



Opawa Bridge replacement



BENEFITS

Replacing the Opawa Bridge will improve safety and reliability in the Marlborough region and provide better access for heavy vehicles on SH1 in Blenheim.

The project objectives are to:

- increase throughput of freight and light vehicles
- provide more consistent travel times
- provide greater structural resilience to natural hazard events, resulting in increased availability and access.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Two bridges (Wairau and Opawa) have been investigated for potential replacement to provide better heavy vehicle access on SH1 in Blenheim. Following investigation, the Wairau Bridge will not be replaced as it has been certified to carry heavier vehicles and can be cost-effectively maintained. The Opawa Bridge, however, has been identified for replacement.

The project involves replacing the existing bridge with a new two-lane bridge upstream of the existing structure. Due to the existing bridge's heritage status, it will be constructed in harmony with the existing bridge with careful architectural design. The existing bridge will be retained and used for improved cycle and pedestrian facilities.

BACKGROUND

The Opawa River Bridge was designed in 1912 and opened in 1917. The bridge is a Heritage NZ Category 1 heritage place, indicating a place of outstanding significance. This bridge is a legacy structure, being the first of its kind (concrete bowstring) constructed in New Zealand.

The Opawa Bridge is 170m long and carries 9,800 vehicles per day, 9% of these being heavy vehicles. The bridge is located north of Blenheim across the Opawa River, which forms a natural

geographic boundary between the urban and the rural agricultural activities on the lower Wairau River Plain. As the bridge is on the northern urban fringe of Blenheim, it is an important gateway to Blenheim.

The recent investigations determined that the 5.5m-wide bridge is not suitable for current and future traffic requirements, particularly heavy vehicles and campervans. The bridge also offers low seismic resistance.

The narrowness of the bridge results in short travel time delays, but also creates significant difficulties for larger vehicles and campervans as opposing large vehicles are unable to pass on the bridge or its immediate approaches.

COST

\$14-17.5 million.

FUNDING SOURCE

The replacement of the Opawa Bridge will be funded by the Crown as part of the Government's Accelerated Regional Roding Programme. The continued maintenance of the Wairau Bridge will be funded from the National Land Transport Programme 2015-18.

DATES

It is anticipated construction will start early in 2018, taking 12 months to complete.