Prime Minister, Hon Voreqe Bainimarama officially declared Cogeloa Bridge open on 24th February. STORY ON PAGE 3

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Photo courtesy of Dept. of Information.

Fiji Roads Authority®

FIJI ROADS

Better Roads, Better Access, Better Business

The official Newsletter of Fiji Roads Authority JAN/MAR, 2017

Cuvu streetlights commissioned by PM

Prime Minister, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama, surrounded by celebrating villagers after he officially switched on the Cuvu streetlights. Photo courtesy of Dept. of Information.

After darkness fell on Thursday 16th February, the Prime Minister, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama, officially switched on 105 streetlights that now light the way for the more than 4000 residents of Cuvu Backroad in Nadroga.

DRUMS were played and the people of Cuvu danced in the street to express their happiness.

They were doubly honoured, as Attorney General, Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, also attended the celebrations held at Cuvu College.

As well as providing a safer environment for pedestrians and motorists, it is expected that the new streetlights will encourage people to engage in commercial activities, or to extend their hours, now they have the benefit of streetlights.

The commissioning of the Cuvu section of the Western Village Streetlight Programme, at an investment of $582,469 by Government, marks the progress being made by the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) in the installation of new streetlights and the improvement to existing streetlights in villages, settlements and peri-urban areas.

The Western Village Streetlight programme extends from the Korotoga baypass as far as Nailaga Village in Ba.

Site inspections have been completed from Navua to Sigatoka and a detailed design plan is under way for the Suva to Sigatoka Streetlight Project.

This project is scheduled to be completed by March 2018, at an estimated preliminary cost of $3.5million. This will bring streetlights to the Queens Road, including Galoa Village and its back road, Namatakula, Korolevu, Olosara and Korotoga Villages.

It is also anticipated that the installation of streetlights will be completed by March 2018 at selected sites from Savusavu to Labasa in Vanua Levu.

The detailed scoping, concept approval and the detailed design of 181 sites for the installation of streetlights along the Kings Road from Nausori town to Nailaga is currently underway, at an estimated cost of $3.9million.

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Roneet appreciates FRA cadetship programme

SINCE joining the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA), in October 2016 under the FRA Cadetship Programme, Mr Roneet Prakash, has been able to put to good use both his passion for drawing and design, and the skills and knowledge he obtained while completing his Bachelor in Building and Civil Engineering degree, at Fiji National University. He graduated in April 2016.

"I have always been interested in working at FRA, so last year I applied when I saw a list of vacancies. At that time, I was working on a construction project in Levuka, so my interview was conducted over the phone. After a month, I received an offer to join FRA as a Cadet Estimator in the Capital Works Department. Although this was not my main field of interest, I decided to make the most of the opportunity to join FRA," said Mr Prakash.

This decision has borne fruit. Within a month of taking up his position with FRA, he was offered the position of Cadet Engineer in the Maintenance Department.

On the 11th January this year, he was advised of his promotion to the position of Graduate Engineer.

Most recently, Mr Prakash has been busy with streetlight and bus shelter designs.

He said that streetlight design involves physically scoping the site to see how many lights should be installed, their wattage, whether new poles are needed and their height, or if they could be 'piggybacked' onto existing FEA poles. Once the details have been checked, Mr Prakash prepares the drawings of streetlights, after mapping their specific location, which is then submitted to the contractors for construction.

Where existing wooden or concrete poles are to be used, he designs the outreach-arm and the connections that attach the arm and the light to the pole. Much of the streetlight work is taking place in villages, as designated by Government.

"Recently, I have also been given the opportunity to design rural, urban and arterial bus shelters, giving me the opportunity to design and draw plans using two-dimensional drawing software. Rather than engaging an outside consultant, I could also render my designs in 3D (three dimensional), by using the appropriate software, making it a much more cost-effective exercise," said Mr Prakash.

Urban or city bus shelters are where buses come by up to as often as every five minutes, so acrylic board has been used on the sides for improved visibility, while protecting the waiting passengers from the weather, corrugated iron roof and back wall are made of a weather resistant marine ply board.

Arterial bus shelters are constructed alongside tarsealed roads, usually in the villages, where buses come by every 45 to 60 minutes. These are built of concrete blocks, and passengers and their goods can keep out of the weather while waiting for their transport.

