

Before the Board of Inquiry
Te Mihi Geothermal Power Station Proposal

under: the Resource Management Act 1991 (*RMA*)

in the matter of: applications for resource consent by Contact Energy Limited in respect of the Te Mihi Geothermal Power Station Proposal

and: the submission of Transit New Zealand (*Submitter No. 11*)

Statement of Evidence of Melissa Donna Slatter on behalf of
Transit New Zealand

Dated: 23 June 2008

Hearing Date: 21 July 2008

Chapman Tripp Barristers & Solicitors

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Reference: V J Rive (vernon.rive@chapmantripp.com)
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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MELISSA DONNA SLATTER ON
BEHALF OF TRANSIT NEW ZEALAND**

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My name is Melissa Donna Slatter. I hold the position of Regional Planning Manager (Waikato) at the Hamilton Regional Office of Transit New Zealand (*Transit*). My qualifications include a Masters Degree in Philosophy (Resource and Environmental Planning) and a Degree of Bachelor of Social Science. I have 11 years experience in the field of resource management planning. I transferred to my current position in May 2006. Prior to this, I was the Environmental Planner Capital Works at Transit's Hamilton Office for a period of twelve months, and the Regional Planner in Transit's Napier office for four years.
- 2 I have extensive experience in infrastructure planning, including from both the policy perspective in district plan preparation and from the regulatory side, as well as in the preparation of resource consents and notices of requirement.
- 3 This evidence is given in support of Transit's submission on Contact Energy Limited's (*Contact*) application for resource consents for the Te Mihi Geothermal Plant (*the Proposal*).
- 4 I am generally familiar with the Proposal site, the State highway network in and around State Highway 1 (*SH1*), and the various local roading connections to SH1.
- 5 I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of Transit.
- 6 I wish to draw to the Board of Inquiry's attention that the Land Transport Management Bill (*Bill*) is currently before Parliament, and the intended commencement date is 1 July 2008.
- 7 Under clause 36(1) of the Bill, Transit and Land Transport New Zealand are dissolved, and a new entity, the New Zealand Transport Agency (*NZTA*) is established.
- 8 For all legal and practical purposes, the NZTA will replace Transit in all proceedings and documents, and in particular, the position of Transit under the Resource Management Act 1991 (*RMA*) is preserved.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 9 My evidence will cover the following matters:
- 9.1 Summary of evidence;
 - 9.2 Background to Transit's submission;
 - 9.3 SH1 and the SH1/Poihipi Road intersection;
 - 9.4 Assessment of traffic effects of the Proposal;
 - 9.5 Transit's current position;
 - 9.6 Proposed mitigation measures;
 - 9.7 Conclusions.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 10 My evidence is based on the conclusions of expert traffic advice received by Transit, and concludes that while there are potential adverse traffic effects resulting from the construction of the Proposal which are more than minor, these will be temporary in nature (33 months).
- 11 Subject to a combination of appropriate intersection upgrades, operational conditions and considered traffic management to manage the effects of construction traffic and staff/visitor traffic, it is Transit's position that the effects of the Proposal on the SH1/Poihipi Road intersection (*Intersection*) can be reasonably managed.

BACKGROUND TO TRANSIT'S SUBMISSION

- 12 Transit made a submission in opposition to the Proposal on 3 March 2008. A copy of Transit's submission is attached as **Appendix A** to my evidence. The submission identified Transit's concerns about potential adverse effects of construction traffic on the Intersection.
- 13 Transit is the statutory body charged with the control and management of New Zealand's State highway system, and operates under a number of statutory and non-statutory documents. Those documents provide Transit with high level guidance as to how it

should operate and more particularly how it should implement its statutory functions.

