

MIN-4355 Potholes and Road Maintenance

8 January 2024

Provide some information on pothole repairs and road maintenance.

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi response:

The state highway network is New Zealand's largest value social asset and is of critical importance to the country's social and economic outcomes. Approximately 90% of the state highway network continues to meet minimum asset condition requirements and is performing as expected. The other 10% is near or below the level of what is considered acceptable. This is impacting the level of service experienced by road users through increased exposure to uneven road surfaces, potholes, and journey disruption, such as that caused by landslide events. When lifeline routes are affected, significant detour routes can be required and, in some cases, no alternate is available.

Roads have suffered from a lack of maintenance and their condition has deteriorated to a level where more work is required to bring them back to an acceptable condition. There has been a noticeable increase in potholes on sections of the state highway network over the past few years, which has been portrayed as a significant representation of the general condition of the wider network.

Ongoing under-investment in preventive measures is resulting in repeated cycles of damage and repair. While we are managing the asset well overall and within funding constraints, a lack of preventive investment on items such as subsoil drains or culverts means that infrastructure such as pavements deteriorate faster and the cost of recovery from extreme weather events and other disruptions is higher, and more work is required to bring it up to condition.

Degraded road surfaces and increased rainfall makes it more likely for water to enter the pavements making them weaker and more vulnerable to damage from heavy vehicles and increasing the rate at which potholes form and greater decay occurs.

Most potholes form during the wet winter months. NZTA has repaired a significant number of potholes across the state highway network in recent years as detailed below. Please note, the figures below relate to pothole jobs attended to, we do not record where multiple potholes are repaired on the same job.

Financial Year	Potholes repaired
2020/21	36,000
2021/22	45,000
2022/23	38,000
2023/24 (to date)	29,000

Over the past ten years the length of state highway has grown by 10%, increasing the assets being maintained. Additionally traffic volumes have increased by 15% which has increased the load and rate of deterioration of infrastructure. This means that every bit of maintenance delivered needs to be of best value. Therefore, not just fixing potholes, but also stop them forming. This requires that we do the right works when

we maintain our roads so that we make them robust and durable and less vulnerable to damage. This involves strengthening our road pavements not just resurfacing them.

This summer is seeing an unprecedented level of activity on the state highway network across the country, including the significant renewal programme, which is about 20 percent larger than last summer. In total over 2400 lane kilometres of road will be rebuilt or resealed over the current summer construction season. Around 30 percent of this work was completed prior to Christmas.

For road users this means that they will likely experience roadworks at some stage this summer, particularly if they are driving long distances during the peak of summer. Unfortunately, we can only proactively maintain our roads during the warmer, drier months of the year, coinciding with the same time as people are holidaying.

Every region has a full programme of work this summer, though particular focus is on the centre of the North Island, due to the impact of several weather events leading to ongoing recovery works, and the associated pause of renewal programmes in January and February 2023.

Most of the renewal programme is expected to be complete by late-March 2024. However, some crews will continue into the autumn months, particularly those completing asphalt works.

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