

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2016

AGENDA ITEM D5

FEATHERSTON 2033

Purpose of Report

To update Councillors of progress on the Featherston 2033 tasks relating to transportation links and gateways.

Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Council is advised to:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to include the traffic and circulation and gateway concept investigations for evaluation as part of the Te Marua to Masterton Corridor Study Business Case assessment being led by NZTA/MWH.*

1. Background

Council has previously considered the outcomes of the VUW student study of Featherston. Subsequently Kerry Geange has "extracted" from that work four key themes for Featherston. One theme related to infrastructure and transport.

This theme (along with 3 others) was then transposed into a strategy for Featherston called "Featherston 2033" (F2033). An integral part of F2033 was a series of investigative and implementation tasks.

Council consequently resolved to adopt these, but to prioritise transport links, along with the inter-related gateways.

This work was delayed by the need to work on submissions to the proposed Natural Resources Plan of the Wellington Regional Council.

Since completion of that work a number of steps have been taken to start the process to implement the following resolutions of Council (July 2015);

"... adopt and proceed with the "Key Action 1 High Value Investigations" and, "...agree to prioritise [A. Traffic and circulation and C. Gateway study] for investigation this year ".

2. Discussion

Kerry Geange and officers have held meetings with the NZTA Planning and Investment Manager, Mr Peter Hookham. At this meeting the Featherston project was discussed along with options around forming a partnership with NZTA (given they are the Nationwide Road Control and Funding Authority) to review the current transportation links in Featherston.

Mr Hookham outlined NZTA `s approach to addressing these types of issues such as; are the current main regional and local routes the best for Featherston, where could gateways be developed, what process could be used to evaluate alternatives and who would fund/undertake any changes identified (if any) ?

Mr Hookham's initial response was supportive of the Council's resolution to review such matters and of the broad reasons for Council looking at changes. He felt that there could be a reasonable case for change in terms of the "methods" used to analyse such proposals.

His advice was that the work should not however be done in isolation from wider transportation reviews and suggested that the technical work around any proposals, should be incorporated into a wider corridor study that had commenced a year earlier from Te Marua to Masterton.

That study had progressed through what is known as the Strategic Case assessment and was moving toward the more detailed Business Case assessment. He offered to ensure that any issues in Featherston would have direct entry to the Business Case assessment even though they were not raised in the initial Strategic Case assessment.

Consequently, the Group Manager, Planning and Environment has been invited by NZTA to sit on the technical working group (officers from various Councils, NZTA representatives, and the consultants MWH who are carrying out the specific technical work) for the corridor study.

For Council this is both a significant positive but also a possible negative.

On the positive side, if the Business Case supports any changes in Featherston and development of gateways, concerns of businesses (who want traffic directed through town) and residents (who want traffic out of residential areas) about the existing transport links can be resolved, with NZTA likely being a key player and possibly funder of any works.

On the negative side, to reach a point where actual physical changes are made, may take a number of years (4 or more).

This is because the Business Case is likely to take 15 months or so to be developed and concluded (agreed/ adopted) and any works arising from it (both large – the Hill, and small – Featherston) will then have to be built into the NZTA expenditure programme (a Ten Year Plan of Action) and the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) – also for ten years but reviewed 3 yearly).

Officers consider it is worthwhile regardless of the potential for a drawn out process, to go down the path offered by NZTA. The core advantages of this approach would be a comprehensive assessment of the possible proposals including gateway locations, a potential significant reduction in costs for Council, and the gaining of agreement of NZTA to change without having to argue the case (they would be Council's partner).

3. Conclusion

NZTA have been engaged about transportation links and development of gateways in Featherston. Initial discussions have been positive and work has been incorporated into the Business Case process for the Te Marua to Masterton corridor study.

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