- 14 Transit has considered the advice of its traffic engineering expert, Mr Robert Swears, and considered its position in light of the relevant provisions of the Land Transport Management Act 2003, Transit's National State Highway Strategy (2007), Environmental Plan (2004) and Planning Policy Manual (2007).
- 15 At a macro level, Transit is supportive of this renewable energy project, which it is understood, if approved will assist in achieving Government's targets of reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions as provided for in the New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy. Moreover, the Proposal will also provide short and long term economic benefits to the regional and local economy.
- 16 However, at a micro level, as Mr Swears will explain, there are currently serious traffic capacity issues at the Intersection. This present situation will be exacerbated by construction traffic associated with the Proposal. This will have an adverse impact (albeit temporary in nature) on the local community who use this intersection to access the Taupo town centre, as well as those motorists passing through Taupo during the construction and establishment of the Proposal.

SH1 AND THE INTERSECTION

Significance of SH1

- 17 SH1 is the country's major north/south transportation route running from Waitiki Landing, close to Cape Reinga in the north to Bluff in the south. It is the paramount link for the transportation of goods and services and travel between regional and inter-regional communities, major cities, towns and tourist destinations. As provided for in Transit's National State Highway Strategy, this route is categorised as being of National importance.
- 18 SH1 provides the primary access to Taupo from both the north and south, taking traffic directly through Taupo's central business district and alongside Lake Taupo. SH5 runs conjointly with SH1 from Wairakei through Taupo to just south of the CBD connecting traffic to and from Rotorua and Napier. Taupo is a major destination for highway users as a tourist and event centre and provides all necessary services for the traveller.

The Intersection - background

- 19 SH1 also provides the only direct access to Taupo to and from the western suburbs via Norman Smith Street and Poihipi Road. The average annual daily traffic flows from the Transit 2006 counts for SH1 is approximately 29,000 vehicles recorded just north of Control Gates Bridge and approximately 11,000 vehicles north of Huka Falls Road. Traffic counts provided by Taupo District Council (*Council*) in 2004 indicate that the average traffic using Poihipi Road was approximately 5,000 vehicles per day. These figures clearly show that a further significant function of this section of SH1 is as a local arterial route providing a roading service to the local community as well as through traffic.
- 20 As residential growth in west Taupo has increased, the Intersection has become of concern to Transit. This is primarily due to safety issues and delays to right turn traffic from Poihipi Road onto SH1. Transit undertook an upgrade of this intersection and the adjacent Huka Falls Road intersection in 1999. This included a revised layout of the central islands to assist the right turn out movement from Poihipi Road.
- 21 With continued growth and development, particularly with further growth planned in the western areas of Mapara Valley and Kinloch, issues regarding the ongoing safety and capacity of the Intersection arose again in 2004.

East Taupo Arterial

- 22 The Council has secured a designation and associated resource consents to construct the East Taupo Arterial (*ETA*), which is proposed as a rural highway bypassing Taupo, connecting between the State Highway 1/5 junction at Wairakei, and SH1 west of Taupo Airport. Transit understands that funding has been obtained for this Council-led initiative, and it is anticipated that ETA will be completed by 2011/2012.
- 23 The ETA is to be constructed as a local road, but the Council and Transit intend that it be declared SH1 following its construction. At that time, SH1 will shift to that alignment, and the designation over the existing SH1 will be uplifted, thereby becoming the responsibility of the Council.
- 24 Transit and Council jointly funded a traffic study of the highway corridor between Huka Falls Road and Spa Road in 2005/6 with the inclusion of adjacent local roads, to determine long term treatments

for the corridor to improve traffic flows and safety once the ETA was completed, and to identify any short term improvements.¹

- 25 The study concluded that the ETA when completed would reduce the pressure on the corridor and its intersections.

Western Kinloch Arterial

- 26 The Council designated a major arterial local road from Poihipi Road westwards, to serve the ongoing and future development of the western area. This route, now known as the Western Kinloch Arterial (*WeKA*), incorporates the proposal for a roundabout at the Poihipi Road/Huka Falls Road intersection and will provide a direct major arterial connection with SH1.

