

MEDIA RELEASE

Ruapehu District Council



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Date: Tuesday 3 May 2011.

OKAHUKURA SADDLE RD RE-OPENS

Roading contractors, councillors, local residents, and other stakeholders joined Ruapehu District Council (RDC) staff to celebrate the re-opening of the Okahukura Saddle Road last Friday (29 April) with a drive over the new road and a tailgate lunch at one of the many scenic points along the road.

The re-opening of the newly sealed Okahukura Saddle Road completes the last major roading capital works project being undertaken by RDC at this time alongside other projects such as the Dobbs Bluff stabilisation, Shorts Hill pavement rehabilitation, Ohakune Mountain Road 9km bridge and the Whanganui River Road seal extension.

RDC Team Leader Roding, Warren Furner, said the Okahukura Saddle Road project started in 2003 and has included major earthworks with horizontal and vertical realignment of the road and it's sealing over 7.4km for a cost of around \$2.8 million.

"Council ratepayers will pay around a third of the final cost and government the rest," he said.

"The project actually struggled at first to achieve the required economic benefits required of any roading project and as a result work actually stalled in 2005."

"Hard work by council and its partners saw a new modified pavement design for the road developed along with the use of local stabilised aggregate from the Taringamotu Stream which was key to getting the costs down and achieving the cost/benefit required to get the project completed."

Mr Furner commented that the Okahukura Saddle Road project utilised 100% local resources in a consortium style approach.

"As well as using local contractors such as Jilisens and Petco local property owners played a major role with their support over the life of the project," he said.

"Notably Anthony and Jinnene Shrubsall allowed the project to use their property for fill material which made a significant contribution to cost savings."

Mr Furner said that if any one person was pivotal in getting the project off the ground it was ex RDC councillor Joe Murphy who sadly passed away last year.

“Joe was represented at the re-opening of the road by his wife Maureen.”

Mr Furner stated that the new road improves travel time between Ohura/Maitere and Taumarunui by half an hour while also being a regionally strategic route by providing the most expedient route north if SH4 is closed.

It is anticipated that the new road will also prove popular with tourists as it takes you through incredible regenerating native forests while providing magnificent views out to the mountains of the Tongariro National Park,” he said.

Mr Furner said that the completion of this stage of RDC’s major capital roadwork programme didn’t mean things were slowing down for council’s roading team.

“We will now be turning our attention to the rebuilding of the existing sealed road network and upgrading the district’s bridge stock,” he said.

**DAVID HAMMOND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



Fittingly the first vehicle over the re-opened road after the ceremony was a stock truck from local transport company Ongarue Transport (ONG JIM)