Rural road bus shelters are made of wood and corrugated iron and are constructed along unsealed roads. These materials are used because they help ensure that an adequate number of shelters can be constructed, as wood and corrugated iron are cheaper and more readily available to subcontractors engaged to build bus shelters in the rural sector.

"Having my designs accepted is a big achievement for me. I have been encouraged and supported by my Project Manager, Mr Musheer Khan and my General Manager, Mr Aram Goes," said Mr Prakash.

"I hope to have the opportunity to do more design work and my dream is to one day be a Senior Engineer at FRA. "

Long-term streetlight opportunity

The Government aims to extend streetlighting beyond the urbanised areas.

THE Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) recently called for Expressions of Interest (EOI) to meet the requirements for upgrading, replacement, operation, maintenance and installation of new streetlights that also meet FRA's and the Government of Fiji's commitments to energy efficiency and cost savings.

This is separate from the seven Requests for Tender (RFT) for streetlight maintenance, already released in the market place. (See story on following page).

The aim of the Fijian Government is to extend street lighting to the whole of the nation beyond the urbanised areas so that this facility will also become commonplace in rural areas on the main islands, as well as the smaller, far flung islands.

The EOI is the first step in the procurement process in order to create a short list of prospective solution providers who would participate in a more detailed tender procedure.

The term of the contract would be negotiated with a minimum of 15 years and a maximum of twenty years. At the completion of the contract term ownership of the cumulative assets is to be handed

Continued on page 6

Streetlight packages to encourage local companies

Streetlights enhance night visibility and security.

TO support the maintenance of approximately 8750 FRA streetlights, Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) recently went to market with seven Requests for Tender (RFT) for streetlight maintenance, packaged to provide opportunities for smaller local companies that wish to bid and including provisions for infill lighting, the installation of new streetlights for residential areas without lights and village streetlights.

Other opportunities to improve Fiji's streetlights portfolio, in addition to the Maintenance Contract, sees packaged bundles such as the Western Village Streetlight Programme, currently underway, and the Suva to Sigatoka Streetlight tender that is to be reissued to the market in 2017.

The Prime Minister, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama commissioned the Cuvu section of the Western Village Streetlight Programme on the 16th of February this year. (See story, page1). The Central Village Streetlight tender will ensure that a total of 38 sites, including 17 villages, two school fronts, Navua Hospital and Navua Town, receive streetlights.

FRA and Government are committed to making worthwhile investments where the use of energy-efficient street-lighting technologies throughout Fiji will help minimise both energy and cost, whilst allowing for more investment in other infrastructure upgrades.

2000T of gear barged to Cogeloa

WITH the official opening of the new bridge at Cogeloa, a single lane bridge has been transformed into a structure with increased capacity to support single lane traffic, a railway line and a pedestrian pathway.

To construct the new bridge, 2000T of plant and equipment had to be taken by barge, across open seas, to the Coqeloa site.

Outer island challenges met

RATHER than responding to urgent requests for maintenance work on the outer islands, the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has introduced a Planned Maintenance Schedule for the outer islands in 2017.

The schedule includes Koro, Kadavu, Gau, Cicia, Rotuma and Moala Islands and there is the possibility of Totoya also being added to the list.

Work has already taken place on Koro, Gau, Cicia, Kadavu and Rotuma. A crew is still working on Gau Island and another left for Moala on the 16th of February.

The crew on Gau completed the scheduled work, but the recent heavy rains caused some slips that blocked roads. A bulldozer was shipped to the island for what was thought to be a week's work. A month later, the crew and the bulldozers are still busy working on Gau, restoring access for the villagers living there.

Difficulties in communicating with the outer islands can complicate planning and once crews are established on an island, they also experience communication difficulties. Network access is not available in all areas of the outer islands.

It can also be complicated organising accommodation for the work crews before they arrive, and finding out in advance exactly what facilities are available. If work crews are expected to remain in contact with their respective headquarters, by mobile phone or email, they need a source of electricity. A generator is often included as part of the equipment they take with them, as some accommodation they manage to arrange does not have electricity.

It is no simple task for the contractor to arrange for crews, their equipment, vehicles and heavy machinery to be transported to an island. The work schedule does not always coincide with the shipping or barging schedules, especially if there are high seas and wind warnings in place.

