

Northland storms throw Transit into action for second time this year

Winter storms have kept Transit New Zealand on its toes, with widespread flooding in Northland for the second time in just three months.

A civil defence emergency was declared in Northland on 10 July as high winds and heavy rain resulted in numerous road closures and a call for all motorists to exercise extreme caution while driving.

Transit's northern operations manager, Joseph Flanagan, traveled north to inspect the flooding and assess the damage as soon as the weather conditions deteriorated.

"The heavy rainfall put increasing sections of the state highway under water, making driving conditions quite dangerous. Our number one priority was to reopen the state highways as soon as possible to connect communities while making sure the roads were safe for drivers. At times, this meant asking people to stay off the roads," Joseph says.

"This storm was pretty testing on the team of Transit's Northland staff and contractors, especially since we were still repairing damage from the storms earlier this year."

SH1 at Rangiahua was the first to close followed by many others throughout the day. The worst hit areas were Whanagaroa, Kaeo and Mangamuka Gorge where a massive slip took over a day to clear away.

The storm passed after two days with all state highways in the Northland region open on the morning of 12 July.

Transit's Northland staff and contractors did a great job clearing slips and trees as the region's state highways took a



SH10 at Kaeo, northwest of Bay of Islands. Kaeo was one of the worst affected areas during the July storms.

battering. This hard work and commitment comes well rehearsed by the Northland team after dealing with storms in February and March earlier this year.

"Transit worked hard with about 50 contractors at the height of the storm to reopen the state highways as soon as possible to allow drivers safe passage. But while all roads were passable there was still a fair amount of debris, surface flooding and potholes," Joseph says.

All Northland roads are open and crews are continuing to repair the damage caused by the flooding. ■



SH1 slip near Fryers Rd. The July storms compounded work to repair damage from storms earlier this year.

It's all go on Hamilton's Avalon Drive

Transit's work on two large projects in Hamilton, SH1 Church to Avalon project and the SH1 Avalon Drive Bypass, is progressing well.

Construction has begun on Stage 2 of the Church to Avalon project, which is being delivered in partnership with Hamilton City Council. Work underway will see instalment of traffic signals at the busy Avalon Drive/Wairere Drive/Te Rapa Road Intersection, and removal of the existing roundabout.

"Once completed, the Church to Avalon project will significantly improve traffic flows around The Base shopping centre and the northern end of Avalon Drive," says Transit's Hamilton regional manager Chris Allen.

Transit will make sure that the intersection is cleared of any road construction works over December to minimise disruption to Christmas holiday shoppers and travellers. Work will recommence around the middle of January, with final asphaltting carried out in late March and landscaping completed in May.

Work has also begun on the new overbridge that will carry Avalon Drive



The Rotokauri roundabout takes shape beside Avalon Drive. The Avalon Drive Bypass begins at the bottom right-hand side of the picture and runs behind Turners Car Auctions (top left). Crawford Street connects with the roundabout at the bottom left-hand corner. Also visible are the pedestrian/cyclist underpasses, which will enable safe and easy crossing of the roundabout.

Bypass over Forest Lake Road.

"The new two kilometre-long two-lane bypass will take state highway traffic off the congested section of Avalon Drive from Rotokauri Road to Norton Road and the new overbridge will be playing an important role," Chris says.

The overbridge will be substantially

completed by October and it is also about this time the new Rotokauri roundabout at the northern end of the bypass will be opening to traffic. The new bypass is expected to be completed in 2009. For more information on the Avalon Drive Bypass visit www.transit.govt.nz/projects/avalondrive/.

Christchurch urban strategy a first for NZ

Future development and growth in the greater Christchurch area is in good hands thanks to Transit, Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, and Selwyn and Waimakiriri District Councils working closely together. At the end of June, representatives of each organisation joined the Rt Hon Prime Minister Helen Clark in launching a long term Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS). This strategy sets a clear direction for managing future growth and development in greater Christchurch for the next 35 years.

"This is the first time in New Zealand that a major regional urban planning strategy of this type has been undertaken together by regional and local councils, and Transit as a central government partner," Transit's general manager transport planning Wayne McDonald says.

"We are proud to be a partner to this strategy. It's a great example of Transit

working together with local government to make sure that the transport network in Greater Christchurch services the future growth of this region."

