



STATE HIGHWAY 1 TAUPŌ AIRPORT TO TURANGI SPEED REVIEW

Summary of the speed review consultation

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

AUGUST 2020

1. BACKGROUND

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has reviewed the speed limits on State Highway 1 (SH1) Taupō Airport to Turangi in the Waikato region. As part of that review, Waka Kotahi consulted with the local community and road user groups on the safe and appropriate speed limits for this stretch of road.

This route is identified as a high-risk road. The current speed limits are generally 100km/h through the rural sections of the corridor and 70km/h within the various settlements and urbanised areas. There are numerous roadside hazards along the route such as large trees and roadside drains, including a particularly winding and tortuous section adjacent to Lake Taupō north of Motutere.

This section of SH1 forms part of the main north-south spine of the state highway network and is used to shift freight and people from one end of the North Island to the other, not to mention various locations in between. It is also used by people commuting between Taupō and Turangi and various other settlements along the eastern lake edge. For many, SH1 is also the 'street' they live on and the place they call home. During holiday periods there is a significant increase in the number of people in the area, including holidaymakers, cyclists, anglers, boaties and campervans visiting the various rest areas, camping grounds and holiday homes dotted along the lake's edge. On average, about 6,800 vehicles use this section of SH1 every day, which is an increase from the 5,400 vehicles per day, 10 years ago.

We reviewed the speed limits to make sure they are safe and appropriate for this road. No matter what causes a crash, speed is always a factor in the severity. Put simply, the speed of impact can be the difference between walking away or being carried away from a crash.

Reducing speed limits is not the only way to improve safety on this section of the state highway network. SH1 from Taupō to Waiouru is the subject of a business case, investigating safety treatment opportunities. Safer speed limits along this route would be complementary to any safety improvement recommendations that the business case produces, rather than being an alternative to implementing those safety improvements.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

Prior to undertaking the formal consultation process, Waka Kotahi completed a speed management technical assessment of the road. This identified that various existing speed limits on the road were not safe and/or appropriate for the current road characteristics and roadside environment along this corridor.

A series of meetings/hui/conversations with stakeholders were undertaken in August and September 2019. Stakeholders included: Taupō District Council (staff and elected members), the Turangi-Tongariro Community Board, Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board, NZ Police, Automobile Association, Fire and Emergency NZ, Road Transport Association and National Road Carriers. Furthermore, three drop-in sessions were held where members of the community could speak to the speed review team and provide their feedback directly on the proposed speed limits. The drop-in sessions were held at the Taupō Market, Turangi New World supermarket and at Te Kura o Waitahanui.

Early engagement provided us with feedback and local knowledge on how people use the road and their concerns. This helped us to decide if a speed limit change was the best thing to do to improve road safety, where new speed limits could begin or end, and if any other safety improvements might be needed. Two specific changes were made to the overall proposal as a result of engagement feedback, including a variable speed limit in the school zone ¹ adjacent to Te Kura o Waitahanui and extending the speed review further south to include Turangi (previously the review only went as far south as Motuoapa).

¹ A variable speed limit in a school zone is an enforceable speed limit that can be activated during peak school traffic times by using an approved electronic advisory sign that alerts motorists that they are travelling through a school zone.

On 25 October 2019, Waka Kotahi started formal consultation on the proposed new speed limits for SH1 from Taupō Airport to Turangi. Consultation was open for four weeks and closed on 22 November 2019.

The consultation period and how to make a submission was advertised on radio stations (The Edge, More FM, The Hits, the Sound and ZM), through social media, on Waka Kotahi's website and in the Taupo Times and Taupo Turangi Weekender. A media release was issued on 25 October 2019. An e-newsletter was sent to those who had subscribed to our mailing list and posters/consultation forms were distributed to businesses along the route.

People were able to submit their feedback through a variety of channels, including an on-line questionnaire, printed formal consultation forms and by email/letter.

3. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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 a variable school speed zone and asked the public the following questions:

Are there any other factors that we should consider when making decisions on these proposals?

and

Are there any other factors we should consider before making a decision on our proposal to introduce a variable school speed zone outside Te Kura o Waitahanui?