Not surprisingly, returning can be even more problematic. Again, relying on scheduled shipping can mean waiting for days for the vessel to arrive. If the vessel has been delayed due to bad weather, once the weather clears the vessel operator usually follows his regular schedule before attending to one-off requests.

Before any plant or equipment is shipped to an island, it receives an extra rigorous mechanical check. An adequate supply of diesel in 44 gallon drums and spare parts such as tyres, puncture repair kits and hydraulic hose connections are also part of the equipment that goes with the crew.

If a mechanic needs to attend a breakdown on the island, it may mean that he needs to take a scheduled flight to the island in question. Once the repairs are completed, he may have to wait at least another week to catch the next flight off the island.

In general, a crew consists of a grader, an excavator or two, one or two trucks, a roller and a crew-cab vehicle. The crew that has just established on Moala Island is comprised of a grader, three excavators, five trucks, a roller, a bulldozer and a transporter.

The roads on the larger islands of Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and Taveuni each have an identifying code number and are entered into the RAMM (Road Asset Maintenance Management) computer system and contractors' vehicles are fitted with devices to measure the start and end of work sections.

Heavy equipment was shipped to Gau to clear the roads.

This is not yet available for roads on outer islands. Measurements for the start and end of sections of road works are based on vehicle odometer readings, and rely on crew members remembering to record the information correctly.

Despite all of the challenges, the crews travel to the islands in good spirit, the plant and materials get shipped across, and the maintenance work gets done.

The slip at Kasavu on Kings Road.

Passengers disembarking to walk past the slip.

TD04F – the aftermath

WITH more than 386 separate road closures taking place between 18th and 22nd December 2016 as a result of Tropical Depression 04, the Fiji Roads Authority's (FRA) first focus was on opening roads to restore access.

Community access first

Speaking at a media conference held immediately following TD04F, a period of sustained rainfall from December 14th to December 21st, FRA CEO, Mr John Hutchinson, said that the first priority was to restore access to communities and then maintain and recover the network.

Major damage

Major network routes and sites damaged by the unrelenting rainfall included Kasavu, Rakiraki and Tavua-Ba on the Kings Road; Veisari, Naboro and Sigatoka on the Queens Road; numerous slips, landslides and washouts on the Sigatoka Valley Road; 14 landslides and slips along the Daria–Nabouwalu Road; damage to the Vunidawa Bridge and slips and washouts on the Sawani–Serea Road. This does not include the pothole damage sustained during TD04F.

Non-stop efforts

In addition to FRA's primary maintenance contractors, the Authority also engaged some 48 subcontractors to assist in the restoration and recovery efforts that began on 16th December and continued, non-stop, throughout the festive season.

Priortising routes

By December 24th, FRA contractors had 15 work crews in the Central, 14 in the Western and 11 in the Northern Divisions, filling in potholes to return the roads to a serviceable condition. Night crews attended to potholes in the Central Business District, followed by main arterial routes, then secondary arterials receiving attention, as the focus was on restoring the busiest, high volume traffic roads first.

Potholes

By Monday 19th December, a total of 11,000 potholes, at a rate of approximately 2,000 a day, had been filled. It was estimated that a further 50,000 potholes on the network, also the result of TD04F, were in need of attention.

Pothole repairs need to be carried out in fine weather to be effective. Repairs made in rainy weather fail very quickly and very soon would need refilling. Potholes are only repaired during wet weather if there is a high risk to public safety or damage to vehicles.

Drainage

The impact of TD04F revealed the importance of good drainage to the road network, as poor drainage contributes to potholes and flooded infrastructure. Since TD04F, FRA has begun conferring with the other relevant stakeholders (see story on page 5) so that an effective drainage network is established and maintained throughout the whole nation.

Kasavu slip

Amongst the damage was the significant slip at Kasavu, on the Kings Road. At first, the road was kept open for single lane traffic, one vehicle at a time, with a maximum weight of 5 tonne gross maximum weight. The site and traffic were monitored under 24-hour traffic management control. The repair of this slip will be a long-term matter, and an alternative route has been opened as an interim measure. (See story on page 5).