- 27 While this roundabout will significantly improve this intersection, there is no certainty at this time that the *WeKA* will go ahead as the notice of requirement is subject to appeal. The Environment Court has placed this appeal "on hold" until appeals on Plan Changes 19, 20 and 21 to the Operative Taupo District Plan are determined. As a consequence, the Council has not yet sought funding for the *WeKA*.

- 28 As the ETA will transfer to the NZTA on completion, no significant investment in the existing SH1 corridor is planned by Transit in the interim.

ASSESSMENT OF TRAFFIC EFFECTS OF PROPOSAL

- 29 As Mr Swears explains in his evidence, the construction traffic generated by the Proposal will increase queuing and delays at the Intersection. This will adversely affect the safe and efficient operation of this Intersection and SH1 in the vicinity of this intersection. In particular, Mr Swears has advised Transit that the Proposal will result in adverse effects not only on the Intersection and SH1, but also the SH1/Norman Smith Street intersection.
- 30 These effects will be experienced by the communities (local, regional and national) who rely upon a safe and efficient transport network in order to be enabled to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

¹ Corridor Study:SH1, Huka Falls Road to Spa Road – Opus Consultants October 2006.

- 31 As explained by Mr Swears, the mitigation measures proposed in the evidence of Mr Harries go some way in addressing Transit's concerns. However, further consultation with Transit will be required to ensure the mitigation envisaged by the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and travel demand management measures proposed by Contact are achievable and successful.

TRANSIT'S CURRENT POSITION

- 32 In its submission, Transit sought a condition requiring the upgrade of the Intersection with a roundabout that would accord with Stage 1a of the WeKA notice of requirement.
- 33 Since lodging its submission, Transit has met with Contact to discuss its concerns and to explore potential measures that could mitigate the effects of the Proposal's construction traffic on the Intersection. The first of these meetings which I attended was on 10 October 2007, prior to public notification of the application. During this meeting, Transit and Contact representatives discussed a number of mitigation options including:
- The need to upgrade the Intersection to a roundabout as per Stage 1a of WeKA; and
 - The potential closure of the site access to Poihipi Road and the use of alternative routes not involving the Intersection.
- 34 However, when the application was publicly notified in February 2008, the Traffic Impact Assessment did not examine these options in any detail. This prompted a second meeting on 1 May 2008 between Contact, the Council and Transit to discuss the need for alternative access routes or improvements to the Intersection.
- 35 In seeking solutions to present at the pre-hearing meeting, Transit and Contact discussed the provision of a slip lane for traffic turning left into Poihipi Road, as suitable mitigation for the adverse traffic effects of the construction traffic. It was seen at this time that this might be a way forward, as Contact indicated it was not prepared to construct the roundabout as sought in Transit's submission.
- 36 During the pre-hearing meeting on 21 May 2008, Transit and Contact discussed a further mitigation measure, in the form of a seagull intersection upgrade of Poihipi Road for traffic turning right into SH1, to be constructed in conjunction with the left turn slip lane.

- 37 After the 21 May pre-hearing meeting, Contact prepared plans of the Intersection depicting the left turn slip lane, and proposed seagull intersection, which then formed the basis of further discussions between Contact, Transit and the Council on 29 May 2008.
- 38 The outcome of the 29 May 2008 meeting resulted in Contact obtaining construction estimates for the Intersection improvement works. As discussed in Mr Swear's evidence, further conversations between the parties resulted in the refinement of the Intersection mitigation to a left turn slip lane only. I can confirm that Transit is no longer pursuing the seagull intersection upgrade.
- 39 Details of the proposed management of construction traffic throughout the construction period will also need further refinement, to ensure the travel demand management commitments made by Contact are achievable.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- 40 Transit is able to support the Proposal on the basis that the following conditions are attached to the consent:
- 40.1 The consent holder shall construct a left turn slip lane to facilitate northbound movements from State Highway 1 into Poihipi Road, prior to the use of this intersection by construction traffic. Design and construction of the slip lane shall be subject to the approval of Transit New Zealand and will be in general accordance with Traffic Design Group drawing number 9118-5W1/14/Revision A dated 23 June 2008.
- 40.2 The consent holder shall minimise the effects of construction traffic on other traffic movements during periods when high volumes of traffic are expected on State Highway 1, by ceasing all construction activities during the following periods:
- (a) The Christmas/New Year period, from the day before Christmas Eve through until the Monday after the New Year holiday;
- (b) Public holiday weekends, including the afternoon of the day before a public holiday weekend;

- (c) Weekends when large events are being held in Taupo. These include, but are not limited to the A1GP, Taupo Ironman, and the Taupo Cycle Challenge.