Greater Christchurch residents were very clear that they want the strategy to advocate urban development that protects water, enhances open spaces, improves transport links, creates more liveable centres and at the same time manages population growth in a sustainable way.

"Transit is looking forward to working with UDS partners and other stakeholders to implement the strategy and meet the needs of local communities," Wayne concludes.

To find out more information on UDS visit www.greaterchristchurch.org.nz.



Future of our country's state highways:

The new National State Highway Strategy prepared by Transit takes a 30-year view on how to manage and develop the state highway network so that it is affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable. It is expected that the strategy will be reviewed in 2008/09 once the changes indicated by the Next Steps Review have flowed through the land transport sector. The strategy is available on Transit website at <http://www.transit.govt.nz/news/publications.jsp>.

For hard copies email ron.kratz@transit.govt.nz at Transit National Office.

Keeping Milford Road safe and open all year round

What do Milford Sound, an avalanche control programme and Transit New Zealand have in common? In short, Milford Road. While everyone knows of Milford Sound, fewer people know much about the Milford Road which is the only way you can get to Milford Sound. As part of SH94, Milford Road takes you from Te Anau through Fiordland National Park to Milford Sound, described by Rudyard Kipling as the 'eighth wonder of the world'.

"Milford Sound is an important part of the local as well as national economy, which is why Transit is working very hard to keep the road to this national jewel safe and open all year round," Transit's general manager network operations Roly Frost says.

As one of the highest alpine state highways in New Zealand, Milford Road offers a lot of challenges but nothing that Transit together with its dedicated team of contractors from Downer EDI Works could not manage.

As an alpine highway, avalanches can seriously affect Milford Road during avalanche season (usually June to November). To keep the road safe and open as much as possible during the avalanche season, Transit is operating



Transit's Consolation Peak weather station 1800m above sea level.



Milford Road - the only access to Milford Sound.

Weather forecasting for the programme is extremely accurate thanks to the efforts of the late Augie Auer.

an internationally recognised avalanche control programme. With this programme, Transit is predicting and controlling avalanches. A specialist avalanche control team is using high tech equipment to manage the avalanches. The equipment, which often has to be customised or developed to be of use in this area, is based at nine road and mountain level weather stations, owned by Transit.

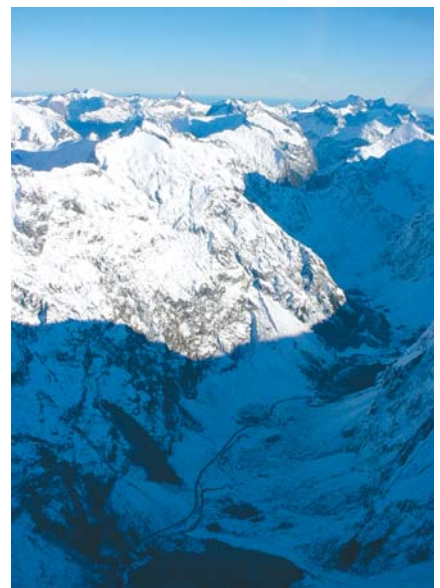
Weather forecasting is very important for road controlling and predicting avalanches and so it will come as no surprise that the biggest improvement to the programme was made by no one else than a meteorologist himself. It was in 1993 and

Metservice's chief meteorologist of the time, the late Augie Auer, couldn't accept that nothing could be done to improve the weather forecasts in Milford Road area.

"He came from Wellington and spent three days in the area to get a better understanding of the environment. He flew around in a helicopter and sat on top the mountains," says Downer EDI Works Manager Wayne Carran who has been contracted by Transit with a team of people to look after the avalanche programme since 1985.

And it was thanks to Augie that Transit today gets weather forecasts that are 80 percent accurate instead of 20.

For more information visit Transit's website www.milfordroad.co.nz.



The highest point of Milford Road is 940 metres above sea level.

Transit's Stakeholder Survey 2007 is all go for September

Transit plans to carry out an online stakeholder survey in September to gauge stakeholders' opinions of how we conduct our business.

"What stakeholders think of Transit and the work we do, is important to us as we want to make sure we are meeting their needs," said Transit's general manager strategic support Deborah Hume.

"Everyone's opinion is important and the online survey is a great opportunity for all our stakeholders to let us know what

they think about how we do business. By business we mean all areas of operation and decision-making as well as how well we achieve best practice and deliver against our values," Deborah said.

