

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Paul Roberts and Stuart Woods
Corporate Plan Output: Road Network Planning	

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors of the current situation regarding the Southern Arterial. These are two streams of work related to this project: the technical road network study and the City Plan designations process.

TECHNICAL ROAD NETWORK STUDY

This was initiated in late 1997, being jointly funded by Transit New Zealand and Christchurch City Council, and undertaken by consultants, Traffic Design Group. The final report was received in late September 1999. The objective of the study was to evaluate roading scenarios and recommend a list of works that are likely to be required for the arterial road network in south west Christchurch in the next 25 years.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- (a) Evaluate four basic options which had been identified from previous work on the Southern Arterial;
- (b) Identify and include any other viable options or variations approved by the Study Management Team;
- (c) Refine the options to the two most beneficial in terms of benefits and roading costs over 25 years, taking into account the staging possibilities of the options; and
- (d) Identify issues outside the economic analysis relevant to the selection of the preferred option(s).

The Executive Summary of the study (including conclusions) will be available at the meeting. The main report is some 200 pages long and of a technical nature, but can be made available on request.

As reported to earlier City Plan hearings, the principal findings of the study are that a roading link along the existing Southern Arterial designation alignment (a Transit New Zealand designation):

- is urgently needed; and
- is economically viable. (This means that the Benefit-Cost ratio was assessed as greater than 4.0, and therefore the project would qualify for 100% funding for Transit New Zealand as a State Highway work. These assessments were made applying land values from prior to the recent City Plan rezoning decision. The effect of the rezoning on the economic viability is currently being assessed).

Alternatives outside this general corridor (particularly the 'Wigram Link' which was an alignment traversing the north east of the Wigram airfield) have been proved by this study to be not viable. It is clearly shown by the economic analyses that the main justification for the indicated early construction of the initial stages of the proposed Southern Arterial is existing traffic demand. The scheme is therefore only partially dependent on meeting the long-term transport needs of future urban developments, and expansion.

The works would involve the introduction of a new route, progressively upgraded over the next 20 years; and also includes the duplication of the existing motorway between Barrington Street and Curletts Road immediately. The extension of the Southern Arterial from Curletts Road to Halswell Junction Road would include junctions at Awatea/Dunbars and an extension of Nash Road. These would be required for efficient servicing of the growth areas in the Halswell area. Much of the access roading could be created through the subdivision of the rezoned land, but there could be some need for Council funding of local roading works that is not allowed for in the current 5 year capital programme.

CITY PLAN

The Council at its September meeting received a report considering the hearing on the Southern Arterial designation and a recommendation recommending to Transit New Zealand (the designating authority) to uplift their designation. The Council meeting resolved that this matter be referred back to the City Plan hearings committee for a further hearing. The dates for the further hearing are yet to set. The timing of this hearing needs to take into account the further work proposed on the Southern Arterial issue (a Scheme Assessment study, programmed to be finished mid-2000, see below) as well as the likely timeframes for the hearing of related references (appeals) to the Environment Court. For the information of the Committee, these references principally relate to urban growth matters. Council staff will be discussing the grouping and staging of references with the Environment Court towards the end of October 1999. It should be noted that once the Council has reheard the matter and made a decision, it then makes a recommendation to Transit New Zealand regarding their designation. Transit New Zealand then are required to decide whether to accept or reject (with reasons) the Council's recommendations, and inform the Council accordingly. The Council and any submitters then may refer the decision to the Environment Court.

NEXT STEPS

Given the conclusions of the Traffic Design Group study, Transit New Zealand has indicated that they wish to progress promptly towards the implementation of the project. The next stage of the process is called the "Scheme Assessment" stage. The Scheme Assessment would involve consultation and participation of affected landowners, confirmation of the alignment and more detailed design and assessment of costs and benefits to support an application by Transit New Zealand to Transfund for funding for the next stages of the designation. Given that the recent study has indicated the eventual need for grade-separated interchanges, part of the Scheme Assessment will also involve identification of any additional land that may ultimately be required.

The recently completed study has confirmed the viability of an extension of the Southern Arterial along the designation corridor and supported the need for the retention of this designation. Land values used in the assessment have not been based on the residential zoning as notified by recent City Plan decisions. Higher land values than those adopted could have the effect of delaying the availability of funding for the arterial because the benefit/cost ratio would be reduced. However, as indicated at the City Plan hearings on the Wigram-Halswell rezoning and the designation, there exists the possibility that an alignment which runs closer to or along Wigram Road may also be viable and have benefits to the development of the area over and above the benefits of the roading designation. This viability has however not yet been proven, and hence Transit New Zealand's recommendation that the existing designation be retained until a viable alternative has been shown to exist.

It was a recommendation of City Council staff in the Wigram-Halswell urban growth rezoning hearings that the potential alternatives along the general corridor be explored in conjunction with rezoning the land following production of an Outline Development Plan for the Wigram-Halswell area. This would have been a joint exercise between Christchurch City Council (including the Community Board), Transit New Zealand and local landowners. However, the Council decision was to rezone the land without this caveat.

There does however appear to be willingness on the part of at least some landowners for a constructive dialogue regarding these potential alternative alignments. This involvement and consultation could be integrated with the Scheme Assessment process. Transit New Zealand and City Council staff are about to begin development of the brief for the Scheme Assessment study. It is anticipated that the brief will be completed prior to Christmas, with completion of the Scheme Assessment itself by mid-2000. The brief will be referred to this committee for comment.

The Scheme Assessment study will provide a technical and rational basis for the required detailed consideration of the potential alternatives to the existing designation alignment. Therefore, the Council, in programming a further hearing of the designation matter may wish to avail themselves of the results and information to take account of the updated evidence which would be available following the Scheme Assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

There is progress being made on the technical aspects of the Southern Arterial project, with joint participation of Transit New Zealand and City Council staff. Staff of both authorities recognise the urgency of implementation of the works, although it should be noted that Transit New Zealand is obligated to follow standard procedures. This can appear to be an extended process, but Transit New Zealand is keen to see progress on the project. There is the possibility that City Plan hearing decisions and processes could obstruct the early implementation of the project, but again, these must be followed rigorously to satisfy the requirements of the Resource Management Act.

Paul Roberts and/or Stuart Woods will be in attendance to discuss the report.

Recommendation: For information.

**Chairperson's
Recommendation:** For discussion.