

Representations

Leith Saddle Motorway Realignment

Abe Gray

Most of our members will be familiar with the area where State Highway 1 crosses the Leith Saddle. If you're not, it's the bit when you're driving on the northern motorway and you find yourself for a brief moment surrounded by lush native rainforest with emergent podocarps thrusting themselves majestically into the sunlight. This magnificent vista is generally accompanied by the sound of calling bellbirds and tuis. Many of us marvel at such a site, especially when it occurs along a major metropolitan motorway, but we also take it for granted and assume such wonders will be available for our viewing indefinitely. Sadly, this may not be the case, and as with so many of New Zealand's natural treasures, it is threatened by the spectre of "progress". Transit New Zealand is currently evaluating several options for the realignment of a sharp bend in the motorway at exactly this point where it passes through the native bush. The Botanical Society of Otago, along with several other interested community groups, is seeking to work with Transit New Zealand to minimize the extent of any impact that this realignment could have on the vegetation. Members of the society have contacted those involved and are planning to participate in a meeting between all parties, scheduled for the 2nd of September. Members of the society are also currently undertaking a statistical analysis of road safety data surrounding previous realignments to independently confirm the stated benefits of the proposed realignment and have offered their services to Transit NZ to assist with any sampling that will be needed to monitor the impact. This area is of particular conservation value as it is one of only a few examples of kaikawaka (NZ Cedar, *Libocedrus bidwillii*) cloud forest. The bush is comprised of cedars, as well as podocarps (Rimu, Miro, Totara, Matai) thrusting themselves high above a canopy of Peppertree (*Pseudowintera colorata*) and Stinkwood (*Coprosma foetidissima*) among others. Many of the emergent trees are covered in epiphytes, which include two species of native orchid (*Earina autumnalis* and *Earina mucronata*) and the ground is covered in multiple fern species. The society is interested in minimizing the negative impact of any sort of development projects that could potentially damage the vegetation in areas of botanical interest, with the hope that such areas may continue to be appreciated and investigated by botanists, both amateur and professional for generations to come.

For further information or involvement email Abe: graab419@student.otago.ac.nz

Proposed Realignment of Northern Motorway around Leith Saddle – Report on Consultation Meeting - 12 noon – 2 pm, 2 September, 2004, Dunningham Suite, Dunedin Public Library.

Toni Atkinson

The meeting was attended by at least 18 people, the majority from environmental and community groups. There were two representatives from Transit NZ, two from Opus Consulting, and one from Dunedin City Council.

Transit's concern is that the two corners immediately south of the Leith Saddle are an accident area – although they could not tell us exactly how much higher the crash