

Paper Roads or Unformed Legal Roads

What is a paper road?

A paper or unformed road is a legally recognised road that provides public access to a particular area or feature and whose ownership lies with either a territorial authority or the Crown.

They are generally undeveloped and often known only to the local community.

These roads can cross farmland or private land and are found in both urban and rural areas.

Why are they there?

The majority of paper roads were established in the early days of settlement - in particular, in the period of provincial government (1854 to 1876). Before a piece of Crown land was sold into private hands, land was set aside as roads to ensure public access would be available once the land was developed.

Roads were shown on survey plans but were frequently not built or used, these include the paper roads we have inherited today.

Paper or Unformed roads were also traced alongside waterways (the coast, rivers and lakes).

Paper roads like these were meant to provide for future access to the public and adjoining landowners.

What is the difference between a public road and a private road?

A **public** road is a road where ownership is vested in the Territorial Authority or the Crown and is therefore available for public use.

There are many formed roads that may look a lot like public roads, but that is not always the case. For example, in urban areas rights-of-way and jointly-owned access-ways may have wide, sealed surfaces and have street names and signs- but are actually in private ownership and may not necessarily be freely available for public use.

A **private** road is an access across privately-owned property which the public may or may not be allowed to use at the discretion of the legal owner(s).

What is the difference between a legal road and a paper road?

An unformed road or paper road is no different in law from a formed road. The public has the right to use them without hindrance.

Whether the road is physically formed or just a line on a map it is still classified a public road.

A "paper" road is simply a legal road that has not been formed, or is only partly formed. It may be a walking track or just two wheel ruts in the ground – but it is still a legal road and members of the public have every right to walk or drive on it.

Legally it is public land.

Further enquiries regarding the use of the paper/unformed road, possible licensing of the road or stopping the road for sale to the adjoining landowners can be made to Auckland Transport.

General enquiries

Phone (09) 355 3553 operated 24 hours, seven days a week

Online [Online form for general enquiries and non-urgent service requests](#)

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