



9 March 2021

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 1 February 2020 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

1. *All advice to the Minister of Education on the Kahuranaki Rd Bus in Hawke's Bay (Routes 5101 and 5148) from the past year.*
2. *All communications about ineligible students using Route 5101 and 5148. For example how many and which ineligible schools they attend.*
3. *All communications in the process of determining that CHB High School is the closest High School to Elsthorpe as opposed to HNHS. This includes the methodology used. We are trying to understand how this determination was made. Is closest for example a line drawn on a map, or does duration of the journey also count?*
4. *All communications from Janice Kennerley on Routes 5101 and 5148 since September 2020.*
5. *All communications on where the proposed new bus stop will be on Kahuranaki Rd, including safety evaluations and communications with the contractor Nimon's and communications to the community about this new proposal.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Question 1

Please refer to the Rapid Response attached as **Appendix A**. This is the only information that has gone to the Minister of Education from the Ministry, from the past year regarding this matter.

Please note that we have not provided two attachments to this Rapid Response, which are your document of 3 November 2020 "The Tragic Tale of Route 5101" as well as our reply to this document of 4 November 2020, as these documents are already in your possession.

Question 2

There are no specific communications relating to ineligible students or eligibility criteria. Accordingly, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e).

Question 3

Determining a student's closest school is based on the distance from the student's provided residential address to the surrounding schools that can cater for that student's year level and gender.

The distance is based on the kilometres of the shortest public roads measured. Whichever school is identified to have the shortest distance to the residential address is considered to be the closest school. Our methodology is similar to the way Google Maps determines journey directions from location to destination. Duration (time) of the journey taken is not a factor in determining the closest school.

In the case of the students in the Elsthorpe area, Central Hawke's Bay College is their closest secondary school as the distance is shorter compared to the distance measured to Havelock North High School.

For further information, please refer to the map attached as **Appendix B**.

Question 4

Please refer to the email attached as **Appendix C**. This is the only email from Janice Kennerley regarding this matter since September 2020.

As per our previous communications with the local community, we had originally planned to defer changes to the current bus route to Term 1, 2021 due to health and safety concerns about the new bus stop. This was further exacerbated by Covid-19 and the period of uncertainty that followed.

We therefore decided not to take any further action and defer changes set to start Term 1, 2021 until further notice, as stated in this email from Janice.

Please note that some information has been withheld from this document under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, in order to protect the privacy of individuals.

Question 5

All of the communications in scope for this part of your request have been released to you as part of your previous OIA requests.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Kim Shannon
Head of Education Infrastructure Service

RAPID RESPONSE

Subject: Elsthorpe School Bus route
Drafter: Wendy Goldswain
Metis Number: 1244211
Date: 4 November 2020

QUESTION

Please provide a current update and key messages on the Elsthorpe bus route situation, and a draft briefing letter for Minister Hipkins to send to the local MP.

BACKGROUND

1. In 2019, the Elsthorpe school bus route in the Hawke's Bay was reviewed, along with approximately 1,200 other routes. The reviews are part of a regular process to ensure the routes fit with the current student population. In 2019, a larger than usual number of route reviews were carried out in order to set accurate route information for tender pricing.
2. For many years, the Elsthorpe route has been operating outside of policy. Ineligible students had been boarding it prior to the route's official first pick up and were disembarking at an unofficial transfer point so they can catch another school bus to Havelock North High School. School Transport is only available for students attending their closest school, which for these students is Central Hawke's Bay College. In addition, the Ministry does not design routes that involve transferring students between school buses for safety reasons.
3. Following community concerns relayed to the Ministry via Elsthorpe High School in October 2019, the Ministry agreed to leave the route unchanged, and committed to reviewing the route at the start of 2021.
4. Because 2020 has been a challenging year for schools, we agreed to defer the route review in 2021. This decision was communicated to the school on 30 September 2020, and the school was asked to communicate this decision to their community, as is normal practice.
5. We consider it likely that the imminent route review in 2021 has re-ignited the situation. Information was released to 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(a) under the Official Information Act in October 2020.
6. 9(2)(a) wrote a seven page document about the issue which he provided to the Ministry for comment on 3 November. The Ministry responded to 9(2)(a) on 4 November. 9(2)(a) intends to "release" this information to the media. This document and our response are attached for your information.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

7. It is perceived that transport eligibility zones are overriding school enrolment zones in an effort to deal with overcrowding issues at some schools.
8. Other concerns that were the subject of media questions from 9(2)(a) from 28-30 October 2020 and 9(2)(a) document relate to misleading the Minister and officials avoiding the community meeting in October 2019.