- 40.3 The consent holder shall limit the number of vehicles permitted on the Site at any one time to 200.
- 40.4 The consent holder shall limit the amount of staff and visitor parking at the Site to capacity for 160 light vehicles (including parking for staff shuttle vans/buses).
- 40.5 The consent holder shall install no-stopping restrictions on all local roads in the vicinity of the Site for a distance of 1 km in each direction from the Site entrance.
- 40.6 Prior to lodging the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to the Council for approval, the consent holder shall provide the CTMP and any other documents/plans intended to manage the movement of vehicles to and from the Site to Transit New Zealand for review and comment at least 40 working days prior to the commencement of construction.

The consent holder shall submit the CTMP to the Council for review no less than 40 working days prior to any construction works commencing. The Council shall then retain a suitably qualified person (internal or external) to review the plan and certify, in consultation with Transit New Zealand, that it meets the requirements of this condition. The consent holder shall bear all reasonable costs associated with this review. The Council will provide a response within 10 working days following receipt of the CTMP detailing whether any additional information is necessary to enable the review. The purpose of this review is to ensure the plan achieves the following objective:

The objective of the CTMP is to ensure that traffic generated during the construction phase of the project is effectively managed so that increases in traffic volume are safely accommodated within the existing road network and so that any traffic effects associated with this phase of the project are no more than minor. The CTMP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) A requirement that shift times are established in all contracts associated with construction of the Proposal

(including physical works contracts, subcontract agreements, and employment contracts) so that shifts do not commence or end between 8.00 – 9.00 am, 2.45 – 3.45 pm, and 4.45 – 5.45 pm;

- (b) A requirement that deliveries to the Site shall not be carried out during the time periods set out in paragraph (a) above;
- (c) Travel demand management measures, which include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) Provision of staff shuttle vans/buses for transporting staff to and from the Site; and
 - (ii) Incentives for high occupancy vehicle use (3 or more persons per vehicle).

- 41 Finally, I consider that the following advice note should be included if consent for the Proposal is granted:

Prior to any works occurring on the State highway network, the approval of Transit New Zealand is required under section 51 of the Transit New Zealand Act 1989.

CONCLUSION

- 42 Transit acknowledges the significant environmental and economic benefits the Proposal will bring to the local, regional and national community. Moreover, it is acknowledged that this project will assist the Government's reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and give effect to its international climate change commitments, This is strongly supported by Transit
- 43 However, these positive effects must be balanced against more than minor adverse effects related to construction traffic, albeit temporary, interacting with the local road and State highway network during the 33 month construction period.
- 44 Transit has received expert advice that Contact's traffic assessment has underestimated a number of factors affecting traffic generation and its effect on the State highway network during the construction period. As a result, it is Transit's view that a conservative approach is needed in assessing the travel demand measures and construction traffic benefits proposed to be achieved by Contact.

- 45 However, Transit is confident the conditions as requested above, will provide for adequate mitigation of construction traffic effects, and enable involvement by Transit during the development and implementation of the management of construction traffic.
- 46 Contact has signalled a commitment to working with Transit during the development and implementation of these mitigation measures. Transit looks forward to positive continued engagement with Contact in the coming months to ensure the timely resolution of the traffic related matters ahead of construction commencement. On this basis, Transit is able to support the Proposal.