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

4. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

We received 120 individual submissions. We appreciated the response from stakeholders and the community and thank all those who provided their feedback. In particular, Waka Kotahi would like to acknowledge the tamariki of Te Kura o Waitahanui who wrote letters describing their experiences of living adjacent to SH1, and their desire to see the road made safer for them and their community.

While a number of submissions did include factors that were taken into consideration when setting the new permanent speed limits, a proportion of the submissions expressed only a general opinion about speed reviews or raised matters that were outside the scope of this speed review. These included issues about driver behaviour, road surface condition, a lack of passing opportunities, the need for a new route away from the lake edge, the need to replace the bridge over the Tauranga-Taupō River and the large number of heavy vehicles using this road.

The relevant factors that were expressed in the feedback from the public are summarised in the table below. The table outlines the section of the road, along with the main factors people raised in their submissions and our comments.

Issues/Concerns	Waka Kotahi comments
Taupō Airport to Waitahanui	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The 80km/h speed limit proposed is too slow to be comfortable on such a straight, well-formed piece of road and itWaka Kotahi has decided to retain the 100km/h speed limit on this section currently while it investigations the installation of a central median barrier. We will update the community and road users about the safety barrier project and the final

Issues/Concerns	Waka Kotahi comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> would need constant policing. A right turn-bay into the Overnight Camper Park is also required to improve safety. 	<p>decision on this speed limit change as we work through the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A right turn bay is being considered as a supporting infrastructure improvement along with the central median barrier.
<p>Waitahanui</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous submitters thought that a change in the speed limit should commence further north of Waitahanui (200m+ north of current location). Numerous submitters thought that a 50km/h speed limit should apply through Waitahanui, rather than the 60km/h proposed. The electronic speed measuring sign should be re-positioned at the northern end of Waitahanui. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is considerably less roadside activity (such as housing and access roads) north of Waitahanui to justify extending the current speed limit location. The impact and effectiveness would be reduced if the speed limit change point cannot be associated with a change in road and roadside environment. A 60 km/h speed limit is safe and appropriate for this locality and is consistent with the proposed limits through the other settlements along this corridor. It will also complement the 40km/h variable school speed zone. An electronic variable speed limit will be installed at the northern end of Waitahanui to operate during peak school traffic times. We are also investigating supporting engineering treatments, such as wide centreline to improve compliance with the 60 km/h proposed speed limit through Waitahanui.
<p>Hatepe to Halletts Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen the road through Halletts Bay so that there are passing lanes and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passing lanes would encourage faster speeds than what is safe and appropriate for this section of road, 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. Drivers are expected to adjust their travelling speeds depending on the weather conditions and road environment and show patience.
<p>Halletts Bay to Motutere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific issues/concerns were raised with this section, beyond the general submission points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further comment.
<p>Motutere to Waitetoko</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standard of this section of SH1 and its straight alignment would indicate that 100km/h is appropriate, not the 80km/h being proposed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this section is not as tortuous as the previous section (Halletts Bay to Motutere) it is an undivided dual carriageway with unprotected roadside hazards and accesses to the lake. The technical assessment supports 80km/h as the safe and appropriate speed for this section, especially when the risk of head on collision is considered against the traffic volumes on the undivided carriageway.
<p>Waitetoko to Oruatua</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some submitters proposed that the 60km/h zone be extended at least 300m further north of Rawhira Road and/or at least north of the picnic area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is less housing and other roadside activity north of Rawhira Road and this makes it difficult to justify extending the current speed limit location. However, advance speed limit warning signs of the 60km/h speed limit change will be erected north of Rawhira Road. This will raise awareness of the approaching speed limit. The current open road speed limit north of Rawhira Road is proposed to be lowered to

