

MT MESSENGER BYPASS PROJECT: SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF GAVIN CRAIG LISTER (LANDSCAPE, VISUAL, NATURAL CHARACTER) FOR THE NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

Landscape input to the Project

1. I am a principal of Isthmus. My practice is providing landscape input to the Project and I am over-seeing this work. This includes input to the consideration of alternatives, selection of the preferred route, highway alignment and design, and mitigation measures as described in the Landscape and Environmental Design Framework (LEDF).
2. Landscape input to the Project is being undertaken in collaboration with other disciplines, particularly civil engineering and ecology. It is also being undertaken in collaboration with Ngāti Tama which to date has included input to route selection, design and rehabilitation measures. Ngāti Tama and the Alliance have developed an approach to further give effect to principles set out in the LEDF, including cultural expression artworks, naming, and involvement in the implementation and management of environmental mitigation works. These matters are given effect to by Condition 4.
3. My evidence refers to a site visit on 28 February 2018. At that time I was unable to visit the Mimi River tributaries because myrtle rust disease had recently been identified in that area. I subsequently visited these tributaries and the southern and northern portal sites on 20 July 2018.

Existing landscape

4. The Mount Messenger area is steep, bush-clad, heavily dissected, papa hill country. It must necessarily be traversed by SH3 between Taranaki and Waikato. In effect, it forms something of a barrier between these regions.
5. The existing highway follows a winding route over a saddle immediately below and to the south-east of Mount Messenger/Parinihi. The proposed bypass follows a lower route by way of a tunnel beneath and slightly further to the south-east of the saddle, linking tributaries of the Mimi River and Mangapepeke Stream valleys.
6. The area west of Mount Messenger/Parinihi, through which more direct alternatives were considered, has considerably higher landscape values. It is identified as an 'Outstanding Natural Landscape' in the draft District Plan 2016.

Avoid, remedy and mitigate adverse effects

7. I consider the following attributes of the Project alignment and design help avoid and minimise potential adverse effects:

- (a) The alignment follows the topography, linking north and south valleys separated by a narrow ridge;
 - (b) The tunnel keeps the alignment at relatively low elevation, reducing visibility and retaining the integrity of the leading ridge;
 - (c) The highway will be 'embedded' in the landscape through such measures as the tunnel, the high proportion of box cuttings, and the alignment along the edge of the Mangapepeke Valley;
 - (d) Visibility of the route is restricted to a small number of properties. It will be mostly experienced by its future travellers for whom it will be a scenic section of the highway; and
 - (e) While the bypass alignment will have easier grades and higher design speeds, it will nevertheless retain the impression of a border between Waikato and Taranaki – 'the jaws of Ngāti Tama'.
8. Nevertheless, any major highway project is likely to have adverse landscape, visual and natural character effects, the potential for which is increased by the steep, bush-covered hills in the Mount Messenger area. Because of the context, the Project will require considerable earthworks, clearance of indigneous vegetation, stream diversions, and major structures such as the bridge and tunnel. I consider the adverse effects that are not able to be avoided or minimised by the alignment and design will be appropriately remedied and mitigated through the proposed measures¹ including:
- (a) Offset planting – in particular the restoration of the Mangapepeke Valley to a natural system comprising replanted stream, kahikatea wetland forest, and bush (8.45km of restored stream, 6ha kahikatea wetland forest, 9ha 'terrestrial' bush);²
 - (b) Fine-tuning the alignment and using steep MSE fill batters to minimise encroachment on significant trees and vegetation;
 - (c) Adopting steep cut batters that echo the typical cliff faces in the area's papa rock (avoiding benching), and promoting the natural revegetation that is common of such faces;
 - (d) Naturalising those stream diversions that are not otherwise able to be avoided;
 - (e) Contouring and revegetating surplus fill disposal sites;

¹ Lister EIC, paragraph 65-67. This section of my evidence includes cross-references to relevant drawings and sections of the LEDF.

² These figures are updated to be consistent with Mr MacGibbon's supplementary ecology evidence. They replace the figures in paragraph 66(a) of my EIC which refer to 8.8km of stream, 6ha of kahikatea swamp forest, and 8ha of dryland bush.

- (f) Refining and simplifying the suite of highway furniture (barriers, signage poles, lights, bridge barriers) to reduce visual clutter; and
- (g) Restoring access to the Department of Conservation estate, particularly through a realigned 'Kiwi Road track' from the pull-off area on the existing SH3.

