



Nigel Davenport

# New satellite tech set to unlock opportunities

Timaru Herald, 6 February 2025, Chris Tobin

<https://www.thepress.co.nz/nz-news/360569413/new-satellite-tech-set-unlock-economic-opportunities-south-canterbury>

**South Canterbury businesses are being encouraged to look at the economic benefits new satellite technology, to be installed at Richard Pearse Airport later this year, may offer.**

The airport has been chosen as the first of five locations by Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) where reference stations would be installed to provide SouthPAN, a free service that improved GPS accuracy from 5–10m to less than a metre, and in some cases as little as 10cm.

Venture Timaru chief executive Nigel Davenport said Venture Timaru was working in collaboration with LINZ on the project.

“It will provide significant benefits for a number of industries, from agriculture through to forestry, maritime, aviation, and emergency services, by improving productivity and reducing costs.

“This technology will be a pivotal resource in enabling faster, more precise and efficient operations, helping us all drive cost reductions and productivity improvements.

“These will undoubtedly all feature prominently in our Towards 2050 Plan, which is currently under development for our district.”

SouthPAN, a shortened name for Southern Positioning Augmentation Network, is a satellite-based augmentation system (SBAS) and joint initiative between the New Zealand and Australian governments, led by LINZ and Geoscience Australia.

The system improved the performance of standalone Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) such as GPS, GLONASS, Galileo and BeiDOU by overcoming gaps in mobile, internet and radio communications.

GNSS are used to support a wide range of agricultural processes, including precision planting, spraying, fertilising and harvesting.

“We’re very keen to see local businesses get involved with SouthPAN and see how it can benefit them, so urge anyone interested to get in touch with us,” Davenport said.

LINZ director SouthPAN, Michael Appleyard, said work would start on the Timaru ground reference station mid-year and be completed by the end of the year. “Timaru was selected because of its location in the middle of the South Island and its flat terrain enables a good view of the sky.”

He said Timaru would be the first of a further five ground reference stations to be built, including on the Chatham Islands and in Antarctica.

“These stations will join a SouthPAN uplink centre in Awarua that was commissioned in 2024.

“SouthPAN services are already available across New Zealand and Australia for compatible devices, and these services will improve as dedicated infrastructure is built and integrated into the network.”

The new technology could unlock new economic opportunities and improve productivity, he said.

“We’re already hearing the benefits from early users in the maritime, forestry and horticulture industries, and this is just the beginning.

“We’re keen to hear from any businesses interested in finding out how SouthPAN can help them and their bottom line.”

Timaru’s Richard Pearse Airport chief executive, Andrew Dixon, said the airport was keen to use SouthPAN once safety of life certification was achieved by 2028.

“SouthPAN will provide a significant safety and usability upgrade for pilots using the airport, as it offers them a greater level of positioning data than was ever available before. For travellers this is a positive, as it’s likely to improve the reliability of scheduled flights through fewer weather disruptions.”