



Better Conversations on Road Risk – using social media to engage

Why use social media?



Communities already use social media to talk about road risk. It is a great platform for Road Controlling Authorities (RCAs) to have conversations with a variety of people.

Social media can be used to test ideas, raise issues and consult on

projects and proposals. It is also a very good tool for updating communities on what is happening on their roads. People who talk to RCAs on social media may be different to those that come along to an open day or reply to a mail drop.

Using social media for pre-consultation engagement

Engagement is about having constructive and valuable conversations with communities.

We know engaging with a wide variety of people helps RCAs understand their communities, and come up with the best solutions to reduce road risk on local roads.

Talking to as many people as possible before consultation helps the consultation process. RCAs can identify early support or opposition to proposed changes and make adjustments based on community feedback.

Social media conversations are just like other conversations - engage in the same way as you would talk to a person on the street. Listen to them and make sure to respond so that the conversation goes both ways.

During consultation

RCAs can use social media to collect formal submissions.

Submissions come in all shapes and sizes. Social media comments that directly relate to the issue under consultation should be treated as submissions.

There can be some grey areas where social media comment only loosely relates to the issue under consultation. RCAs should seek legal advice if they're unsure about what they should (or shouldn't) include as submissions.

RCAs can also use social media to encourage communities to share their ideas. Waipa District Council used this approach during the Waikato Demonstration Project.

Post consultation

RCAs can use social media to update their communities and keep them in the loop.

Communities will want to know what's going to change and whether their opinions were heard.

RCAs can also use social media to stay in touch with their communities. People might talk on social media about whether the changes have worked, or other roads that need attention. It's important RCAs are tuned into these conversations and remember that engagement doesn't stop once the decisions are made.



Choosing your platform

You should choose your platform based on what you're trying to achieve and the people you're trying to reach. Each platform has a unique audience and purpose, which influences how you should use it.

Facebook

Facebook content is personable and conversational – it's a great platform for driving engagement and participating in conversation.

It is the most widely used social media platform in New Zealand – 2.3 million Kiwis login daily. The audience is broad and varied, which makes it useful for reaching ordinary Kiwis.

Twitter

Twitter is useful for gaining reach. Each tweet can only be 140 characters long, which means messages need to be short and simple. This makes it a great platform to make announcements, but more challenging to use it for conversation.

Twitter's New Zealand audience is much smaller than Facebook – there are approximately 360,000 active users. These users are mostly politicians, journalists and businesses, which makes it useful for engaging with influencers.

Creating good social media content

Engaging social media content is short, purposeful and conversational. We've included some tips for creating engaging content below:

- Use images and videos – it will help people engage with the issues in new ways and it stands out on an ever-changing feed.
- Include sub-titles on all video so those watching without sounds can understand the content.
- Include a call to action – your audience is more likely to engage if you tell them what you want them to do (e.g., like, comment, share, follow a link).

- Respond to comments – keep your answers short, conversational and informative and try to avoid standard answers that make it seem like you're brushing people off.
- Adapt your content to fit the platform – what works on Facebook might not work on Twitter. Facebook is more conversational, Twitter should be short and to the point.
- Ensure each article or video is well produced – that it includes obvious search terms and has links to other content.
- Make sure your content is easy to view on mobile.
- Consider live streaming events or Q&As to increase reach and engagement.

Tips for Facebook

- Including a video or an image will help boost your content within Facebook's algorithm, making it more likely to appear in your audience's NewsFeed.
- Experiment with the timings and frequency of your posts – your analytics will show when your followers are online. Adjusting timings may lead to more engagement
- Adjust your tone – your content should be short, informative and conversational.

Tips for Twitter

- Include links so people can learn more – if you've only got 140 characters to tell your story, it's likely that your audience might need more information.
- Use a website like bit.ly to shorten your links.
- Use hashtags to anchor your content and make sure to tag (@ followed by their Twitter handle) relevant businesses or partners.
- You've got 140 characters, but if you only use 120 characters it will be easier for others to retweet your post.