



SPEED REVIEW STATE HIGHWAYS 23, 31 AND 39 WEST WAIKATO

Speed review engagement summary

27 APRIL 2021

SPEED REVIEW STATE HIGHWAYS 23, 31 AND 39

Too many people are being killed and seriously injured in crashes on State Highway 23, 31 and 39 in West Waikato. Between 2009 and 2018, 17 people lost their lives and 104 were seriously injured on these roads.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has been looking at how lower speed limits could help to reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes on these routes.

To help us fully understand the issues on these roads we asked locals to give us their views on speed on this road.

What we did

We had many useful conversations at drop-in sessions held October-November 2020 in Pirongia, Whatawhata, Otorohanga, Kawhia and Raglan. Approximately 215 people attended, and we received 225 written comments at the forums. People were also able to give feedback on-line and submit feedback forms and send in emails. We received:

- 63 emails
- 23 feedback forms
- Social Pinpoint (on-line forum) had 187 comments and 13 survey responses

We also talked to businesses and organisations in the area, including the Councils, the AA, Fonterra, NZ Police, and Fire & Emergency. We also had discussions with iwi and schools in the area.

What we heard

There was both support and opposition for reducing the speed on the highways in this review.

“100km/h is perfectly adequate for the road. Drivers need to be aware of the conditions.”

“I live on this road and would like to see the limit dropped to 80kmh. Turning right across can be dangerous as there's no room to stop in the middle or any shoulder to stop on. Turning left is also dangerous as people go far too fast coming up behind even though I indicate well before the driveway. I think this road is now too busy to have a 100kmh limit with the amount of residential addresses.”

“Reducing the speed will affect the majority of users who travel daily on this road.”

The Police were supportive of the reduction in speed limits, commenting they are keen to see good promotion of any speed limit changes made. They would like to see repeater signs being used and the new speed limits also marked on the road and a roading environment that supports the change in the speed limit. They also commented that travel times will not be considerably longer and there would be efficiencies gained in terms of fuel consumption. They observed that it can be challenging to travel at the 100km/h speed limit on rural roads and many people feel safer driving these roads when the speed limit better reflects the actual driving environment. The Police take a no tolerance approach to people speeding past schools.

Wayne Asplin, Principal of Ngahinapouri School made a submission on behalf of the school.

“I find some of the statistics on State Highway 39 alarming. Ngahinapouri's average speed through the village is 77km/h, 7km over

the recommended 70km/h. I would suggest that this alone is a very good reason for NZTA to be more proactive and put steps in place to make this piece of road safe for our community.”

Fonterra supported lowering of speeds as Health and Safety is their top priority. Lower speeds would make farm gate entries and exits safer.

The main feedback themes from the general public were that the speeds through the townships and urban areas were too high. The main areas mentioned included Pirongia, Whatawhata, Te Uku and Ngahinapouri.

“Our township is far too busy to have a 70 km speed limit combined with the design of the roads not working with the rapid growth in our community. We have a primary school and an ECE centre in our township, a rugby and tennis club for children and adults to enjoy as well as a local pub and café/shopping district... the current roading system does not support people enjoying these safely.”

Area	Feedback received
Pirongia	<p>There was widespread support for reducing the speed in the Pirongia Village and extending the current 50km/h speed limits both north and south of their current positions.</p> <p>The sharp turns near McClure Street were seen by many as being dangerous. Vehicles were going too fast through that area, cutting the corner, and ending up in the right-hand turn bay on the other side of the road.</p>
Otorohanga	<p>People agreed with lower speeds around schools.</p> <p>Passing lanes/slow vehicle bays were seen as being quite unsafe, especially when trucks pull back in to merge with the traffic.</p>
Kawhia	<p>People supported a lower speed limit for SH31 and 80km/h was seen as appropriate. Extending the 50km/h zone in Kawhia to the cemetery was suggested by many. Driver behaviour is an issue especially the corner cutting and dangerous overtaking, both of which lead to unreasonable speeds on this road.</p>
Whatawhata	<p>People supported the idea of lower speeds in Whatawhata and other urban areas (especially Ngahinapouri).</p> <p>Generally, there was support for lowering speeds on SH23 both towards Hamilton and towards Raglan.</p> <p>The intersection of Tuhikaramea and SH39 was mentioned as being dangerous. People were keen to see action to improve the SH23/39 intersection as quickly as possible.</p>
Raglan	<p>There were varying views on the speed on SH23 but all were unanimous about the area around Greenslade, Lorenzen Bay and Manukau Roads. The speed limit for that area is currently 100km/h and everyone agreed this is too high and needs to be extended towards Hamilton although there were various suggestions as to how far it should be extended.</p> <p>There were some strong opinions, especially from those commuting daily that the speed limits should remain at 100km/h (apart from the Greenslade Road area, Te Uku and Whatawhata and over the Deviation). Concerns included the extra time it may</p>

Area	Feedback received
	<p>take them, and they thought there would potentially be an increase in frustration which would lead to unsafe driving.</p> <p>Many believed the standard of drivers, especially visitors to Raglan, is an issue</p> <p>More passing lanes / slow vehicle bays between Raglan and Hamilton were wanted by some and others suggested the slow vehicle bays are dangerous when traffic re-integrates, especially at the bottom of the Deviation.</p> <p>There were a number of people that felt the Raglan driving culture was intimidating and talked about feeling “monstered” when driving to/from Hamilton due to the tailgating and unsafe passing.</p>

Some Waka Kotahi responses to feedback

- While passing lanes can help to get past slower vehicles, evidence shows that passing lanes do not improve safety or journey times on winding routes. Passing lanes can lead to faster speeds than what is safe and appropriate, especially given there is no separation between the opposing traffic flows. Short passing lanes can lead to poor judgement at both the two lane and merge points with increased head-on risk. Passing lanes on winding roads can mean entry into curves is faster resulting in more corner cutting or swinging wide.
- Reducing the speed limit on SH23 especially is likely to give more consistent travel speeds, resulting in more uniform flow along the highway, potentially reducing driver frustration, harsh braking and acceleration. The current operational speeds are below the current speed limit of 100km/h (closer to 80km/h) so a speed limit closer to operating speed means traffic is likely to flow better.
- SH23/39 intersection improvements in the form of a roundabout is proposed but construction is subject to funding availability
- Speed limits that are safe and appropriate has been shown as one of the best things we can do to prevent people being killed or seriously injured on our roads. Most crashes are caused by a number of factors, but it is speed which is most likely to determine whether anyone is killed, injured or walks away unharmed.

What’s going to happen next?

Changing speed limits is a legal process and there are numerous steps we must follow under the Speed Management Guide and the Setting of Speed Limits Rule.

We’ve read all the feedback you have provided during this engagement phase. We are using these insights along with the technical analysis to finalise our recommendation for what the safe and appropriate speeds should be for this road. The next step will be to formally consult on our recommendations. It is expected that the announcement of the consultation dates will be made shortly.

The consultation will give locals, and others who are interested and affected an opportunity to let us know if there are any other factors that we should consider when making our decision on the safe and appropriate speeds.

Information on this speed review, including future consultation, can be accessed via our website: www.nzta.govt.nz/west-waikato-speed-review