



# SH3 WAITARA TO BELL BLOCK SPEED REVIEW

Summary of the speed review consultation

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

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# 1. BACKGROUND

State Highway 3 (SH3) Waitara to Bell Block is one of the busiest corridors in the region, carrying a combination of commuter, tourist and long-haul freight traffic. It provides access to key points such as New Plymouth Airport and Port Taranaki and is an interregional link between Hamilton and New Plymouth.

There have been 101 crashes on this route between 2009 and 2018. Seven people died and 14 were seriously injured. Three of the fatal crashes occurred in 2018 alone.

In 2017 and 2018 a business case was developed for safety improvements for SH3 between Waitara and Bell Block. There was considerable engagement with stakeholders and the community on infrastructure improvements and proposed changes to speed limits for this corridor during this process. Most people supported safety improvements and making the road a consistent speed limit.

Safety improvements such as roundabouts at key intersections, flexible safety barrier and wide centrelines are currently being designed for the route.

In addition to making physical safety improvements, we needed to review speed limits to ensure they were safe and appropriate for the road. The proposed changes to speed limits would make the speed limit a consistent 80km/h along the entire route.

# 2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

Extensive community engagement both on speed limits and proposed safety improvements was undertaken during the development of the SH3 Waitara to Bell Block safety improvements business case in 2017 and 2018. Community open days were held as well as meetings with community boards, New Plymouth District Council, RTA, road transport operators, local business owners and potentially impacted landowners.

The community was encouraged to share their concerns about the road, and their views on proposed infrastructure improvements and speed reviews through a range of channels. This included letter drops, media, social media, print advertising and a project specific webpage.

Through this engagement we learned that people found the different speed limits along the route confusing and that most supported making the speed limit a consistent 80km/h. This was also largely supported at one-on-one meetings with impacted landowners, open days, and during stakeholder discussions.

From 18 November to 15 December 2019, Waka Kotahi formally consulted on proposed new speed limits for the two 100km/h sections of road between Waitara and Bell Block. These stretches are located 360m east of Mahoetahi Road to 400m west of Princess Street and 430m east of Princess Street to 300m east of Bayly Street.

Consultation materials provided evidence that supported the proposed safe and appropriate speed limits. This included current travel speeds and the characteristics of the road. The consultation was advertised on radio stations, through social media, on the Waka Kotahi website and in local newspapers.

People were able to submit their views through the electronic form on our webpage, via email or by completing a postage paid hardcopy form.

## 4. CONSULTATION QUESTION

The consultation phase is used to seek any additional information from stakeholders or the public that will help inform the decision about the proposed speed limit changes.

During formal consultation we proposed new speed limits and asked the public the following question “**Are there any other factors that we should consider when making our decision?**”

We considered all factors raised during formal consultation when making our decision on new permanent speed limits.

## 4. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

We received 77 submissions in total, two of which were from the same person. We appreciated the response from the community and thank all those who provided their feedback.

The table outlines main factors people raised in their submissions and our comments.

Factor	Waka Kotahi comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some submitters wanted the speed reduction area extended to include the Bell Block Bypass and all the way through to New Plymouth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a case to be made for a reduction from Bell Block to New Plymouth, but this section of SH3 is median divided and a lot safer than the rest of the route under review.</li> <li>The speed management through the urban sections of SH3 were done as part of the infrastructure work at the time. We could consider this section at a future date.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People raised concerns over “blanket” reductions and the impact they felt they could have on driver frustration, distraction and traffic congestion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lowering the speed limit through this section of the network lowers the risk at these intersections until the point when they are improved. The approach is effective at mitigating the harm created when drivers make mistakes common at intersections.</li> <li>The travel time increase is under 20 seconds when the existing operating speed is used for the calculation. If the existing posted speed is used, the increase in travel time is only 48 seconds.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People were concerned over lack of passing opportunities and space for agricultural vehicles to pull over on the existing 80km/h sections. Many felt that this led to risky overtaking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic volumes do not currently warrant investment in widening and increasing the number of lanes. This type of work can't be done easily without land purchases.</li> <li>Roundabouts are currently being designed for key intersections along the route. It's likely that these will include additional lanes on the exits which will create some overtaking opportunities.</li> <li>A consistent speed limit generally contributes to improved traffic flows.</li> <li>At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the state highway has to provide for a range of users in this area including at times slow moving farm vehicles.</li> <li>The traffic volume drops past the turnoffs for Waitara and the need to pass is lower. There are passing lanes beyond this section which most drivers should have no problem using if needed.</li> </ul>