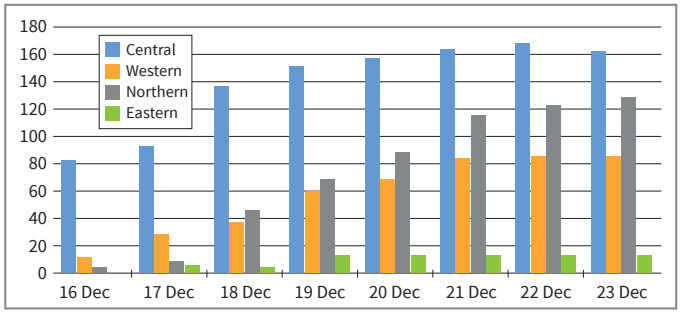
The Fiji Roads Authority Board of Directors reviewed two feasible options to restore access at Kasavu on Kings Road; options that FRA Chief Executive John Hutchinson says can be delivered under six months.

Solution options

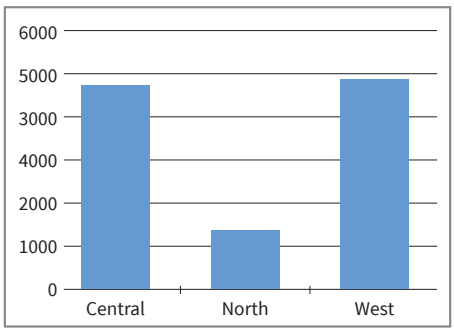
"Option 1 looks at the use of a single lane, Bailey bridge solution and has been approved by the board and would take 6-to-8 weeks to install. This would permit heavy vehicles and buses to use the Kings Road. This bridge solution would be single lane for buses, cars and trucks, and controlled by solar powered traffic lights. FRA is completing the technical design and sketches, as well as seeking prices. Whilst not ideal, it re-opens the Kings Road to all traffic whilst the medium/ long term solution is put in place. Construction has commenced.

Option 2, which is for a road detour, has a lengthier turn-around time of five-to-six months and will provide for a medium, possibly long term solution. It is currently out to market.

Summary of roads affected 16-23 December 2016



Potholes patched



FRA contractors working to open the Bau Tikina detour.

The Bau Tikina detour has been opened, keeping communities accessible.

Prime Minister opens Bau Tikina detour

THE alternative route for the Kasavu slip section on the Kings Road was officially opened by the Prime Minister, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama, on Monday 9th January.

In his address to the assembled dignitaries and guests, the Honourable Prime Minister said, "As you are all aware, the end of this past year was fraught with difficulty for many Fijians as we experienced widespread flooding due to Tropical Depression 04F.

"The heavy rains and flooding caused serious damage at the Kasavu slip and the Kings Road will have to undergo repairs that may take some time.

"In order to keep these communities accessible, work began in the immediate aftermath of the Tropical Depression to open this alternative bypass route.

"And I am very pleased that this seven kilometre route is now open, with the capability to hold traffic of up to 18 tonnes."

The Honourable Prime Minister acknowledged the work required to make the alternative route possible, saying, "I would like to thank our contractors and subcontractors who have been working diligently since 21 December – through Christmas and the New Year – doing this good work for the people of Rarelevu. Vinaka vakalevu."

He also thanked the Fiji Bus Operators Association for their contribution and said, "Following the damage sustained to the Kings Road, we also saw the Fiji Bus Operators Association step up in a major way to offer bus services on both sides of the Kasavu slip. Your support and your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and you also deserve our thanks."

(L-r) Permanent Secretary for Infrastructure & Transport, Mr Paul Bayly, Prime Minister, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama and FRA CEO, Mr John Hutchinson with officials and villagers at the opening of the Bau Tikina detour.

The Fiji Roads Authority also expressed appreciation for the support and cooperation of all stakeholders, who worked together to find a solution to a difficult situation.

Drainage a shared responsibility

WITH the aftermath of December's TD04F and the 11 further Tropical Depressions still impacting the nation's road network, the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has recognised the need for, and has begun, a thorough review of its entire drainage system, and how it interacts with Council storm water, the Land and Water Resource Management Unit's systems, and other systems owned by the FSC and the Department of Lands to ensure a better, more integrated drainage network.

FRA is aware that the responsibility for drainage is complex and varied. The Authority is responsible for the construction of roadside drainage and the cleaning and maintenance of drains and culverts in rural areas alongside and under main roads and highways, with the Land and Water Resource Management Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture being responsible for drainage in rural areas associated with agricultural projects.

Councils and local authorities are responsible for storm water reticulation within their municipalities and for keeping roadside drains and culverts clean and operable within their jurisdictions, and the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of drains and culverts associated with their infrastructure. The Department of Lands is responsible for all creeks and river systems.

