



## **SH24 MATAMATA, SH29 TE POI TO TAURIKO AND SH29A TAURIKO TO TE MAUNGA SPEED REVIEW**

### **Engagement Summary**

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

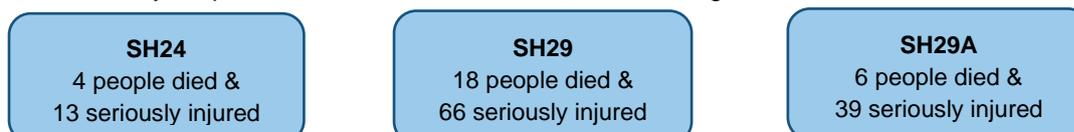
DECEMBER 2021

# SPEED REVIEW SH24 MATAMATA, SH29 TE POI TO TAURIKO AND SH29A TAURIKO TO TE MAUNGA

In May and between October and November 2021, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency engaged with the local community, key stakeholders, councils, mana whenua and road user industry groups about the current speed limits on the following highways:

- State Highway 24 (SH24) from Matamata to the SH24/State Highway 29 (SH29) intersection;
- State Highway 29 (SH29) from Te Poi to Tauriko in Tauranga; and
- State Highway 29A (SH29A) from Tauriko to Te Maunga (Baypark).

There have been a high number of crashes on these roads, and something needs to be done to turn this around. Over a 10-year period between 2010 to 2019, the following CAS data<sup>1</sup> was recorded:



There has also been a high number of minor and non-injury crashes across these highways during this period. Many of the crashes have been run off road, rear end and head-on with speed being a factor in a great number of reported crashes. The safety features of a road and the speed vehicles travel on it influence both the risk of a crash and whether it is survivable.

These roads have been identified nationally within the top 10% of the roading network that, if speed management was put in place, we would get the greatest reduction in deaths and serious injuries. We've heard concerns from people in the community about the speed people are travelling, specifically through Te Poi, over the Kaimai Range, across bridges and past schools, which indicates the current speed limits are not safe for the way people use the road. Waka Kotahi therefore want to improve the safety of SH24-29-29A by reviewing the current speed limits and finding out where other safety improvements might be needed.

## What we did

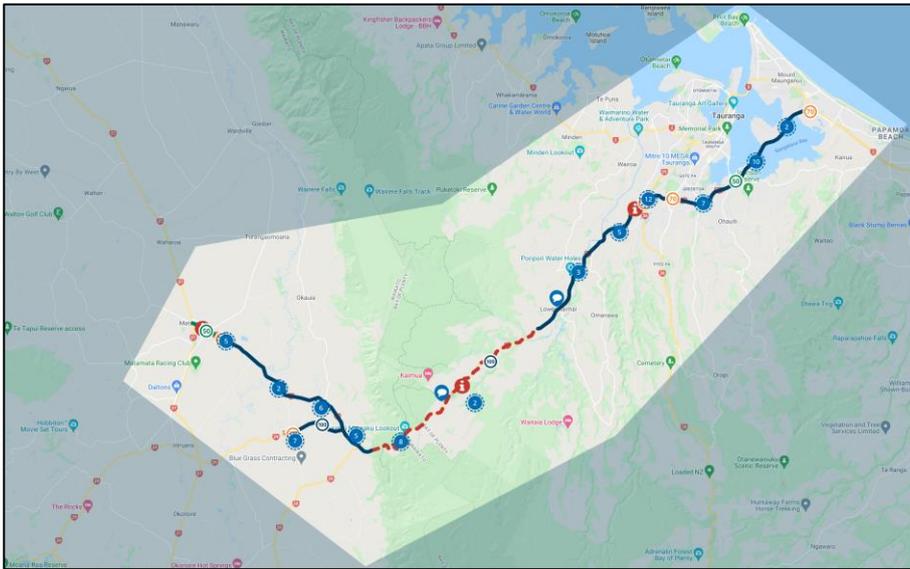
Prior to undertaking the engagement part of the speed review process, Waka Kotahi completed a speed management technical assessment for the project area. Through the engagement process we obtained 510 pieces of feedback which contained valuable local knowledge on how people use the road and their concerns. This, together with the technical assessment, will help determine if a speed limit change is the best approach to improve road safety; where new speed limits could begin or end; and if any other safety improvements might be required.

