

SECURING NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE



**BUDGET
2026**

Hon Chris Bishop Minister of Transport

28 May 2026

Extending the Waikato Expressway

The extension of the Waikato Expressway will make travel safer, faster and more reliable, Transport Minister Chris Bishop says.

Budget 2026 invests \$1.773 billion in funding for the Cambridge to Piarere Road of National Significance, extending the Waikato Expressway which is one of New Zealand's most strategically important transport corridors.

"State Highway 1 between Cambridge and Piarere is a critical freight and economic link connecting Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty with the central and lower North Island," Mr Bishop says.

"This project has been talked about for years. Now we're getting on with it.

"The Waikato Expressway has already delivered huge benefits for the region, improving safety, reducing congestion, increasing reliability, and supporting economic growth across the upper North Island.

"Our Roads of National Significance programme is about backing economic growth by improving the roads that carry people, freight and business around the country.

"The Golden Triangle between Auckland, Waikato and Tauranga is home to more than half of New Zealand's population and around 60 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. This corridor is critical to New Zealand's economic growth.

"The Cambridge to Piarere RONS project has a benefit-cost ratio of 2.7 to 3.1, underlining the strong economic case for investment."

The new four-lane 16-kilometre expressway will connect the end of the current Waikato Expressway to the intersection of SH1 and SH29 at Piarere.

"The project includes a grade-separated interchange near Karāpiro Road and will improve safety, strengthen resilience, and support one of New Zealand's most important economic corridors," Mr Bishop says.

“It is expected to reduce deaths and serious injuries by around 70 per cent, improve resilience by reducing the impact of road closures, and improve local access to community facilities and destinations.

“Consents for the project were granted in September 2025, and early works approved by the NZTA Board in December are now underway.

“Cambridge to Piarere is the next major Road of National Significance to receive funding following the start of construction on the Ōtaki to north of Levin and Hawke’s Bay Expressway projects.

“Procurement on the Warkworth to Te Hana stage of the Northland Expressway is also underway, with a preferred bidder expected to be confirmed soon and detailed design and early construction works expected to start in late this year.

“The Government is getting on with building the roads in our long-term infrastructure pipeline to redress New Zealand’s infrastructure deficit and support jobs, productivity and growth across the country.”

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