KEY MESSAGES

11. The Elsthorpe bus route remains unchanged based on feedback received from Elsthorpe School on behalf of the school community.
12. Students in the Elsthorpe area are not eligible for school transport assistance to Havelock North High School. School Transport is only available for students attending their closest school, which for these students is Central Hawke's Bay College.
13. On 30 September 2020, the Ministry wrote to the Elsthorpe School principal to confirm that the route will not be reviewed as planned in 2021 and asked the school to advise their families of this decision.
14. As the Elsthorpe route continues to transport ineligible students, operating outside of policy, it will be reviewed in the future when new contracts and transport providers are in place from 2022.
15. Enrolment Schemes and Transport Eligibility Zones serve different purposes. Ability to enrol at a school does not confer eligibility for transport assistance.

RECOMMENDATION

16. Note the current situation outlined in points 1-8 above.
17. Review and send the draft letter to the incoming Tukituki MP, Anna Lorke.

ATTACHMENTS

"The Tragic Tale of Route 5101", 9(2)(a), 3 November 2020

Ministry response to 9(2)(a), 4 November 2020

Draft letter to Anna Lorke MP

DRAFT

4 November 2020

Anna Lorke MP

Tukituki Electorate Office

Dear Anna

Elsthorpe and Havelock North school bus route

I wanted to make you aware of a situation relating to school bus services being used by ineligible students in your electorate. While the current route is continuing unchanged for the time being, there have been concerns raised by the local community about the changes that the Ministry was previously looking to implement.

The Ministry assists over 100,000 students to get to and from school each day, at an annual cost of \$207 million in 2019/20. School transport assistance is designed to help parents overcome barriers to education, such as distance and a lack of public transport, and meet their responsibility to get their children to school. Students must attend the closest school they can enrol at to be eligible for assistance.

For many years, the Elsthorpe bus route has been operating outside of policy, with students using the Elsthorpe bus to get to a bus stop at Red Bridge where they board a second bus taking them away from their closest school and into Havelock North.

In 2019, the Ministry commenced a routine review of the Elsthorpe route to bring it into line with policy. The community raised concerns around the design of the proposed route changes and safety of the new bus stops. The Ministry agreed to defer changing the route until 2021. The route is currently operating unchanged.

The review of the route was scheduled for 2021 which is likely the reason for a recent OIA request and a subsequent media enquiry. A concerned parent has written a summary of the situation, which the Ministry had the opportunity to comment on, on the 4th November, after which the parent intends to release his document to the media.

