

## TRANSPORT

# Linking light phases tipped to save \$50m

Co-ordinating arterial route signals would yield fuel and time savings, say experts

by Mathew Dearnaley

Transport consultants believe \$50 million could be chopped off Auckland's annual congestion bill, by co-ordinating traffic lights on the region's main roads.

The Auckland Regional Transport Authority has begun developing a project with the consultancy firm GHD to create a regional "route optimisation" programme to reduce driver frustration while yielding time and fuel savings.

That follows a trial conducted for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority over five adjacent intersections at Takanini, calculated to have saved road users 63,453 hours and more than 214,000 litres of fuel in a year.

GHD intelligent transport services manager Blair Monk said yesterday that while various local councils had similarly streamlined about 10 other routes, a co-ordinated network approach was needed across Auckland to make the most of valuable existing infrastructure.

"It's not terribly sexy, because there is nothing new and exciting to open — it's just taking what you've got and making it work properly," he said.

"Compared to building new roads, it's just so much cheaper."

Mr Monk said that although the Takanini trial offered a time saving of just 17 seconds for each passing vehicle, that soon built into major benefits for busy routes, including reduced emissions from stopping and starting.

"It adds up very quickly."

Peak-hour delays on another key arterial route through nine intersections were reduced by about a third.

His consultancy predicts potential annual savings of \$50 million from making the most of main roads throughout the region, against an existing estimated congestion cost of \$700 million to Auckland motorists and businesses.

It has charted a potential development of route optimisation across Auckland over five years for \$10.5 million, to be followed by annual spending of \$1 million to adjust traffic lights and other measures to changing patterns of use.

The firm is also advocating such management techniques to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and to promote public transport, by configuring signals to encourage or discourage the use of particular routes.

Mr Monk said it was even possible to programme signals to give priority only to buses which were running late, to improve travel times for all road users.

But he acknowledged challenges in obtaining enough Government money through the new three-yearly funding cycle for land transport, despite support for the project from the regional transport authority.

He hoped obtaining funding would become simpler under the Super City model, with a single budget for transport projects throughout the region.

Regional transport authority spokeswoman Sharon Hunter confirmed that her organisation was preparing for its successor agency to roll out a region-wide route optimisation project under the new Super City.

Sites would be prioritised under a region-wide programme so that the most important routes were improved first.

## HERITAGE



LANDMARK: The developer wants to turn the tavern, one of Auckland's oldest pubs, into apartments.

# Fears of 'judge's bias' delays appeal

by Wayne Thompson

The Masonic Tavern apartments case stalled in the Environment Court yesterday after Devonport residents said they feared the judge would be biased against their appeal.

Principal Environment Court Judge Craig Thompson allowed a day for residents' groups to persuade the High Court that he should excuse himself from hearing any more of the case.

Lawyer for most of the appellants, Paul Cavanagh, QC, said the judge's position was untenable after pre-trial rulings savaged the appellants' case.

They felt he would have an "unconscious bias" against their arguments — preventing a fair hearing.

Judge Thompson declined the appli-

cation to step aside. He said he did not accept that he was no longer capable of having an open mind to the residents' case because of their complaint about pre-trial rulings.

He said that if he sat on the case he would be one of a panel of three judicial officers.

However, he adjourned the court to noon today to give dissatisfied parties a reasonable time to persuade a High Court judge that he should step aside.

Meanwhile, Wellington-based Judge Thompson and environment commissioners will familiarise themselves with the site of the tavern, which is one of Auckland's oldest hotels.

The Masonic Friendly Society and Devonport Heritage are heading the appeal against North Shore City Coun-

cil granting resource consents for the tavern's redevelopment into apartments.

The groups believe a conservation plan by Redback Develop did not address the building and site as a whole and its importance as a heritage building.

The Masonic Friendly Society was outraged when Judge Thompson ruled that a fundamental part of its case, expert evidence about the archaeology of the site and original tavern, could not be received.

Redback Develop is also appealing against conditions of the resource consents.

The developer's lawyer, Matthew Casey, QC, objected to yesterday's adjournment.

He suggested bias in the pre-trial.

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## ACCOLADES

# Mt Roskill students realise their dreams

by Vaimoana Tapaleao

Three Auckland teenagers are looking forward to coming up with innovative inventions that will change the world.

Mt Roskill Grammar students Nikhil Mahashabde, 17, Kevin Huang, 18, and Abhilash Kamineni, 17, were among 29 students chosen from around the country to attend this year's Genesis Energy Realise the Dream event.

The trio spent a week at the event, held in Wellington last week, where youngsters were recognised for their excellent science and technological research done while at school.

Students presented their individual works to a panel of judges at the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Mr Mahashabde, who created the SpyNik — a device designed to let parents monitor and control their children's internet use remotely — was awarded a trip to attend the Taiwan International Science Fair.

The 17-year-old is set to study engineering and commerce at the University of Auckland next year.

But his sights are ultimately set on greater horizons.



CHANGING THE WORLD: Winning students (from left) Nikhil Mahashabde, 17, Kevin Huang, 18, and Abhilash Kamineni, 17.

"One of my goals is to get into Nasa. That was my passion as a child and still is — astronomy.

"And with engineering, hopefully I can combine my two passions one day and do work for Nasa."

His feet, though, will be firmly planted on the ground.

"Oh no, I don't want to actually go into space.

"I just want to be the brains behind the project."

Classmate Kevin Huang was awarded a trip to China to attend the Beijing Youth Creation Competition, for his remote-controlled lawnmower.

The 18-year-old came up with the idea for his invention after seeing his grandparents having trouble maintaining their lawns.

Mr Huang was sponsored by Prime Minister John Key to help develop his mower, which earned its maker several top prizes at the Niwa Auckland Science and Technology Fair this year.

Mr Kamineni created the NSR Transfer — a pocket-sized device which lets him transfer data between USB drives.

He said being able to attend the Realise the Dream event was an amazing experience.

"The skills we learnt there will remain with us for life and the contacts we make will be invaluable as we continue our work in the future."

Royal Society of New Zealand organiser Debbie Woodhall said the work that the three students — and many others — undertook was highly innovative.

"To be selected is a real achievement as all the entries are of a very high standard, with students completing some outstanding projects," she said.

The students will fly to Wellington on March 10 for an awards dinner.

A trip to Europe and cash prizes of up to \$7000 will be presented.

## ROADS

# Bridge eases trip

Almost 40,000 vehicles a day have started using a bridge at the top end of Auckland's Northwestern Motorway, as part of a \$220 million link in the region's western ring route.

The 60m bridge carries Hobsonville Rd across the motorway, which will ultimately be connected to the new Upper Harbour link by a flyover immediately to the north.

Traffic gained access to the Hobsonville Rd bridge on Sunday after workers dismantled a large roundabout previously used to keep 38,000

vehicles construct

The flybridge is seamless Harbour lane extension Brigham

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## CRIME

# Man's death treated

Police have launched a homicide inquiry after a man was found dead and a woman stabbed at a house in South Auckland yesterday morning.

Neighbours called police to the property in Puhinui Rd, Papatoetoe, about 10am. They found the 69-year-old man's body but said it was too early to say what caused his death.

A 42-year-old woman went sur known la

A knife in stabbin Police for anyone