The issue of drainage is further complicated where the responsibility lies with other agencies, such as FSC or private developers, where, for example, flash flooding may be caused by their culverts being blocked.

To further complicate the issue, FRA and local councils have also inherited responsibility for inadequate drainage previously installed by private developers into their subdivisions. Many of the existing road culverts and drains were designed for the past, and are now under-designed for the volumes of run-off that now occur.

FRA has a process for permit applications for all driveways constructed by owners. This is to ensure that driveways are installed to the correct size, levels and standards, so that drainage channels are not obstructed.

FRA is committed to working with local Councils and other agencies to solve the problems. The Authority recognises that it will take both time and a concerted effort by all concerned to prevent future hardships caused by blocked culverts and drains.

Effective management of Fiji's road network

MAKING the commitment to buy and maintain a car is no different to building and maintaining a road. Upon purchasing, an owner will have to forecast the recurring costs associated and what you choose to spend money on could mean the difference between an upfront investment with cheaper running costs or a cheaper investment with higher running costs.

These underlying factors and costs associated with owning any asset for the period of its designed life, including maintenance and associated expenses, is called the whole-of-life cost or life-cycle cost.

Fiji Roads Authority has made upfront investments in the design of our roads and bridges, including the proper construction that maximizes its life, but the initial investment is just the tip of the iceberg.

A newly constructed road in Fiji is built to have a design life of 25-30 years without requiring full rehabilitation. This does not mean that a road is built and left for 25 years before receiving attention, which is one of the challenges the FRA has faced with Fiji's failing roads. This was the practice in the past.

Learning from past experience, FRA has scheduled periodic maintenance over the design life period of Fiji's roads. These roads may require a new coat of seal in their 5th or 10th year, just like a car would need its oil changed and batteries replaced every so often.

The whole-of-life costing is important to the FRA because of our large portfolio and our long-term interest in key infrastructure that keeps Fiji connected and moving. The current value of our portfolio is some seven billion dollars and the reality is that most parts of the network have finite lives.

At the current investment rate on renewals (replacing roads and bridges that currently exist) it would take Fiji about 10 years to get over the current 1 billion-dollar backlog identified as maitenance deficit from past neglect. Delaying the work would result in almost five times as much work and cost compared to taking care of it at the optimum lifecycle time. Just as with a leaking radiator in your car, choosing not to replace the radiator immediately could result in damage to your engine and become far more expensive.

As decision makers, we need to be responsible forward thinkers, anticipating situations around future spending and safe guarding returns on our investment.

The FRA is committed to learning from the past and, through lessons learned, has incorporated new practices and technologies to effectively manage Fiji's road network. Effective management means ensuring the best value for money for every contract handed out, and ensuring that suppliers comply to international standards and deliver to expectations.

Embracing new technology to capture data on our assets is critical in a day and age where data has a monetary value. The Fiji Roads Authority Asset Management System effectively changes the way asset records are kept, allowing FRA to see the turning point when the cost of maintaining a road is more expensive than the cost of rebuilding.

Owning an asset comes with the responsibility of maintaining it, which means recurring costs throughout its life cycle.

Our crews would then carry out a full rehabilitation, essentially replacing the asset.

The technology also enables the FRA to model different scenarios, so we vary the decision process based on observed results on the ground. This forward thinking will make the difference in our nation's road network.

FRA's practices in effective management will ensure that Fiji's drivers have safe and reliable access that will protect their own car investments and keep them moving safely in their daily lives.

Continued from page 2

back to the FRA in an 'as new' condition.

It is forecast that meeting this requirement would grow the street light network to approximately 20,000 lights, poles and associated infrastructure over the next 10 years, with a corresponding increase in the road network by 50% over the same period. The current streetlight network has an asset base of approximately 8, 750 lights, poles and associated infrastructure.

The scope of services for the solution provider would be applicable to all four divisions and would require the provision of street lighting to areas without existing road infrastructure - for example, a remote outer island - and to other transport infrastructure, such as jetties and boat ramps.

FRA is looking for a competent solution provider who is clearly able to demonstrate their capability to provide an innovative street lighting solution inclusive of an appropriate funding or financial model to the standard required in the timeframes specified.

