

BEFORE THE GISBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL HEARINGS PANEL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the resource consent application by Eastern Port Limited to establish a second berth at the Port of Gisborne.

**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF
MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER ROSSITER**

11 September 2023

1. Introduction

Qualifications and relevant experience

- 1.1. My full name is Michael Christopher (Chris) Rossiter. I am employed as a Principal Transportation Engineer at Stantec New Zealand Limited (Stantec). I have been in this position since 2013 and have been employed at Stantec (and TDG prior to its incorporation with Stantec) since 2006. Prior to joining TDG (now part of Stantec) in 2006, I was employed as a Principal Systems Engineer and Technical Manager with BAE Systems in England.
- 1.2. I hold the academic qualifications of Bachelor of Science from the University of Exeter and Bachelor of Arts (Open) from the Open University.
- 1.3. I am registered as a Chartered Engineer with Engineering New Zealand. I have over 35 years' engineering experience including 16 years' transportation engineering in New Zealand on a wide range of projects involving transportation engineering, transportation planning and assessment, analytical investigations and road safety audits. My role involves both preparing transportation assessment reports for resource consent applications and also providing transportation engineering peer review services for councils.
- 1.4. Within the Gisborne district, I have previously provided advice to council on resource consent applications for residential development and on the Te Panuku Tū Titirangi summit development.

Code of Conduct statement

- 1.5. I confirm that I have prepared this evidence in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. The issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise except where I state that I am relying on the evidence or advice of another person. The data, information, facts and assumptions I have considered in forming my opinions are set out in the part of the evidence in which I express my opinions. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I have expressed.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Joint Witness Statement prepared by the transport experts for Eastland Port Limited (J Makinson), Waka Kotahi (G Connelly) and myself sets out our agreement on the descriptions of existing transport networks providing access to the port and its current operational performance. Based on the information provided by Eastland Port Limited (EPL), we understand that the port is currently operating at or close to its maximum capacity with a single berth.

- 2.2. I consider that the primary point of difference between Ms Makinson and myself is whether the increase in traffic movements on the port access roads can happen as of right or only as a consequence of the second berth being constructed. I agree that there are no restrictions on the traffic generation of the port.
- 2.3. The port provides an enabling function for the logging companies that will utilise whatever export capacity is available. I accept that there will be an increasing demand from the logging companies to export logs as trees mature and are ready for harvesting. However, I understand that some harvesting would be deferred if the port did not have capacity to handle the logs.
- 2.4. In my opinion, the port activity relating to log exports will remain largely unchanged unless it can increase its capacity to handle logs. If the port increases its capacity, then the logging companies would be able to increase their export volumes. Therefore, while the port does not directly control log truck movement volumes, it does have a very strong influence on them.
- 2.5. The provision of the second berth will enable a more consistent volume of logs to be handled each day and reduce the number of days with low volumes of logs being brought into the port. The overall effect is that there will be more days with high truck volumes.

3. Twin Berth Application – Traffic Generation

- 3.1. The existing log export demands at Eastland Port creates an average weekday truck volume on Hirini Street of about 800 vehicles per day (vpd) but also varies widely from day to day, ranging from 460 vpd to 1,250 vpd¹.
- 3.2. The EPL resource consent application seeks to establish a second berth to meet the future export demands for logs. I also understand that the expansion would also enable container movements in the future as part of Business As Usual operations or during emergency events, similar to during Cyclone Gabrielle, when road access is restricted due to damage.
- 3.3. EPL anticipates that the second berth will enable logs to be loaded for export on more days of the year. From a transport perspective, there will be a reduction in the number of days with low volumes of trucks and potentially, higher hourly volumes through the middle of the day. The overall effect is that the average daily volume of truck movements is expected to increase to 1,075 vpd². EPL do not expect the peak hour volumes to change from those that currently occur.

¹ TAR, Table 2

² TAR, Section 8.5

- 3.4. In my view, the critical transport effects of the application are the increase in the average daily volume of truck movements, the number of days on which this will occur and the consequential effects on safety and efficiency of the road network.

4. SH35 / Hirini Street Intersection

- 4.1. Based on information provided to me by Gisborne District Council (GDC), I understand that GDC began development of a Network Operating Framework (NOF) in 2017/18. The first phase of work identified strategic objectives and a road hierarchy. The next phases of work were delayed due to a lack of funding and started again in 2019.
- 4.2. Subsequent workshops with Waka Kotahi concluded that a high level network operating plan (NOP) focused on identifying preferred freight routes was a higher priority than developing a detailed NOP for all roads.
- 4.3. An NOF was completed in August 2019 that identified a proposed road hierarchy and also seven key operating gaps which included the SH35 / Hirini Street intersection. I understand that investment decisions to address the operating gaps could not be confirmed at that time until the freight routes had been confirmed.
- 4.4. In 2020, GDC began consultation on preferred heavy freight routes which resulted in a Traffic and Parking Bylaw being issued in December 2021. The Bylaw restricted heavy vehicle movements in the Gisborne city urban area to SH35, Ormond Street, Esplanade and the Hirini Street / Rakaiatane Road / Kaiti Beach Road corridor. Heavy vehicles were prohibited from using Crawford Road.
- 4.5. The NOF was used to inform investment decisions in the GDC Long Term Plan (LTP) and also submissions on the Te Tairāwhiti Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-2031 (RLTP). The RLTP identified the need for improvements to the SH35 / Hirini Street intersection and the project was ranked fourth in Table 3 of the RLTP with implementation expected in 2021/22 to 2024/25 period.
- 4.6. I understand that GDC are still committed to implementing improvements at the SH35 / Hirini Street intersection and are seeking funding through the RLTP.
- 4.7. I accept that if intersection improvements to improve safety and capacity were completed prior to the second berth becoming operational, there would be no noticeable operational effects on the network compared with the port operation with a single berth.

5. Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan

- 5.1. Clause 2.1.7.2 sets out assessment criteria on transport matters when considering a resource consent application. The first matter to consider is whether the existing infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve the proposed development.

- 5.2. The SH35 / Hirini Street intersection is the most critical part of the transport infrastructure in terms of access to the port. This currently operates with a Level of Service (LOS) E or worse for a large proportion of the days on which a ship is being loaded with logs. Based on the information provided by EPL, the second berth will increase the number of active loading days at the port rather than the quantity of loading on any particular day. This means that there will be more days of the year when the intersection operates with low levels of service. This primarily affects traffic departing from the port or from the Kaiti suburban area via Crawford Road rather than state highway traffic.
- 5.3. Although the state highway intersection operates with a poor level of service, it can accommodate existing traffic volumes and would be able to operate in this way on more days of the year. One potential consequence of this is an increased risk of crashes occurring.
- 5.4. Waka Kotahi has confirmed that funding has been allocated for safety improvements to the intersection under the Safety Improvement Program. GDC is also seeking funding for improvements through the RLTP. I understand that any intersection capacity improvements could be completed before 2030 and the forecast peak export demand period for logs.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1. The construction of the second berth will enable EPL to accommodate a large increase in log export volumes. The primary traffic effects arising from the development will be higher truck volumes on Hirini Street throughout the day and on more days of the year.
- 6.2. I consider that the higher truck volumes could be accommodated on the road network but it will require implementation of an operational traffic management plan to distribute movements across the day and ideally, safety and capacity improvements to the SH35 / Hirini Street intersection. Construction activity will also contribute to higher volumes of traffic using Hirini Street and a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be required.
- 6.3. In my opinion, implementation of an Operational Traffic Management Plan and a Construction Traffic Management Plan are matters that can be addressed through resource consent conditions.