

## Eastern Link begins

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**Transport Minister Steven Joyce is at State Highway 2 near Papamoa for the sod turning ceremony that marks the construction start of the Tauranga Eastern Link highway project.**



*Transport Minister Steven Joyce at Papamoa with other ministers and politicians for the ceremony.*

This ceremony, occurring late Friday morning, is six months ahead of the original schedule because of the successful contractor's tender for the \$335 million project.

A consortium led by Fulton Hogan, and including HEB Construction, Opus International Consultants, URS Corporation New Zealand, Peters and Cheung, and Bartley Consultants will build the Bay of Plenty's largest roading project.

The Fulton Hogan-led consortium won the contract due to its submissions on several features including price, innovation and their proposed construction programme which allowed initial works to begin almost immediately.

The tendered price for construction of \$335 million represents a saving of \$15 million or four per cent on original estimates.

The four lane highway will run from Te Maunga to Paengaroa and bypass Te Puke.

It will include 6km of existing highway from Te Maunga to Domain Road, and 17km of new highway to the junction of State Highway 2 and 33.

Tolls of \$2 for cars and \$5 for trucks will apply to the Te Puke bypass section from Domain Road to Paengaroa.

“We know there will be a lot of interest in the project as it gets underway and we’ll be working hard to keep people informed of progress,” says New Zealand Transport Agency Regional Director Harry Wilson.

“This will include a dedicated website and an on-site visitor centre which is due to be opened next year.

“We are excited about what completing this project will mean for the Bay of Plenty and are grateful for the support of our local government partners.”

Construction will involve more than three million cubic metres of earthworks to build a 23km four lane median-divided highway. Construction is expected to take five to six years, depending on soil and weather conditions.

Transport Minister Steven Joyce says the Tauranga Eastern Link is a road of national significance because of the safety and productivity gains it will bring both regionally and nationally.

“It is estimated that on average 200 to 250 people will be working on the project at any given time over the next five years, with more jobs expected to be created or retained in support industries and the wider regional economy,” says Steven.

“In the longer term, the new road will boost productivity, improve access to the Port of Tauranga and greatly enhance safety.”

It’s estimated that the new road reduce travel time for a return journey between Paengaroa and Te Maunga by 24 minutes.

“As well as shortening the journey for motorists and reducing transport costs for business, greater efficiencies and access to the Port of Tauranga will help increase the volume of exports and in turn the growth of the region.

“It will also bring significant safety gains on State Highway 2 between Tauranga and Paengaroa, which is ranked second worst in the country per kilometre for fatal and serious injury crashes by the KiwiRap programme.”

All going well, it is expected to open to traffic in 2016.

[\*\*View informational videos about the TEL here.\*\*](#)