We received the following feedback through a range of engagement approaches:

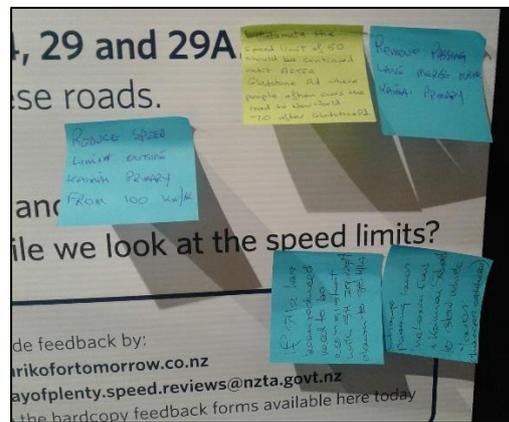
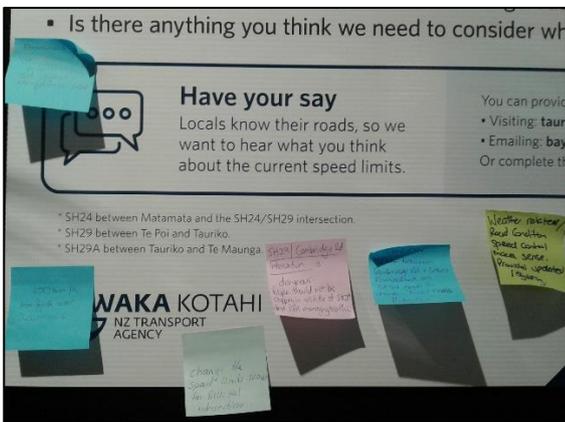
- 140 written comments from the Tauriko for Tomorrow drop in sessions
- 170 comments and suggestions on Social Pinpoint (online forum)
- 160 comments during stakeholder and iwi partner online workshops
- 40 emails and 1 phone call

As part of a stakeholder online workshop, we engaged with businesses and organisations in the area, which included representatives from local and regional councils, AA, freight industry, NZ Police, Fire and Emergency NZ, Tauriko School and Federated Farmers. We also engaged with representatives from local iwi, hapū and marae.

<sup>1</sup> CAS data for 2010 – 2019 indicates: 28 fatalities and 118 serious injuries across these highways



Comments and suggestions from Social Pinpoint (online forum)



Posted notes from the community drop-in sessions in Tauriko

## What we heard

When reviewing the feedback, there were very specific locations mentioned where speed or safety was a concern. To capture this feedback, we divided SH24-29-29A into five sections. These are defined in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1 SH24-29-29A Speed Management Priority Areas**

Section	Location
0	SH24-SH29-SH29A in general
1	SH24 Matamata section
2	SH29 Te Poi section
3	SH29 Kaimai Range
4	SH29 Tauriko section
5	SH29A Tauranga section

We heard most of the community are in favour of lowering the speed limit at certain sections along SH24-29-29A, however many also indicated they think the speed limits are fine as they are and they'd rather see changes in road design than reducing speed limits. Here are a few comments as received across the various road sections:

### **Section 1: Matamata**

"The current 100km/h should rather be 80km/h down that section of road towards the Old Te Aroha Road intersection."

"These speed limits are fit for purpose and should stay as is."

"Yes! The urban and commercial growth to the West of Matamata demands lower speed limits. It's a natural progression, so move the 50km out to the Transfer Station, and the 70km out past the Bridge."

"Replace the bridge for safety, it's old. Slowing traffic down does not make it safer! Quite the opposite, you get a domino effect causing nose to tail accidents."

### **Section 2: Te Poi**

"Te Poi intersection is dangerous for people going to Rotorua and urgently needs a roundabout built.."

"Reducing the speed to 50 during school drop off & pm pick-up times would mean it is safer for all children and families who attend Te Poi School. It is a difficult intersection to pull out into and slower speeds would make it safer to pull out into traffic also going slower."

"Reduce to 60 km/h intersection is busy with long and heavy vehicles. Vision is severely restricted if crossing using Te Poi Rd, by heavy vehicles parked for breaks"

### **Section 3: Kaimai Range**

"Fix the problems that is to extend length of overtaking bays and creating hard berms, so it is safe for slow vehicles to pull over to allow safer passing. Flashing signs for increased caution at intersections until these are fixed."

"Scrap the variable speed signs. They are just a gadget that doesn't work. Most driver are sensible in adverse conditions. The few others don't listen anyway."

"I have driven this road for 27yrs.... Speed isn't the issue. It is people not using the existing pull over slow lanes.... more slow lanes or two lanes both ways would be the best options to decrease the risk. Impatient drivers are always going to speed to through to get past/ahead, this is putting themselves and others on the road at risk."

"This section of road needs to be four lanes the whole way up and down, fix the surface."

### **Section 4: Tauriko**

"This section of road needs a major upgrade for safety as the traffic flow is so high that at slower speed there is no gaps in traffic to crossroad already. This section needs to be bypassed!"

"Tauriko roundabout has overtime increased in traffic considerably with people entering the roundabout at very high speeds – which is a concern."