Factor	Waka Kotahi comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many people noted unsafe intersections along the route and the need for these to be improved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SH3 Waitara to Bell Block Safety Improvement project is currently in design. The project includes roundabouts to improve safety and access at key intersections.</li> <li>Reducing the speed limit through this section of the network will lower the risk at these intersections until they are improved.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other submitters felt driver behaviour was to blame for the poor crash history on the route. They were concerned about drivers getting impatient and making unsafe decisions if a lower speed limit was imposed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the safe system approach in both the previous and current road safety strategy, the aim is to focus less on crash causes and more on harm reduction. With respect to driver behaviour, this means allowing for drivers to make mistake and reducing harm if they do make an error.</li> <li>Lowering the speed limit will allow more margin for error if a driver makes a mistake and reduce the severity if a crash does occur.</li> </ul>

## 5. DECISION

The table below shows the recommendations Waka Kotahi formally consulted on between 18 November and 15 December 2019. The submissions did not identify any issues that Waka Kotahi had not already considered.

The outcome of the speed review was in line with the proposed speed limit changes, and the permanent speed limits outlined below will come into effect on Friday 18 December 2020.

Stakeholders will be notified by letter and the public are being notified via media release, newspaper and radio advertising, and social media ahead of the new speed limits signs being installed and the new speed limits taking effect.

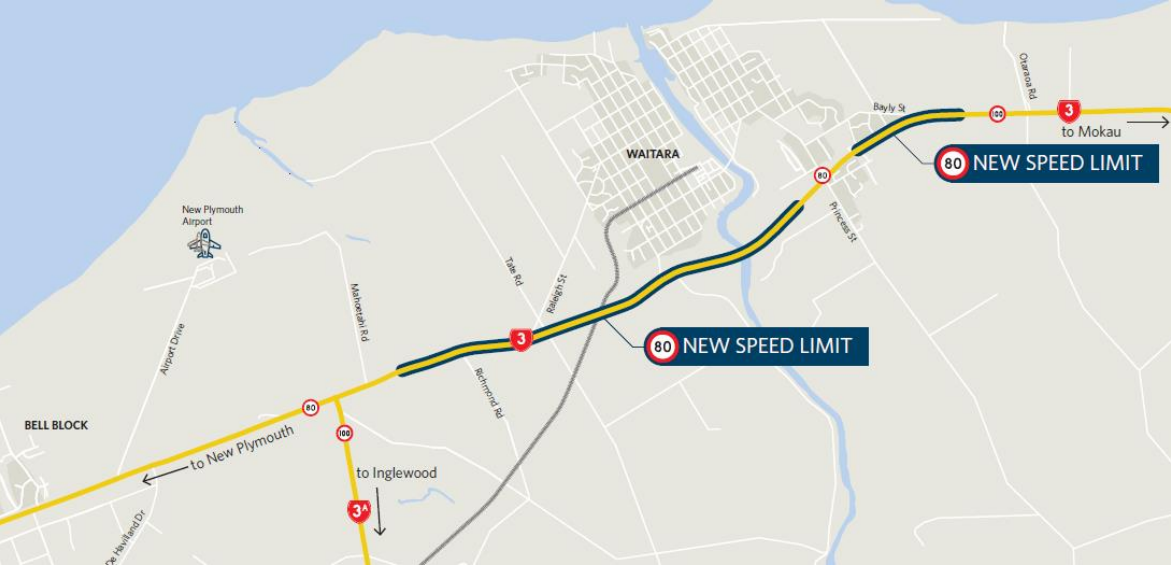
When the new speed limits take effect, the area will be monitored to ensure the new permanent speed limits and supporting treatments are working effectively and to determine if any further changes are required.

The following new speed limits will apply from Friday 18 December 2020:

SH3 Waitara to Bell Block	New speed limits from 18 December 2020
<b>Mahoetahi Road Intersection to Waitara</b> 360m east of Mahoetahi Rd to 400m west of Princess Street	80km/h
<b>Waitara to Bayly Street intersection</b> 430m east of Princess St to 300m east of Bayly Street	80km/h



# Map showing the permanent speed limits



## 6. SUBMISSIONS

You can view the submissions we received for this speed review [here](#).