

Memorandum

30 November 2018

To:	Environment and Community Committee, Local Board Members and Independent Māori Statutory Board members
Subject:	Project Streetscapes – Weed management
From:	Rod Sheridan, General Manager, Community Facilities

Purpose

1. To update elected members on changes to weed management contracts in the road corridor, as part of Project Streetscapes.

Summary

- *From April 2019, there will be a transfer of services and budget to the council unit Community Facilities to manage weeds within the road corridor on behalf of Auckland Transport. Initially Community Facilities will continue with the current Auckland Transport weed control methodologies.*
- *After the first year, consultation with local boards will begin as part of a regional review of vegetation management methodologies within the road corridor.*
- *The regional review will be informed by data gathered in the first year of the contract. This will include costings for different methodologies, asset condition and supplier investigations on the feasibility of new technologies for weed management in the road corridor.*
- *Community Facilities, Biosecurity and Auckland Transport are working together on coordinating the implementation of the proposed Regional Pest Plant Management Plan within the road corridor.*

Context/Background

2. From April 2019, as part of Project Streetscapes (which does not include the Gulf Islands), vegetation in the road corridor, including street to street walkways, will be managed by Community Facilities through the Full Facilities contracts. This activity will be completed on behalf of the council-controlled organisation Auckland Transport, who will retain ownership of all greenspaces in the road corridor.
3. Auckland Transport undertakes vegetation management in over 7,452 kilometres of road corridor. This management achieves the following outcomes:
 - Ensuring vegetation growing in the kerb and channel and open water channels does not interfere with water flow.
 - Controlling vegetation within the concrete expansion gaps in footpaths.
 - Maintaining the safety of pedestrians and road users by maintaining clear sight lines.
 - Maintaining the streetscape in a tidy and aesthetically pleasing condition.
 - Preventing root intrusion causing damage to the road surface, kerb and channel, footpaths and other road assets.
 - Complying with the Auckland Regional Pest Management Plant and the Biosecurity Act 1993 to fulfil landowner requirements.
4. See Attachment A for examples of weeds in the road corridor.
5. Auckland Transport is a council controlled organisation that has decision-making responsibility for transport networks and infrastructure and regional spend within the road corridor.

Discussion

Vegetation management methodologies

6. Current weed control methodologies within the road corridor have been set by Auckland Transport. Auckland Transport has continued to use the same weed control methods and herbicides as those used by the legacy councils: Auckland City Council, Manukau City Council, Waitākere City Council, North Shore City Council, Papakura District Council, Rodney District Council and most of Franklin District Council.
7. This continuation of legacy arrangements means that there are differences between local board areas in the methods used to meet weed management outcomes, .e.g. glyphosate, biosafe, hotwater and steam. In some cases, different methodologies are used within the same local board boundaries (see summary in Table 1 below). Glyphosate is used to some extent to treat specific weeds.
8. Initially, after transfer of services and budget to Community Facilities, council will continue using the same methodologies as Auckland Transport to ensure continued achievement of desired service levels.
9. Consultation with elected members and Community Facilities suppliers will start after the first year of the contract as part of a regional review of vegetation management within the road corridor.
10. A working group will be established to put forward options for weed management in the road corridor. The review will be informed by data gathered in the first year of Community Facilities managing the contracts. This will allow time for staff to confirm the cost of different methodologies of weed control, road asset condition and supplier investigation on the feasibility of new technologies for weed management in the road corridor.

