

Media release

14 July 2022



Passenger services paused through Otira Rail tunnel

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has instructed KiwiRail to pause passenger rail services through the Otira Tunnel until further information is provided to the regulator to demonstrate that safety risks are being managed satisfactorily.

Waka Kotahi Senior Manager Safer Rail Gini Welch says the action has been taken as a precautionary but necessary measure in order to ensure the ongoing safety of passenger services through the 8.5km long tunnel between [Otira](#) and [Arthur's Pass](#).

The TranzAlpine excursion is the only service affected by the decision. The service will continue to operate, with KiwiRail providing bus transport for passengers from one end of the tunnel to the other.

KiwiRail's provision of passenger services through the Otira Tunnel has been subject to a Special Safety Assessment (SSA) overseen by Waka Kotahi, since November 2020. The assessment required specific remedial actions to improve safety in the tunnel to be completed by the end of May 2022.

The specific areas to be addressed by the remedial actions include the need for the development and implementation of a robust risk management plan to address potential safety risks to passengers in the event of an emergency situation that requires evacuation from the tunnel on foot.

Ms Welch says that while KiwiRail is working with Waka Kotahi and has confirmed their commitment to taking the necessary action, the evidence presented to the regulator on the management of risks to date has not been sufficient to allow passenger services to continue through the tunnel.

"As the regulator responsible for monitoring the safety of rail operations in New Zealand, Waka Kotahi has a clear obligation to take action necessary to ensure that safety risks are being actively managed.

"KiwiRail is working with Waka Kotahi and has confirmed their commitment to ensure that the evidence presented to the regulator on the management of risks provides us with the assurance we need to allow the resumption of passenger services through the tunnel."

We have a vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on New Zealand roads. Learn more about:

- [Road to Zero - our plan to achieve this vision](#)
- [Our vision – video explaining Road to Zero and what we're trying to achieve](#)
- [What Waka Kotahi is doing to support Road to Zero](#)

For more information please contact:

Andrew Knackstedt

Media Manager

Phone: 04 894 6285

Mobile: 021 276 3222

Email: Andrew.Knackstedt@nzta.govt.nz

Website: nzta.govt.nz



Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency works to create transport solutions for all New Zealanders – from helping new drivers earn their licences, to leading safety campaigns to investing in public transport, state highways and local roads.

 [About](#)  [Careers](#)  [Contact](#)



© 2021 Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, all rights reserved



Released under the Official Information Act 1982