

Upgrade to choked route vital for growth

8 November 2018 - The Government's decision to axe completely the planned four lane highway from Christchurch to Ashburton shows it isn't prepared to support regional New Zealand, MPs for Selwyn and Ashburton Amy Adams and Andrew Falloon say.

"National planned for the choked route between Christchurch and Ashburton to become a four-lane highway, with the road widened and oncoming traffic separated," Ms Adams says.

"The Christchurch to Ashburton link is one of the busiest stretches of highway in the South Island and has become increasingly congested in recent years.

"NZTA have recently announced they are looking at installing median barriers on parts of the highway. This is a poor substitute for what is really needed. It appears NZTA is using this announcement of minor works to deflect attention from the fact that the required four laning and road separation will now not occur.

"The demand on the road has only increased, in the last 15 years international tourist numbers have more than doubled, the number of passenger vehicles has swelled, and due to a strong local economy more and more trucks are travelling on the road.

"Coupled with the continued success of Timaru's PrimePort and the growth of the inland port at Rolleston, this has made the road the second most dangerous in the South Island."

"Between 1 January 2010 and 31 March 2018 there were 19 deaths and 109 serious injuries on this stretch of road. The Government is ignoring these horrendous statistics, all in the pursuit of cutting costs out of the South Island roading budget," Mr Falloon says.

"The planned new highway is sorely needed to improve safety, reduce congestion and minimise travel times for those commuting and transporting goods throughout the region. The existing road is becoming a handbrake on Canterbury's growth.

"We need to be investing in the critical infrastructure that supports growth in our regional economies. Instead the Government has stripped billions of dollars from the regions and funnelled it back to Transport Minister Phil Twyford's pet tram project in Auckland.

“The upgrade of the road is vital to ensure the safety of those travelling on the road, to better connect the regions and boost regional economic growth. The Government is putting savings ahead of safety.”