Hon Shane Jones

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Energy

20 October 2026

Expert Panel for the Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills Fast-track Application
C/o Environmental Protection Authority, Fast-track Team
substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills application (FTAA-2603-1178)

Dear Expert Panel members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this substantive application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA 2024).

The FTAA 2024 has been established to provide a regime that makes it easier and quicker for regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects to gain the approvals needed for development, in support of this Government's economic growth objectives.

I have considered the application and its alignment with the priorities of my Regional Development portfolio. My comments are attached as Annex One.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Regional Development

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Annex One – Regional Development comments

Project overview

1. The New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) is seeking Fast-track consent for the construction, operation and maintenance of a four-lane, median-divided highway and associated infrastructure from Pukekararo to Waipu, across the Brynderwyn Hills. These works are the first stage of the Alternative to Brynderwyn Hills Project listed in Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). Due to the complexity and scale of the overall listed project, NZTA proposes to stage more than one substantive application for it. The Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills Project, in turn, is one of three Roads of National Significance that make up the Northland Corridor Project, a 100km stretch of highway connecting Northland to Auckland.

2. The application states that long-term weather-related road closures exacerbate Northland's economic challenges, and that as a region with high levels of primary and manufacturing activity, freight transport by road is critical for many of the region's businesses. Road transport is reported to account for 95 per cent (by tonne-km) of freight movements in Northland, compared to 70 per cent nationally. The closure of the Brynderwyn Hills section of SH1 for a total of 73 days during severe weather events in 2023, was estimated to cost the national economy over $1 million per day.

3. Benefits identified by the applicant for the Alternative to Brynderwyn Hills Project include a 79 per cent reduction (compared to the current route) in the time the road is closed due to weather events. Reduced travel times of 3.8 to 5.6 minutes (23-30 per cent) are further estimated to be worth $795 million in net-present-value (NPV) terms.

4. Other economic benefits provided by the applicant are largely for the broader Northland Corridor Project, and include:

    a. Approximately $6.6 billion NPV in gross domestic product (GDP), and an estimated 721 additional jobs at peak impact in 2048, from savings in business and freight travel times/operating costs supporting higher productivity for beneficiaries and flow-on effects in the wider economy. This excludes impacts from construction and maintenance.

    b. Estimated additional GDP of $490 million NPV from greater agglomeration as a result of reduced journey costs and improved access to economic opportunity.

Regional Development comments

5. The scale of benefits noted by the applicant for the overall Northland Corridor, and the Alternative to Brynderwyn Hills Project's designation as a Road of National Significance, indicate that the project would have both regionally and nationally significant economic benefits.