The online questionnaire is based on previous surveys, giving people a chance to quickly rate Transit and provide additional comments if they wish to. The survey is anonymous and conducted by an independent consultant. While it is an online survey, hard copies of the survey

will also be available.

"The results of the survey will drive our service improvements, and with the merger of Transit and Land Transport NZ next year, it's an ideal opportunity to use these results to inform the development of the new organisation," Deborah says.

In early September, an email will be sent out to many of the about 4,000 names in Transit's database of regular contacts, seeking their cooperation in completing the survey. ■

Road Innovation Award goes to Transit and MWH

Minister of Transport the Hon Annette King presents the 2007 New Zealand Road Innovation Award to Transit and MWH representatives for their joint paper *Sensitive receiving environments at risk from state highway run-off*.

The winning paper describes the innovative use of a Geographic Information System tool to identify bodies of water potentially at risk from adverse effects from highway stormwater run-off and prioritise them for attention.

The award was presented at the recent Transport - The Next 50 Years conference held in Christchurch. The conference, attended by some 600 people, was an opportunity to discuss and listen to new ideas about multi-modal, integrated, sustainable transport directions for the next 50 years and beyond. Transit chief



executive Rick van Barneveld says the conference had challenged the transport industry to think outside the square to meet the major challenges that lie ahead in ensuring New Zealand's transport network develops in a sustainable way. ■

New Planning Policy Manual available for comment

The new Planning Policy Manual sets out Transit's policy and approach for the development of integrated transport and land use solutions on New Zealand's state highways. It recognises the need for reaching the right balance between maintaining the national function of state highways and accommodating local needs.

The current document follows wide consultation with stakeholders, including a series of regional workshops where key issues were discussed. While it is effective from 1 August 2007 the new manual will be reviewed and finalised in early 2008. Further feedback from stakeholders is welcome and can be sent together with comments to planning@transit.govt.nz by 1 December 2007. More information on the manual can be found at www.transit.govt.nz/planning/integrated.jsp. ■

Transit's Statement of Intent 2007/08 – 2009/10 is out

Progress on Transit's work programmes continues to be accelerated over the three-year period of this Statement of Intent, and beyond, as the result of the establishment of the initial 5-year funding package for state highways announced by Government in Budget 2006. The new Statement of Intent is available on www.transit.govt.nz/news/publications.jsp. ■

New Guidelines for Highway Landscaping

Transit's Guidelines for Highway Landscaping have been updated to take account of feedback received since the document was first issued as a draft in October 2002. The format has been revised to make it more user-friendly, and the new version clarifies the steps that need to be completed when assessing, designing and maintaining state highway landscaping. More information on the new guidelines can be found in the Manuals section of the Transit website, or by contacting Transit's Environmental Policy Advisor Debbie Firestone on 04 496 6605. ■

What's on

Train the Trainers - Refresher Courses for Level 1 Roads

For Level 1 trainers to conduct refresher training they must attend either a trainers' refresher course or the full course where they will receive updated information. Contact Kimberley Ng, (04) 496 6688 or copttm.quals@transit.govt.nz.

Level 1 - STMS Trainers Refresher - (also may be used as a refresher for Level 1 TC Trainers), Taupo, 23 November 2007. Contact Stuart Fraser (04) 496 6698 or stuart.fraser@transit.govt.nz.

Level 1 - STMS Train the Trainer Course - restricted entry, applicants must be qualified STMS, Taupo, 27-29 November 2007. Contact Stuart Fraser (04) 496 6698 or stuart.fraser@transit.govt.nz.

Road Safety Barrier Systems Workshop

Owing to growing demand this second workshop is planned for 5-6 November 2007. It is essential for consultants responsible for design, checking, and audit of safety barriers, and for contractors responsible for installation. Contact Stuart Fraser on (04) 496 6698 or stuart.fraser@transit.govt.nz to register your interest.

Do we have your correct contact details?

Let us know if your contact details have changed, you want to change the number of copies of InTransit you are receiving or if you or others you know wish to begin receiving this newsletter. Email communications@transit.govt.nz or post to Transit, Communications Team, PO Box 5084, Wellington. ■

Board Meeting

The next Transit Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 September at Transit's National Office in Wellington. The open agenda is from 2.30pm. ■