Table 1. Overview of the different weed control methodologies used by Auckland Transport

Control method	Mode of action	Frequency	Local boards
Synthetic herbicide, e.g. formulations of glyphosate	Kills the entire plant including its root system.	Glyphosate is typically applied three to four times per year to achieve the desired level of service.	Franklin, Henderson-Massey, Howick, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Manurewa, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Papakura, Rodney, Waitākere Ranges, Whau
Plant based herbicide e.g. Biosafe	Plant-based herbicides are activated on contact with the foliage of weeds and burn off the foliage, thus preventing or reducing seed production and restricting growth.	Needs to be applied more frequently. Approx. 2.6-3.2 times the cost of glyphosate. ¹ (based on data from 2015)	Albert-Eden, Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Ōrākei, Puketāpapa, and Waitemata. (Glyphosate is used in some areas and for some weeds)
Mechanical and thermal e.g. hotwater or steam	Hot water/steam destroys the surface foliage of the weeds, leaving the roots primarily untreated as the temperature of the water decreases rapidly upon touching the ground.	Needs to be applied more frequently with additional traffic management requirements. Approx. 2.7-3.5 times the cost of glyphosate. ¹ (based on data from 2015)	Devonport-Takapuna, Hibiscus and Bays, Kaipātiki, Upper Harbour (Glyphosate is used in some areas and for some weeds)

¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers, Weed Management Cost Review, 15 September 2015

11. Community Facilities will be following the eight objectives of the Weed Management Policy (see Attachment C) for vegetation and pest plant control within the road corridor including:
- **Reducing agrichemical use.** Community Facilities suppliers have a contractual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to reduce agrichemical use from a baseline established in the first year(2018/2019). This KPI will be applied for the road corridor.
 - **Investigating alternative weed control technologies.** As part of continuous improvement and best practice, Community Facility suppliers are investigating non-agrchemical weed control methods including hot foam and its potential for the road corridor.
 - **Minimising non-targeted effect of weed control.** The contract specifications do not permit spraying outside schools, early education centres, or places of public assembly on days that these institutions are in use. There are limitations on the time of spraying in urban areas to avoid times when children are walking to and from school.
 - **Community empowerment and the no-spray register.** From April 2019, council will take over the management of the no-spray register. This register is maintained for residents who have requested that no agrichemicals be used directly outside their properties. A condition of being placed on the no-spray register is that the property owner maintains the road berm outside their property in a weed-free condition.

Glyphosate use in the road corridor

12. Glyphosate is a low toxicity broad-spectrum non-selective herbicide which is particularly effective on broadleaf weeds and grasses. Glyphosate is used by most, if not all, Road Controlling Authorities in New Zealand to control vegetation in the road corridor.
13. The council's agrichemical use is guided by the New Zealand Environmental Protection Agency, which has granted approvals for the use of glyphosate-containing substances in accordance with their code of practice. For all agrichemical use council complies with the Environmental Protection Agency Code of Practice (NZS 8409:2004 Management of Agrichemicals) for the storage, mixing, use, disposal and certification of contractors for agrichemicals. In urban and rural areas if the berm is being maintained by the adjoining property owner and there is no vegetation overhanging the kerb or footpath then no spraying will be undertaken.
14. Round up, a product containing glyphosate, has recently been in the media. Round up contains an additive called POEA (Polyethoxylated tallow amine). Recent assessments have identified that this additive is more toxic than the glyphosate active ingredient.² Community Facilities will only be using approved formulations of Glyphosate within the road corridor which do not include POEA. Therefore, the brand Round up will not be used within the road corridor.

Regional Pest Management Plan

15. In 2019, the new Regional Pest Management Plan will be introduced which will supersede the existing strategy. The plan will create some additional requirements for pest plant control in the parts of the road corridor.
16. Biosecurity, Auckland Transport and Community Facilities are working together to confirm the scope and resourcing requirements for implementation of the new Regional Pest Management Plan on Auckland Transport land.

Next Steps for Project Streetscapes – Vegetation Management

17. Next steps for this project are outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2. Timing of next steps for management of vegetation in the road corridor

² Glyphosate: Commercially Available Options. Cathy Bebelman Consulting Ltd.

Next Step	Timing
Community facilities take over weed control in the road corridor	April 2019
Review of weed control methodologies	April 2020

Attachments

Attachment A – Examples of vegetation in the road corridor

Attachment B – Weed control methodology table

Attachment C - Weed Management Policy