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New double track opens **The Last Spike**



Prime Minister
Helen Clark

Prime Minister Helen Clark was on hand to help mark the completion of 7.5km of new double tracked line between Titirangi Rd and Henderson, in a traditional railway ceremony at the beginning of June.

The time-honoured convention of driving the last spike has now become a symbolic rather than a physical act - instead the Prime Minister clipped the last pandrol - the device that holds the rail to the sleeper.

The ceremony was held just before the new track was commissioned at Queen's Birthday Weekend - on time and under budget. The work is another significant step in developing a rail network that will allow more

frequent and reliable commuter services, quicker travelling times and faster recovery from disruptions on the network.

ONTRACK drew on staff and resources from around the country to deliver the project which included laying 12,000 sleepers, 15,000m of new rail, 70,000 cubic metres of bulk earthworks and 48,000 pandrol clips, all placed individually by hand.

The original scope was extended to include an extra 500m of track to enable a robust timetable improvement to be introduced by ARTA at the beginning of July. For full details visit www.maxx.co.nz.

Commuters are already using the new station facilities at Fruitvale, Glen Eden and Sunnyvale stations.

Further west

Meanwhile work is continuing on duplicating the five kilometres of track between Henderson and Swanson.

Work on this section is primarily double tracking but also includes the redevelopment of Sturges Rd, Ranui and Swanson Stations, which is where our activity will be concentrated over the coming months. The new 70m long rail bridge over Candia Rd (North) is also now taking shape. Work will also start shortly on a five to six metre high retaining wall built to the north of the track between Mt Lebanon Lane and Sturges Rd.

The old Sturges Road concrete road bridge will be demolished and replaced with a new three-lane bridge.



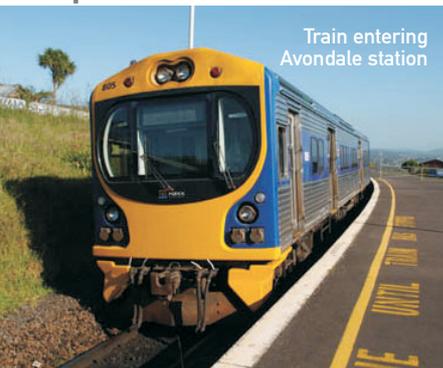
Candia Rd bridge

which will allow room for the double tracking beneath. This work will be managed by Waitakere City Council.

Avondale's redevelopment plans

Around 200 Aucklanders came along to an open day on plans to improve rail transport in Avondale on Saturday 23 June.

Work is due to start at Avondale later this year with completion in late 2008. The upgrade proposal includes redeveloping and moving the train station, to improve its connection with the town centre, laying a second track and future proofing for electrification.



Train entering Avondale station

New Lynn open days popular

More than 300 Aucklanders found out about plans to upgrade the rail network at New Lynn at two open days held in May. The most popular display was a scale model of the planned rail trench which shows tracks lowered up to 8m through the town centre and the addition of a second track.

Following the current line between Portage Rd to Titirangi Rd, the rail trench is critical to the upgrade of the network. It will allow trains to pass under road/pedestrian bridges while people and cars pass over the top and will be designed to allow for future electrification.

As a major civil construction in a very confined, busy part of the network building the trench will be very challenging, especially as we need to keep the railway line open for freight and passenger trains throughout most of the construction.

Preparatory works will begin over Christmas and New Year, with primary construction from mid 2008 and completion in 2009.

The upgraded train station will be integrated with a new bus station. These facilities will be developed by Waitakere City Council, working with ARTA and ONTRACK, in consultation with the wider New Lynn community.



New Lynn Open Day

Newmarket

The first steps in the redevelopment of Newmarket station and junction will be taken in July. A major redevelopment of the station and junction is planned which involves a redesign of the existing track layout and station area to allow a wide range of services and ensure trains keep running smoothly through this busy section of the network.

Construction will take about two years and during that time commuters will use temporary stations at Kingdon St and just south of Remuera Rd. Some initial track re-arrangements will be made during July at the junction area to enable these changes.

Electrification

ONTRACK is likely to begin work on building the infrastructure associated with electrification of the Auckland metropolitan passenger rail network by the end of next summer. The Government allocated funds for the work in its 2007 Budget and has set a target of 2013 for the infrastructure to be in place. The intention is to complete the project in stages, concentrating first on to the most popular destinations.

Work has already begun with planning and concept development and a physical start is planned by the end of summer. First steps will be to dig trenches for underground services required to support electrification.

The upgrading and double tracking work already underway on the Auckland network has been planned as far as possible to be compatible with electrification.

It is inevitable that the work will cause some disruption to services and ONTRACK will work closely with ARTA and Toll to develop a balance between progressing the work and keeping services running.