Conclusion on landscape, visual and natural character effects³

9. I consider that implementation of such measures will mitigate adverse natural character effects to the point where they will be 'moderate' in magnitude overall, and will mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects to the point where the residual effect will be 'moderate-low'. There will also be some positive landscape effects arising from the scenic nature of the corridor, and the rehabilitation of the Mangapepeke Stream valley.

Matters raised in submissions

10. Several submissions did not agree with the route selected.⁴ From a landscape perspective the proposed route is preferable. In particular, the area west of Mount Messenger – and Mount Messenger/Parininihi itself – have higher landscape values (including identification as ONL) that would result in greater adverse landscape effects.
11. Some submissions⁵ are critical that the proposed tunnel will perpetuate constraints on oversize loads caused by the existing tunnel. While transport matters are addressed in other evidence (I understand the tunnel will in fact accommodate oversize loads), from a landscape perspective the tunnel reduces potential adverse effects by allowing a lower elevation route and retention of the natural ridge.
12. The Department of Conservation⁶ submitted that, despite its support of the proposed route over other options, there will nevertheless be significant adverse effects on the natural environment and that the proposed conditions are inadequate. While there is overlap with landscape, the matters raised by the Department principally relate to ecology, have been the subject of further work between the Department and Transport Agency and are addressed by other witnesses.

Matters raised in NPDC section of the s42A report⁷

13. Mr Bain reviewed the landscape aspects of the Project on behalf of NPDC. He agrees the route selection has had proper regard to landscape matters,⁸ he does not dispute the overall level of landscape and natural character effects stated in the Landscape

³ Lister EIC, paragraph 72. Effects prior to mitigation are analysed in paragraphs 37-58.

⁴ Submissions 2996 (Keighley), 2999 (Ngāti Mutanga), 3023 (Pascoe), 3025 (Piper), 3032 (Soffa), 3108 (Lobb).

⁵ Submissions 3025 (Piper), 3026 (Bengal), 3027 (Baker), 3031 (Washer), 3032 (Soffa), 3033 (Cryer).

⁶ Submission 2994.

⁷ Lister EIC, paragraphs 74-81.

⁸ Bain review, page 8.

Assessment,⁹ and he considers the effects would be appropriately addressed through the proposed mitigation measures.¹⁰ However, while he considers the measures proposed in the LEDF are 'exemplary in their range and quality', he does not consider they are adequately given effect to by the conditions.¹¹ I agree with Mr Bain and consider this can be addressed as follows:¹²

- (a) In my evidence I recommended the name 'Ecology and Revegetation Management Plan' (ERMP) would more accurately describe the purpose of the mis-named 'Ecology and Landscape Management Plan (ELMP)'. Text has been added to the ELMP to clarify that its focus is ecology and revegetation matters, and that the LEDF remains the overarching framework that guides not only the ELMP, but other aspects of the detailed design including earthworks, structures, highway furniture, and cultural expression. It has effectively played this role to date;
- (b) The LEDF is to be given effect to by changes to the conditions along the lines proposed in the s42A Report as follows:
 - (i) Condition 8 of the conditions attached to Mr Roan's supplementary evidence gives effect to Conditions 1(a), 5 and 6 recommended in the s42A Report. It includes the LEDF with the list of other Management Plans and requires works be carried out in general accordance with the LEDF.
 - (ii) Condition 25 gives effect to Condition 32 recommended in the s42A Report. It requires that the LEDF inform the detailed design, and lists elements relevant to mitigating landscape, natural character and visual effects. The list has been fine-tuned to (i) avoid unnecessary duplication of ecology and revegetation matters already covered in the ELMP; (ii) recognise that fill batters may be either contoured or formed steep so as to minimise footprint; (iii) include matters not covered in the s42A Report list such as 'cultural expression and kaitiakitanga'; and (iv) exclude items such as walking access through the tunnel which is not to be provided for safety reasons, or provision of access to the Mount Messenger Track which is not affected by the Project.
 - (iii) Condition 26 gives effect to Condition 38 in the s42A Report. It requires a peer review of the detailed design by a suitably qualified and experienced landscape architect, and written confirmation verifying the design is in general accordance with the LEDF.

⁹ NPDC s42A Report, paragraph 257.

¹⁰ NPDC s42A Report, paragraph 264.

¹¹ NPDC s42A Report, paragraph 266.

¹² Lister EIC, paragraphs 76 - 81.