"Most dangerous intersection on a state highway that I have driven. Needs lights to give every user through it a safe passage"

### **Section 5: Tauranga**

"The speed limit of 100km/h seems Ok except for the Maungatapu Bridge where traffic already slows down due to the narrowness of the bridge. 80km/h for the bridge would seem more appropriate with 100km/h before and after the bridge."

“Either enlarge roundabout, add traffic light system like Barkes Corner or just change to traffic lights. Very dangerous intersection as traffic straight through on 29A doesn't slow down to required speed at intersection. Very difficult to turn right from Poike Road on to 29A.”

“Speed reduction. The Maungatapu Bridge has comparatively narrow lanes compared to the other parts of SH 29A. Either a permanent speed reduction or weather/ traffic volume related speed reduction. Suggest the glowing light speed signs with a 70km/h or 80km/h for both ends of the bridge.”

### **Local iwi, hapū and marae representatives**

The project team worked alongside mana whenua to understand their concerns. We heard from representatives from Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngai Tukairangi, Ngai Te Ahi, Ngāti Tapu, Ngāti Ruahine, Ngāti Potiki, Hikurangi hapū and Matapihi hapū.

The following requests and key points were raised:

- Speed at Maungatapu bridge and Mangawhero needs to be reduced.
- Better access to Waahi Tapu (Te Pāhou Urupā).
- Safer parking along key sections off SH29/29A especially near fishing areas and bridges.
- Temporary lower speeds and signage during tangihanga/nehu are underway as current speed limits are unsafe.
- Better access to Marae and Kohanga Reo.
- Safer crossing points for pedestrians especially tamariki going to school or using walkways in the area.
- Hairini Street congestion – it's blocked from traffic coming from SH29A (Barkes Corner Roundabout/ Poike Roundabout) need reduced speeds between the roundabouts.
- Hairini Roundabout into Ohauiti/Welcome Bay needs better design to cater for the continued growth and high congestion.

Overall, mana whenua are concerned about the volume of traffic that is increasing through Tauriko and Hairini, which causes commercial and commuter traffic to drive too fast through their communities.

### **Councils:**

Council staff and elected members stressed the need for both speed reductions and improved design at various high use intersections. There were many comments about the need to work together on both local road and state highway safer speed limits. Especially when the new Setting of Speed Limits Rule comes into place to ensure consistency.

### **Local Schools**

Te Poi and Kaimai Schools were the two key schools mentioned that need variable speed signs as well as better design for pick up and drop off areas. The need to implement safer footpaths/shared paths for children was also mentioned.

### **New Zealand Police**

Police said driver behaviour and road conditions need to be considered along with speed reductions to make the road safer. When traffic is congested (which is happening more and more often), people make poor decisions. Consistency across speed limits would assist with compliance.

The Kaimai Range Weather Activated Variable Speed Limits do not always accurately reflect the current road conditions, which are then poorly adhered to and makes enforcement even more difficult. Placing warning signs advising drivers of upcoming changes in speeds (e.g., slow down) would also assist, especially along the winding Kaimai Range and well before reaching a school, for instance. Another concern raised was lighting along SH29A causing poor visibility in some sections.

## Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)

In general, FENZ are in support of anything that's going to make roads safer, and if that includes safer speeds, it is good. FENZ also emphasize that traffic safety measures such as barriers, need to provide enough room on the road shoulder for emergency vehicles to get through. If this isn't provided it could cause delays (life or death situations) if additional traveling time is needed to drive to a passing / turning bay to gain access to an accident.

## Sentiments and key themes

Most of the community supports reducing the speed limits along various sections of SH24-29-29A and there was also a desire to see more consistent speeds (especially over the Kaimai Range).

Another key theme relating to speed was the need to widen the road and/or provide more frequent and regularly spaced, or longer, slow vehicle passing bays. Especially over the Kaimai Range, as speed exacerbates issues caused by these.

Many people felt changing the road layout at key high-risk intersections would be a better intervention. By making the intersection safer, people would make better decisions and therefore reduce harm as opposed to reducing the speed limits.

The following presents feedback received by key themes across all five key sections of SH24-29-29A defined in Table 1 above.

### • Speeding / too-high speed limits

Concerns were raised about the current speed limits at certain sections along SH24-29-29A (151 comments). Many locations were described as almost impossible to safely travel at the posted speed limit. This was based on the sentiment that drivers perceive a posted speed as a target rather than a limit; for example, when drivers see the 100km/h sign they increase their speed.