The Authority is receptive to innovative financing or funding models, including Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) solutions. Interested parties were requested to lodge their proposals by 4.00 pm Fiji time on 28 February 2017.

SARUP 1 contract awarded

THE Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has announced the Contract Award for the Suva Arterial Roads Upgrade Project (SARUP 1) to China Railway No. 5 Engineering Group.

FRA Chief Executive John Hutchinson says that the Fiji Roads Authority has received loan funding from the Asian Development Bank and World Bank for the Transport Infrastructure Investment Sector Project (TIISP) to carry out multiple infrastructure improvement projects on roads and bridges around the country.

One of these projects is called the "Suva Arterial Road Upgrading Project" (SARUP). This project is about upgrading and improving sealed roads accommodating large volumes of traffic.

The contract, No FRA / TIISP / 16-01 is expected to begin in March 2017, with the 12 month construction period ending in March 2018.

The arterial roads work will include:

- Queens Road: 2200 metres - Suvavou and Delainavesi, starting at the Tamavua River Bridge as far as the Lami Bridge.
- Walu Bay roundabout / Edinburgh Drive: 1700 metres - as far as the Princess and Waimanu Roads intersection.
- Ratu Mara Rd: Princess and Waimanu Roads intersection: 900 metres – as far as Lakeba Street.
- Kings Road: Ratu Mara / Mead Road roundabout: 1200m - to Ratu Dovi Road.
- Kings Road: 1200 metres - Ratu Dovi to Khalsa Rd intersection.
- Kings Road: 1600 metres - Pilling Rd to Matanikorovatu Road (Hansons).
- Victoria Parade: 150 metres - McArthur Street to Gordon Street.
- Gaji Road / Grantham Road roundabout: 500 metres - to Belo Street.
- Ratu Mara Rd roundabout.

Greig Street renewal completed

ROAD renewal work that was recently carried out on Suva's Greig Street is now completed at an estimated cost of close to $430,000. Deterioration of the road's surface meant that it had to be ripped out before a length of 175 metres and width of 13.7 was stabilised.

Traffic lanes and carpark slots were also marked and proper drainage was installed. While it took three weeks to complete the stabilising work on Greig Street, the paving and sealing work was done within three days.

Also constructed parallel to the Nabukalou Creek were footpaths and a carpark, with solar street lights along the creek seawall and a pedestrian crossing on Renwick Road to be installed before the end of March this year.

Whilst the project is successful, the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) works on Greig Street were to improve the road surface. It did not address the historic flooding issues in this low-lying area adjacent to the tidal creek.

The Authority remains concerned about the overflow from Nabukalou Creek onto Greig Street. This is a matter that will require detailed investigation and investment to address the issue.

FRA Chief Executive Officer, Mr John Hutchinson, said, "The seawalls within the Municipal boundaries are the responsibility of the Suva City Council. There have been suggestions that the FRA should raise the road level. This may appear to many as a simple solution to prevent tidal seawater ingress.

The Greig Street renewal work has upgraded vehicle and pedestrian access.

"However, without a detailed hydrological survey study, raising the road level has a very high risk of causing increased flood damage to the properties on Greig Street, as raising the road level would flood both the road and the shops on the ground floor.

"It would result in the confinement of inland water being unable to flow to the sea during heavy rain events. Therefore, the Greig Street road reconstruction maintains the existing level to allow any excess surface storm water to spread out, rather than build up, minimising the depth of potential surface flooding.

"FRA has ensured the existing drainage outlets are properly shaped with positive fall to the outlets, ensuring that, after any surface flooding, the area drains away freely when the tide recedes.

"The FRA proposes to now raise the seawall to a more consistent height along the concrete walking strip of the car parking area."

Mr Hutchinson said this would include small gate-flap outlets at existing storm water outlet levels to reduce tidal ingress yet still allow rain event discharge to the creek.

"In cases where the high tide occurs in combination with a rain event, there will be temporary surface flooding, as is the current situation.

"It is for this reason we have not raised the road, allowing for any floodwaters to spread and not increase in depth, that would otherwise occur if the storm water was confined between the road and the buildings," said Mr Hutchinson.

Nadi four-lane project on schedule

THE Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is pleased with the progress that has been made on the four-lane project through Namaka, into Nadi, despite the challenges presented by high-density traffic and the large number of commercial enterprises needing access for their customers.

