Comment on Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills Fast Track Application

Attn: Expert Consenting Panel Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills Application
c/- Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
Private Bag 63002
Waterloo Quay Wellington 6140
From: Northland Regional Council

Northland Regional Council (NRC) thanks the Panel for inviting comment on the Alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTA).

Overall comment

Council supports the application and the progression of an alternative route to Brynderwyn Hills. State Highway 1 is the principal transport connection between Taitokerau/Northland, Auckland and the rest of New Zealand. Improving the safety, resilience and reliability of this connection is strategically important to the social and economic wellbeing of the region.

The strategic importance of this connection extends beyond Northland. It supports the Auckland and national economies by enabling the reliable movement of freight and goods, strengthening supply chains and business activity, and connecting Northland producers with major markets.

The proposal has the potential to strengthen route resilience, improve journey reliability and safety, support freight and visitor movements, and provide greater confidence for people and businesses investing in Northland. These outcomes are strongly aligned with the strategic direction of the Northland Regional Land Transport Plan. NRC therefore supports the approvals sought through this fast-track process.

Council encourages an implementation pathway that retains a strong focus on affordability, deliverability and whole-of-life value. Securing the necessary approvals and route protection is an important step, while subsequent design, staging and investment decisions should continue to seek the most cost-effective means of achieving the project's safety, resilience and connectivity outcomes.

Links with Regional Land Transport Plan

The strategic direction of the Northland Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) 2021–2027 (2023 review) and the FTAA substantive application for Northland Corridor Section 2 (Brynderwyn Hills) are broadly aligned, particularly in relation to the delivery of core transport system outcomes.

The RLTP identifies a small number of dominant priorities, including improving network resilience, reducing deaths and serious injuries, strengthening regional and national connectivity, and supporting economic development, while also recognising the importance of environmental outcomes and integrated planning. The FTAA application directly responds to these priorities, positioning the Brynderwyn Hills project as an intervention to address a known failure point in the state highway network, with a strong emphasis on resilience, safety, network reliability and freight efficiency. In this respect, the project responds to several of the RLTP's highest-order objectives, particularly in relation to maintaining a secure and reliable Auckland–Northland lifeline corridor.

The FTAA application also highlights that the project sits within a wider context, with a clear role in supporting long-term regional growth and broader strategic outcomes. While the RLTP promotes integration of land use and transport, this is, in practice, largely being progressed through complementary processes such as the Whangārei Future Development Strategy and forthcoming regional spatial planning. In that setting, the broader Northland Corridor project, covering multiple stages, can be seen as providing the route certainty and network capacity that enable those processes, rather than attempting to deliver integration itself. Although the project remains primarily road-focused and therefore contributes less directly to mode shift and emissions reduction, it is nonetheless well aligned overall and can be seen as supporting the intent of the RLTP's broader strategic direction.

Conclusion

Council supports the project in recognition of the significant benefits that will be realised for all Northlanders as a result of improved transport efficiency, strengthened route resilience and improved access for the tourism sector. We believe this support is broadly reflected across Taitokerau/Northland communities.

Northland REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau



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