solely from Council resources including rates, or to simply not do the work. Either way our community is being short-changed.”

In the coming year, the reduction in NZTA funding amounts to \$559,000.

In road maintenance, work on traffic services and lighting is the most affected. The shortfall would literally mean Papakura faces being unable to maintain street lighting or keep road marking up to standard.

The Council is proposing to reduce levels of pavement (road surface) repairs and also to cut kerb and channel work.

Funding cuts mean the Council's roll-out of workplace travel plans will not be funded, the community road safety programme will be reduced and the implementation of the Walking Cycling programme will have the knife taken to it.

The change in government policy means funding is being diverted to state highways and all other forms of transport are missing out.

“Are we supposed to just not do these things?”

Clr O'Connor said the reduction was at odds with the Government's support for lower local body rates.

“Rodney Hide is on record saying he is keen to see Council rates come down. He wants us to be more accountable and consult more with the public. Then NZTA tells us we either have to stop providing essential infrastructure services to our communities or fund them ourselves. I really can't see how we – or the Supercity – will be able to both reduce our rates and pay for transportation and roading services as NZTA backs out.”

The cost to the community if the work is paid for by Council will equate to a two per cent rates rise.



MEDIA RELEASE

“So on top of the transition costs, on top of the leaky building costs and all the other pressures that are being signalled by various organisations now, our ratepayers and residents end up paying for what should in fairness have been NZTA’s contribution.”

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For further information please contact:

Mark Baker
Communications Advisor
Papakura District Council
Telephone: 09 295 2311
Mobile: 027 442 3044
Email: mbaker@papakura.govt.nz