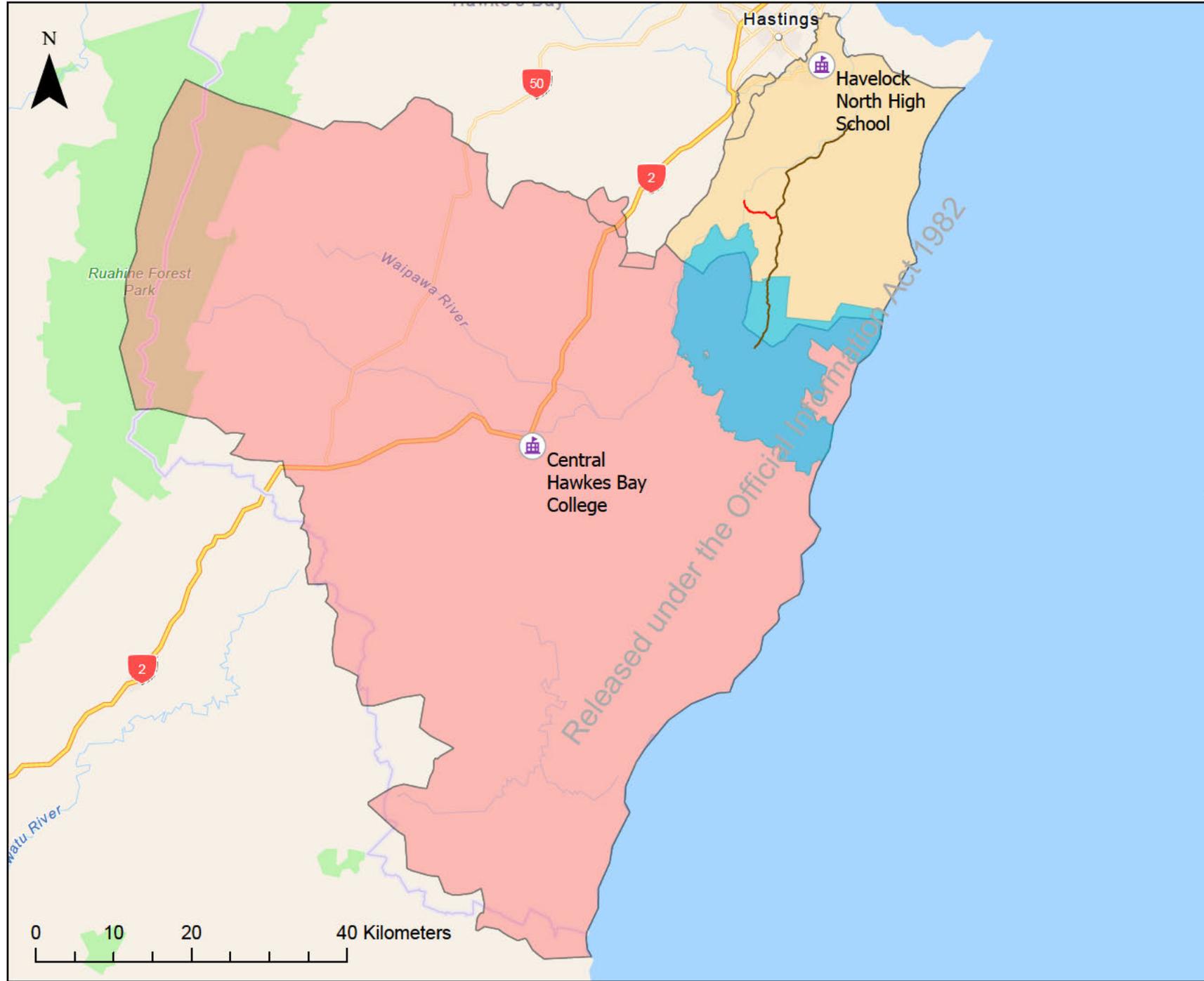
Due to the challenges faced by schools in 2020, the Ministry agreed to not review the route in 2021 and Elsthorpe School were notified of this decision on 30 September 2020. At this time the school was asked to inform their school community.

Yours sincerely

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

Central Hawkes Bay College and Havelock North High School Transport Eligibility Zones Appendix B



Legend

- Schools
- Kahuranaki Road
- MacKenzie Road
- Elsthorpe Suburb Boundary
- Central Hawkes Bay College TEZ
- Havelock North High School TEZ



The purpose of this map is to display the TEZ boundary of CHBC and HNHS. It will help visualize the effects of ST's closest school policy on ineligible secondary students in the Elsthorpe community.

Date created: 12/02/2021
Created by: School Transport

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

From: [Janice Kennerley](#)
To: [Elsthorpe School Principal](#); [Ruth Zapasnik](#); [HNHS Office](#); ["office@taikura.school.nz"](mailto:office@taikura.school.nz); [Te Mata School](#); [Principal HNPS](#); [Havelock North Intermediate](#)
Cc: ["Mark Thrupp"](#); ["Katie Nimon"](#)
Subject: MOE Elsthorpe Bus
Date: Wednesday, 30 September 2020 3:29:28 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Good morning all

With the Covid-19 lockdown and associated level changes, schooling interruptions, job losses, family separations, this year has brought many challenges to us all.

Bearing this in mind, a change to the Elsthorpe bus from next year would bring another challenge on top of already difficult times, and as such we are deferring our decision to implement the changes to the bus routes that were due to commence in Term 1 2021.

Our bus route will continue running from Elsthorpe to Redbridge connecting with our service into Havelock North until we review the route again.

Would you please advise all your families of this decision.

Thank you.

Janice Kennerley | Regional Transport Advisor - Hawke's Bay & Tairāwhiti | School Transport
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*We shape an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes
He mea tārai e mātou te mātauranga kia rangatira ai, kia mana taurite ai ōna huanga*



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