The good faith and trust that FRA has maintained with property owners is also demonstrated by the straightforward land acquisition that has taken place.

The Project Team works closely with stakeholders to provide updates and find ways to minimise long and short-term disruptions to their homes and businesses. The four-lane stage from Concave Boulevard to Vunisalato Street was opened in time for the holiday season at the end of last year.

Early in the process, Government and the FRA decided to take the opportunity to upgrade, future-proof and place all utility services underground, as FRA considered that there was a considerable risk of new roading infrastructure being continuously excavated and poorly reinstated, simply to maintain an old and tired utility network.

The Authority has worked closely with WAF, FEA and TFL to achieve a brand new services infrastructure that is trouble-free for a significant number of years to come, and that takes into account future population growth. This has increased the capital cost of the project significantly, but the benefits of a reliable new services network, and its benefit to the future growth of Nadi, far outweigh the additional cost.

The four-lane project underway at Martintar.

The vision is for Namaka, Martintar and the Nadi Township to be a series of significant commercial centres, featuring ease of transportation, with attractions that cater for the local community and tourists alike.

The project is on schedule, with an estimated completion date of August 2018.

Q&A

In each issue of ROADS, we will answer commonly asked questions received at FRA.

Why doesn't the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) cover all the roads in concrete? Then there would be no more potholes.

WHILE we appreciate that this would be an ideal solution, the reality is that FRA has to consider other factors apart from our own agenda.

The first is the enormous cost of such roads. All road infrastructure is expensive to construct and maintain, but some methods are more expensive than others. FRA has to find the most cost-effective means of providing as much improvement as possible for the benefit of as many people as possible. Putting a concrete surface on one road may mean that other roads, equally as deserving, would have to wait a very long time to be upgraded.

We already work in close cooperation with all other utilities such as electricity, telecommunications, water and wastewater service. If we were to put a concrete surface on a road, we would need to make sure theses utilities would have no need to dig up any of their infrastructure buried under the road and/or running alongside the concrete road. Digging up and then having to repair a concrete surface would be very expensive.

So yes, we agree, concrete roads would solve one problem, but they could also contribute to creating other challenges.

Labasa roads stabilised

Sealing Rawasa Road.

DURING periods of rain, water gets under the pavement through the cracks on the road surface or from the side of the road. This can cause erosion of the pavement, resulting in potholes. Such was the case on Rasawa and Lajonia roads in Labasa Town, where remedial work on an 1,800 metre of the roads has been completed.

To repair the road, deteriorated material was removed from sections, which were then backfilled and stabilised, using gravel and cement. This was followed by sealing with bitumen and stone chips.

Drive with care and keep our children safe.

Slow down for our children's sake!

FOR the sake of our children's safety, FRA asks all motorists to please slow down when you see the yellow school sign. It is a reminder that school children are present in the area and these little ones are still learning about road safety. Be prepared to expect the unexpected, as children often act spontaneously, without forethought.

Staff and student school patrols do their best to keep our children safe as they arrive at and leave the school compounds, but it is the duty of all drivers to take heed of the warning that they are approaching a school.

Remember, smaller children, especially, cannot see easily over or around parked vehicles or anything else that may be blocking their field of vision.

Slow down, drive with care and keep our children safe.

Budgets kept, timelines met

Key projects such as Navua Township have been completed on time.

UNDER the FRA Renewals Programme, where annually, approximately 45 kilometres of sealed roads are fully rehabilitated, 95 to 110 kilometres of sealed roads are resealed to maintain waterproofing, and a further 60 to 120 kilometres of unsealed roads are resheeted.

FRA has a considerable backlog of maintenance work as the rehabilitate, reseal and resheet programme was not kept up in past years. In recognition of this by Government and FRA, the Authority has been receiving significant budget allocations over the past few years.

During and after extreme weather events such as TD04F in December 2016, or Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2016, the FRA Renewals Programme may slow for a while as emergency response work takes precedence.

Emergency works are financed by emergency funding, and FRA works closely with the Ministry of Economy in the management of their budgets, should any adjustments be needed in order to carry out emergency works.

Ultimately, all work carried out by FRA and their contractors to restore and/or improve the road network is for the benefit of all Fijians. Despite the impact of TD04F and most recently TD09, TD10, TD12 and TD14 the Road Renewal Programme for the current financial year will continue as planned, and key projects such as Navua Township have been completed on time.