



Highway wins planning award

THE East Taupo Arterial has won a top national planning award for the significant project.

The 16km route has won the New Zealand Planning Institute best project award for its planners Opus International Consultants and the Taupo District Council at the institute's annual conference in Wellington last Wednesday.

The institute said the new highway section represents an outstanding achievement in planning and engineering process, all of which required considerable research, option analysis, extensive consultation and resource consent approval. It was also commendable that this was an appeal free process which reflects the extent of consultation involved.

In their citation the institute judges recognised the success of the East Taupo Arterial in diverting heavy traffic away from the Taupo business district and improving the quality of the environment of the Taupo community.

"It makes us proud to receive this award on behalf of our community and to have had the vision to pursue and achieve our goal and have this recognised," said Taupo District Council group manager operational services, Gareth Green

Opus' Taupo manager, Chris Davies said that at the planning stage the project involved considerable consultation and input from a number of key stakeholders including the local iwi, the New Zealand Transport Agency, Department of Conservation, Contact Energy and the district council.

"As a result of this consultation, the project was well supported by the stakeholders and the local community, all of whom shared a common goal of reducing the number and noise of heavy vehicles and reducing congestion travelling through the Taupo business district and along the lakefront adjacent to residential properties and activities," said Mr Davies.

"Our planners made every effort to minimise the impact of the highway on the environmentally sensitive and geothermal areas."

"The resulting highway has reduced the traffic congestion at the Waikato River crossing and through the CBD, improved the amenity value along the lake front, reduced the severance between the lake and the town, improved the air quality and reduced the contamination of the lake from storm water runoff from the former state highway route."