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## NZTA and Beca get moving with PMI

Newtown Square, Pa., 26 May 2010 — In 2009 the New Zealand chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMINZ) presented the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and Beca, a specialist New Zealand engineering consultancy, with its annual project of the year award for their Ramp Signaling Project. The project has produced a 15 per cent improvement in travel speed and a five to 15 per cent increase in throughput of vehicles on Auckland's motorways.

Initially, NZTA was tasked with addressing the cause of rear-end crashes and morning/evening crashes due to traffic congestion. The agency had exhausted all feasible physical solutions so instead decided to mitigate these problems through traffic management. The objectives of the project were to improve traffic flow and safety on the motorway, enable more consistent speeds for merging, and provide more predictable travel times.

Leon Wee, Senior Project Manager, Intelligent Transport Systems, NZTA, says the main element of the project was implementing traffic signals on the ramps feeding into the motorways which manage the rate at which vehicles enter the main motorway. These signals operate only when they are needed – during shoulder peak times (just before and after the rush hours) – and can be switched off at all other times.

NZTA and Beca jointly completed this project in 2009. Beca provided NZTA with a PMI certified project manager who looked after all aspects of the project, which was successfully completed on time and on budget.

“Professional project management was absolutely vital to the success of this project,” says Wee. “We are responsible for providing value to taxpayers, so we needed that expertise to deliver the best value to the public.”

Using the latest PMI standards for project management from *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) – Fourth Edition*, the project was carried out across a large number of sites on Auckland's motorways and the ramp signals were incorporated into other NZTA capital projects. This meant the project team had to factor in a number of changes to the scope of work – a daunting task for large infrastructure projects involving specialised disciplines of construction and engineering.

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“One of the biggest challenges we faced was the number of approvals needed from a wide variety of stakeholders,” says David Bentham, a Project Manager for Beca and a PMI Project Management Professional (PMP)®. “For example, we had to get local council approval before construction started and we had to have the designs reviewed by independent experts employed by NZTA.

“The PMI standards helped us organise all the information so we could communicate what had to be done, and where our priorities lay. Our approach is to carefully manage the ad-hoc matters that arise within a project so we can keep our main focus on executing the project on time and within budget.”

Project management is a critical part of Beca’s offering. The company provides engineering, architecture and cost related services to a diverse range of infrastructure projects – project management is therefore critical to Beca’s business and customer satisfaction. The company puts its project managers through PMI certification and training to ensure they are operating within a framework of best practice.

Bentham says good project management, that is standards-based, allows organisations to identify risks and opportunities ahead of time. It helps individuals and organisations learn to manage both risks and opportunities and so reduce the impact of potential challenges and take advantage of those opportunities that present themselves.

“Project management is a core discipline for Beca,” says Bentham. “We have 140 specialist project managers working in New Zealand, Australia and Asia on projects that range from buildings, bridges and breweries to specialised systems for traffic management and crowd modeling. Project management directly affects how we work and underpins our professional reputation.”

Beca’s staff members who have completed PMI certifications say they have found particular value in the study groups PMI offers to project managers completing certifications. Bentham believes having a body such as PMI lifts a project manager’s game by refreshing the skills learned at university and on the job, sharing current best practice and by setting benchmarks to which project managers can aspire.

“There is a synergy between PMI and Beca and we encourage our staff to obtain PMI certifications,” he says. “The way that PMI encourages project managers to frame issues and present solutions to their clients is a valuable approach to problem solving.”

Wee concurs: “PMP is the more common project management certification in New Zealand and, in my experience with Beca, the structured and common practice approach to project management helped the NZTA complete this project on time and on budget.”

Beca also gains value from PMI’s global standards.

“For an international organisation with staff working on projects in different countries our global standards provide a platform on which businesses can be confident their skills will translate in different regions,” says Karen Clarke, President of the PMI New Zealand chapter.

“We were honoured to present the Project of the Year award to NZTA and Beca last year,” says Clarke. “Both organisations take a lot of pride in their ability to deliver great projects, and realise the benefits of great project management. This project is no exception – it is showing substantial results already.”

## **About the project**

### **Features**

- 2000 traffic detectors embedded into the road surface to monitor traffic volume
- 600 electronic signs
- 100 CCTVs to monitor the ramp signals
- Priority lanes for trucks, buses and car pools on 14 on-ramps
- Upgraded ramps

### **Benefits**

- More consistent and predictable travel time
- Safer merging
- Fewer crashes
- Better throughput of vehicles on the motorway
- More consistent speeds for motorists

### **Outcomes**

- 15 per cent improvement in travel speed
- Five to 15 per cent increase in vehicles using the motorway

## **About Project Management Institute (PMI)**

The world’s leading professional membership organization for project managers, PMI shares knowledge with more than one half million members and credential holders in over 180 countries. Since 1969, PMI has impacted more than one million practitioners, businesses, governments, students and training organizations. Today, PMI’s products and services range from world-class standards for project, program and portfolio management to five professional credentials, including the gold standard Project Management Professional (PMP)<sup>®</sup>. PMI’s exclusive Global Corporate Council and European Corporate Networking Group engage large multinationals and government organizations in endorsing the value of project management. The only project management association with an established academic research program, PMI has invested more than US\$14 million in support of dozens of research projects since 1997. Learn more at [PMI.org](http://PMI.org).

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