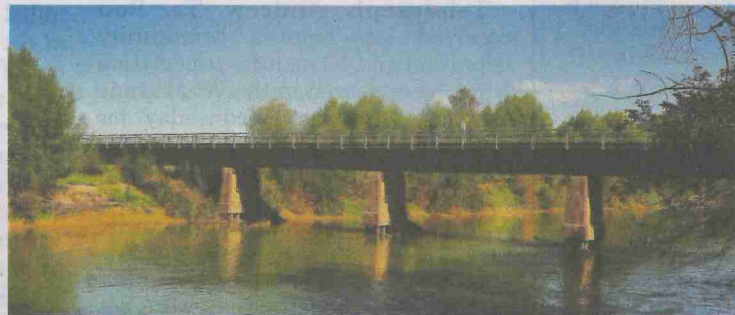


News

Government road programme omits Pekatahi bridge

Keith Melville
Staff reporter

OPOTIKI trucker Robert Monk, of Robert Monk Transport, says it is a shame the Government has not included funds in its \$212 million road upgrade package, announced in the weekend, for the Pekatahi road-rail bridge.



LEFT OUT: The Pekatahi road-rail bridge has been ignored in the Government's \$212 million road upgrade package.

Mr Monk said the bridge, across the Whakatane River near Taneatua, was overdue for replacement, but he welcomed the news that the Motu River bridge on State Highway 2, between Opotiki and Gisborne, would be replaced.

The Motu bridge replacement cost is estimated at \$3 million to \$5 million and the Government envisages making a start on the project between 2015-16 at the earliest.

Mr Monk said the bridge had difficult approaches and, unlike the Pekatahi road-rail bridge, it was not capable of carrying nine-axle 50-tonne trucks.

The only other project anywhere near the Eastern Bay among the 14 announced by Prime Minister John Key on Saturday is the Rotorua eastern arterial.

This is one of three projects in which \$12 million will be made available for investigation and design.

The others are in Hawke's Bay and Nelson.

New Zealand Transport Agency regional director Harry Wilson said the 14 projects

had been selected by the Government for advancement with additional funding.

"These projects have been signalled by local governments as high priority for some time.

"However, most of the projects were unlikely to go ahead under normal funding settings for a number of years," Mr Wilson said.

As part of the announcement transport minister Gerry Brownlee said the Government was committing up to \$80 million from the package to accelerate five critically important regional projects, with work beginning next year.

These are:

- Kawarau Falls bridge, in Otago
- Mingha Bluff to Rough Creek realignment, in Canterbury
- Akerama curves realignment and passing lane, in Northland
- State Highway 35 slow vehicle bays, in Gisborne
- Normanby overbridge realignment, in Taranaki.

"These projects are fully investigated and designed, and

address current safety, resilience or productivity issues, but construction wasn't due to begin until late this decade or after 2020," Mr Brownlee said.

He said these projects could begin in 2014-15, and be completed by 2016-17.

"The government is committed to fund the next six projects with an additional \$115 million and subject to the usual investigations, construction would be expected to begin within three years on each of these projects," he said.

The six projects are:

- Whirokino trestle bridge replacement, in Manawatu-Wanganui
- Motu bridge replacement, in Gisborne
- Opawa and Wairau bridge replacements, in Marlborough
- Taramakau road-rail bridge, on the West Coast
- Loop Road north to Smeatons Hill safety improvements, in Northland
- Mt Messenger and Awakino Gorge corridor, in Taranaki.

Woollen slippers keep kids' tootsies warm



THERE will be no more cold tootsies for children in this Allandale School bilingual class. Now, after removing their shoes at the classroom door, the children can slip on woollen slippers, knitted for them by Clare Wrathall.

Mrs Wrathall has knitted 24 pairs of slip-

pers - one for every pupil in the class, including her grandson, and teacher Whaea Ngamihi. She presented them to the children last week.

Mrs Wrathall said she got the idea from a friend who knitted slippers for schools as part of a Spinners and Weavers Guild project.

"I mentioned it in front of my grandchildren and next minute I'm knitting slippers for the whole class."

She is hoping the carpet wool, supplied by Brian Wallace, will ensure the slippers are hardwearing.

Photo Troy Baker D0750-04

Smoky winter fires prompt complaints

SMOKY outdoor fires on cool days are ramping up the number of complaints made to Bay of Plenty Regional Council about smoke nuisance.

And the number of complaints

could easily be reduced if people managed fires well and understood the rules about what can be burned, pollution prevention officer Chris Brewer said.

The regional council received 10

smoky fire complaints on one day at the end of May, all but one caused by burning green vegetation.

"All of the alleged offenders claimed they did not know it was

against best practice to burn green vegetative material. The prime cause of smoky fire complaints is the lack of awareness about the rules under the region's air plan and management of fires," he said.