Some common themes about where and how speed needs to be reduced include:

- Schools – During school drop-off or pick-up times tamariki need safe connections, access or crossing points to get to school. School Variable Speed Zones were suggested. Especially at Te Poi School and Kaimai School, so it's safer at school drop-off and pickup, like currently implemented at Tauriko and Matamata.
- Unsafe intersections:
  - o Te Poi Road/SH24 intersection
  - o Old Te Aroha Road/SH24 intersection needs a right-hand turning bay
  - o Tauriko roundabout
  - o Cambridge Road/SH29 intersection
  - o Hairini roundabout into Ohauti/Welcome Bay
  - o Oropi Road roundabout
  - o Belk Road and Omanawa Road intersections
- Access on/off the state highway – People take chances to turn on/off the state highway in a high-speed environment when it's not safe, ie along bends and narrow stretches.
- Kaimai Range Weather Activated Variable Speed Limits – Many people felt that the weather-based variable speed limits did not work, weren't responsive enough and didn't activate (or deactivate) when the weather changed. People therefore ignore them and felt speed should be reduced over the hills and on the descending sections.
- Kaimai Range speed limits – people felt traffic calming measures and a more consistent safe speed would be better rather than drivers accelerating and decelerating at alternate tight corners and straights, especially when descending.
- Bridges – The speed needs to be reduced on narrow bridges (specifically the SH24 - Mangawhero bridge near Matamata and the SH29A - Maungatapu bridge near Tauranga).
- Driver behaviour – during peak traffic periods people take chances to enter the respective highways (intersections). They also try and pass slower vehicles in areas where there are houses, business and shops. Some suggested the speed should be lowered and space provided for vehicles to access the road or pass vehicles waiting to turn off.

- **Speed limits fine as they are**

We received 102 comments from the community about not wanting to see any speed limit changes on these roads and they are highways for a reason. They'd rather see changes in road design than reducing speed limits. Here are some of the comments:

*"Leave the speed limit at 100km/h, if it is lowered it will just cause more frustration and more poor decisions. Road improvements need to cope with the extra volume, but also driver education, driver attention, driving to conditions etc really needs improving and enforced."*

*"My thoughts are to leave the speed limits as they are. I am a truck driver and use these roads all the time, I find most drivers are good and will let you in to traffic, will slow down when is needed. There is always going to be a small percentage of people that are idiots. These people will speed no matter what speed signs you put up. They will pass when it is unsafe and will cause crashes. Changing speed signs will not stop these idiots."*

*"I am opposed to any change from the current speed limits on these roads, which I drive often. The road is perfectly safe for licenced drivers and it there is a training deficiency, this should be attended to by a review of the driver training curriculum and licencing regime."*

- **Driver Behaviour**

Many people (42 comments) from the community commented they thought a big safety issue on SH24-29-29A were dangerous drivers (i.e. others using the road, not local drivers). Behaviours that people were concerned about included:

- dangerous overtaking
- not observing or respecting the current speed limits (especially with variable speed changes over the Kaimai Range and outside schools)
- not driving to the conditions
- slow drivers and trucks causing driver frustration and therefore more likely to take risks to overtake
- insufficient slow vehicle bays or slip lanes to pass
- drivers who ignore the speed limit and signs.

- **Other safety concerns and design improvements**

130 comments were about other concerns or improvements that should be implemented to make the road safer (i.e., not just reducing the speed limit). Suggestions included:

- Safer intersection design at busy intersections.
- Widening the road especially over the Kaimai Range and bridge crossings.
- Adding more slow vehicle bays and passing lanes especially over the Kaimai Range.
- Move current speed signs near schools further out so people slow down sooner, before reaching the school.
- Larger pull over areas and more spaces for people to stop and park near schools and recreational river spots, with proper signs to show where not to stop i.e., dangerous corners.
- Widening intersections so there are slip lanes, or wider middle sections for people to pass by or wait so it's safer to turn.
- Maungatapu and Mangawhero Bridges need to be widened and improved.
- Make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists along the roadside, ie proper constructed footpaths/shared paths with barriers, especially where young children are traveling to and from school or during holiday periods.

- **Road condition and maintenance**

There were 35 comments that raised safety concern about road design and condition. Particularly the narrowness of the road in a number of areas, such as over the Kaimai Range where trucks go around narrow bends and then cross the centreline as well as at various bridges, where trucks and even campervans have bumped mirrors when crossing at the same time.

Ten people were also concerned about general wear and tear on the road and noted potholes and resealing needing to be addressed on a more regular basis.

- **Gazetted signage, policing and enforcement**

Proper signage, policing and enforcement measures are paramount for people to adhere to the speed limits and road directions. The use of speed cameras was proposed several times. There were 27 comments about the need for more adequate lighting, reflectors or rumble strips on the roads to assist with better navigation especially during night-time traveling. Specific sections mentioned were over the Kaimai Range, through Tauriko and SH29A towards Tauranga.

## **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 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 commence the required formal consultation with our recommendations. It is expected that the announcement of the consultation dates will be made shortly.

The consultation will give local communities, and other interested parties 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:

[Consultations | Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency \(nzta.govt.nz\)](https://www.nzta.govt.nz/consultations)