Melissa Slatter

23 June 2008

Annexures:

A Transit's submission

ANNEXURE A
TRANSIT'S SUBMISSION

Please quote our reference:
All enquiries to: Steve Howard

03 March 2008

FreePost Te Mihi Call In
Minister for the Environment
PO Box 10362
WELLINGTON

11

Dear Sir/Madam

**TRANSIT NEW ZEALAND SUBMISSION ON CONTACT ENERGY LIMITED PROPOSED
TE MIHI GEOTHERMAL POWER STATION AT WAIRAKEI, TAUPO**

Please find attached Transit New Zealand's submission on the Proposed Geothermal Power Station at Wairakei, Taupo.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss aspects of our submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

S. Howard

Steve Howard
for **REGIONAL MANAGER**
stgs2102

cc: Taupo District Council
Contact Energy Limited

FAXED

7/3/2008 13:49.

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TRANSIT NEW ZEALAND SUBMISSION ON CONTACT ENERGY LIMITED PROPOSED
TE MIHI GEOTHERMAL POWER STATION AT WAIRAKEI, TAUPO

TO: Minister for the Environment
PO Box 10362
WELLINGTON

Fx. (04) 439 7705

FROM: Regional Manager
Transit New Zealand
PO Box 973
HAMILTON

Ph. (07) 9571 610
Fx. (07) 9571 437

Attn: Steve Howard

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 is to achieve sustainable management of natural and physical resources - including in respect of roads. The roading network in general and the State highway system in particular, are natural and physical resources of national importance. This has been recognised by the Parliament in the Transit New Zealand Act 1989 (TNZA), and the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA). This has also been confirmed in a number of Court decisions (eg. see *Auckland Volcanic Cones Society Inc. v Transit New Zealand* [2003] 2 NZRMA 54.
- 1.2 Transit New Zealand (Transit) is a body corporate (s.75, LTMA), with the sole powers of control and management for all purposes of all State highways (s.61, TNZA). The statutory objective of Transit is "to operate the State highway system in a way that contributes to an integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport system" (s.77, LTMA). In meeting its objective, Transit must exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility. The LTMA has set more stringent requirements for Transit to ensure the sustainable operation of the State highway system in a manner that contributes to the sustainable management of the land transport system as a whole.
- 1.3 This submission of Transit New Zealand is intended to achieve these goals.

2.0 TRANSIT'S SUBMISSION

- 2.1 This submission relates to the application from Contact Energy Limited (Contact), for the construction of a new power station in the Wairakei-Tauhara Geothermal Field, in an area known as 'Te Mihi' near Taupo.
- 2.2 Transit has reviewed the application and assessed the impact this may have on the State highway network. Vehicles associated with the construction phase of the power station will travel the State highway network and primarily utilise the Poihipi Road / State Highway (SH) 1 intersection. This intersection has known safety and capacity issues. Transit is therefore an affected party.
- 2.3 Transit opposes the application.
- 2.4 The reasons are as follows:

The transportation assessment and further information prepared by Traffic Design Group, that forms part of the application, does not offer appropriate conditions to avoid, remedy or mitigate the traffic effects at the Poihipi Road / SH1 intersection.

3.0 TRANSIT SEEKS THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS FROM THE BOARD OF INQUIRY


- 3.1 That the Board resolves the consent application is declined.
- 3.2 Alternatively, that the application be amended or a condition included to require the upgrade of the intersection of Poihipi Road and SH1 in accordance with Stage 1a of the Western Kinlock Arterial Designation, to the satisfaction of the Taupo District Council (in consultation with Transit New Zealand).

or

The Construction Traffic Management Plan that forms part of the application includes the provision that no construction traffic will use the Poihipi Road / SH1 intersection. Alternative routes would instead be used, which may utilise other State highway intersections or private side roads.

4.0 Transit wishes to be heard in support of its Submission.

5.0 Transit does not wish to present joint evidence.


Signed by KAYE CLARK
REGIONAL MANAGER
Pursuant to the authority of
Transit New Zealand

Deputy RM.

Date: 3/3/2008