

Late Attachment – TNL Tolling Submission Update

The quarterly report included the following update around this matter:

TCC made a submission to the tolling consultation process identifying a number of concerns with the tolling proposal and made a request to NZTA for further engagement before recommendations and decisions were made. Tolling decisions for the Tauranga North Link have been made without this further engagement happening. The Minister has announced that tolling will occur.

The concerns TCC had with the proposal related to:

- *Relevant information not being provided through the consultation process (eg information on diversion to the current SH2 because of tolling and how toll revenues vastly exceeded maintenance costs)*
- *Further tolling creating inequity between Tauranga and other regions given the prominence of toll roads locally.*
- *Tolling for TNL Stage 2 being questionable and potentially unlawful under the LTMA as TNL Stage 2 is separate from TNL Stage 1 and is not a committed and funded project at this time.*
- *Proposed toll pricing being sub-optimal due to the impact of traffic diversion and that lower pricing would achieve better outcomes.*
- *Peak pricing not being warranted as the TNL will have sufficient capacity during peak times and peak pricing would have minimal impact on encouraging the use of public transport and instead put more cars on the existing road through Bethlehem.*
- *No commitment that toll revenues would be reinvested locally.*
- *That tolling decisions should be delayed to align with consideration of broad road pricing options in the near future.*
- *The proposed revocation of part of SH2 back to TCC not being supported under the tolling proposal as it would continue to operate with a State Highway function due to significant traffic diversion creating poor outcomes for local communities and significant maintenance / renewal costs for TCC.*

TCC is seeking further information on if / how TCC's concerns were considered, assessed and reported by NZTA through its processes and to the Minister.

Overall, the limited information available on submissions to the tolling proposal show that 72% of respondents were against tolling of the TNL.

Tolling decisions

Details of the tolling decisions are set out below.

- For SH2 Takitimu North Link we propose to keep the toll rates consulted on but:
 - Extend the peak hours of operation from 7am-9am to 6am-9am and from 4pm-6pm to 3pm-6pm. This is to align the toll period with peak period traffic flows.
 - Exempt users of both SH2 Takitimu North Link and the adjacent SH29 Takitimu Drive toll road from paying SH2 Takitimu North Link tolls.

Scheme	Light vehicle toll rate	Heavy vehicle toll rate
SH3 Te Ahu a Turanga	\$4.30	\$8.60
SH1 Ōtaki to north of Levin	\$2.70	\$5.40
SH2 Takitimu North Link	TNL Stage 1 or Stage 2: Peak \$3.10 / Off-Peak \$2.10 TNL Stage 1 & Stage 2: Peak \$4.10 / Off-Peak \$3.10	TNL Stage 1: Peak \$6.20 / Off-Peak \$4.20 TNL Stage 1 & Stage 2: Peak \$8.20 / Off-Peak \$6.20

Official Information Act request

Following the tolling decision by the Minister, TCC submitted a further OIA Request with NZTA on 16 December 2024. We requested information on how TCC's concerns were considered, assessed and reported. We also requested NZTA's summary of submissions, recommendations to the NZTA Board, the NZTA Board decisions, and the report from NZTA to the Minister.

NZTA responded to the OIA on 31 January 2025. We have reviewed this material and concluded that it is still unclear if or how many of TCC's concerns have been considered by NZTA and the Minister.

In addition, TCC's submission was categorised through NZTA's consultation assessment as one of the 27% of respondents 'in support' with limited attention to the 'with concerns' component of our submission.

In particular, the following matters are noted:

- Board decision minutes are extremely brief.
- No information is provided on the lawfulness of tolling of TNL Stage 1 to fund Stage 2, nor an answer to our question whether this is lawful under the LTMA. This may be covered in material that has been redacted.
- The reports provided indicate that modelling and traffic diversion has been considered, however the report on efficiency of the proposed tolling scheme is redacted, which makes it impossible to understand the balance between cost effectiveness and traffic impact. Also, there is no information to be found about how the threshold of 20,000 vehicles per day on the current SH2 that was considered by NZTA to be acceptable has been established.
- Whilst the times of the peak hour have been assessed and made longer, no information has been provided around TCC's concerns around the value (of lack thereof) of peak pricing. The increased peak period with higher tolls will also push even more vehicles back onto the current highway through Bethlehem.

In summary, the OIA response demonstrates that limited attention was placed on the issues raised by TCC.

We understand that concerns raised through submissions by BOPRC and WBOPDC may have similarly not been addressed.

Next steps (if any)

The Regional Transport Committee has considered the tolling decisions and passed a resolution to engage further with the Minister (or NZTA Board). While further engagement is an option it would be unlikely that the tolling decision would be revisited by the (new) Minister.

It may be better to focus on discussions with NZTA on the ownership and operational cost / funding of the existing SH2 through Bethlehem, as well as seek a more collaborative approach for future tolling investigations (eg the proposed new offline SH29 through Tauriko).