Issues/Concerns		Waka Kotahi comments
		80km/h which will make it safer for motorists leaving the picnic area to integrate back into traffic.
Motuoapa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would like to see the new speed signs moved further north and south as trucks and cars don't slow till inside the current signs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is not sufficient roadside activity (houses and accessways) or change in the roadside environment north or south of the existing change points. The current speed change points will remain as they are at pinch points which reinforce the change in environment and support compliance with the lower speed limit through the settlement. There is currently an electronic speed activated warning sign operating in Motuoapa which will be re-programmed to the new speed limit.
Motuoapa to Turangi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 km/h from Motuoapa to Turangi with long straight sections of road will just mean more frustration and people will speed and pass anyway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safe and appropriate speed for the corridor has been determined as 80km/h taking into account of road usage, crash data, personal risk to motorists, land use around the road, roadside hazards, the density of accessways and intersection as well as lane and shoulder width. There has been no recorded evidence of a section of speed reduction causing increases in crashes due to driver frustration or otherwise. Vehicles will also be travelling at a more consistent speed that will reduce the need for overtaking and improve traffic flows, as well as reducing crashes. Slow drivers are not significantly implicated as a cause in our crash statistics.
Turangi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific issues/concerns were raised with this section, beyond the general submission points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further comment.

5. DECISION

The table below shows the new speed limits that will apply from 12 October 2020. Those speed limits generally reflect the recommendations Waka Kotahi formally consulted on between 25 October and 22 November 2019.

During consultation, it was proposed to reduce the speed limit between Taupō Airport and Waitahanui from 100km/h to 80km/h. Waka Kotahi is currently considering installing a central median barrier from the Taupō Airport roundabout to the northern end of Waitahanui. The speed will remain at 100km/h whilst this is being investigated. If this section of the highway is made safer by installing a safety barrier, it could mean the safe and appropriate speed can remain at 100km/h. Waka Kotahi will continue to update the community and road users about the safety barrier project and the final decision on this speed limit change as we work through the process.

The variable school speed zone and associated improvements to the road corridor in this location is planned to be completed by 12 October 2020. There are other safety improvements planned in Waitahanui including improving the school entrance, footpaths and road markings, taking out roadside hazards such as a power pole, replacing school warning signs and making the road safer to cross outside the school. These are scheduled to take place over the summer.

It is important that the community is made aware of the changes being made to the speed limits and the installation of the electronic variable speed limit near the school. Stakeholders will be

notified of the decision by letter and the public are being notified via media release, newspaper/radio advertising, and social media ahead of the new speed limit 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 speed limits will apply from 12 October 2020.

SH1 Taupō Airport to Turangi	New speed limit
<p>Waitahanui</p> <p>1.33km north of Hurae Road to 80m south of Wairau Avenue, Waitahanui.</p>	<p>60km/h with variable speed limit of 40km/h</p> <p>The variable speed limit will lower the speed limit from 60km/h outside the school to 40km/h at peak school traffic times which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 minutes before the start of school until the start of school, and • 20 minutes at the end of school, beginning no earlier than five minutes before the end of school • it may also operate for 10 minutes at any other time when there is school-related activity. <p>The variable speed limit will be displayed on electronic signs located outside the school at 470m north of Hurae Road and 120m north of Hurae Road.</p>
<p>Hatepe to Halletts Bay</p> <p>240m north of Rereahu Avenue to 3.075km south of Rereahu Avenue, Hatepe.</p>	80km/h
<p>Halletts Bay to Motutere</p> <p>3.075km south of Rereahu Avenue, Hatepe to 160m south of Waitapu Road, Motutere.</p>	60km/h
<p>Motutere to Waitetoko</p> <p>160m south of Waitapu Road, Motutere to 130m north of Rawhira Road, Waitetoko.</p>	80km/h
<p>Waitetoko to Tauranga Taupo (Oruatua)</p> <p>130m north of Rawhira Road, Waitetoko to 170m south of Oruatua Avenue, Te Rangiita.</p>	60km/h
<p>Motuoapa</p> <p>140m north of Rangimoana Avenue to 130m south of Parekarangaranga Street, Motuoapa.</p>	60km/h
<p>Motuoapa to Turangi</p> <p>130m south of Parekarangaranga Street, Motuoapa to 280m south of Waiotaka Road, Turangi.</p>	80km/h

SH1 Taupō Airport to Turangi

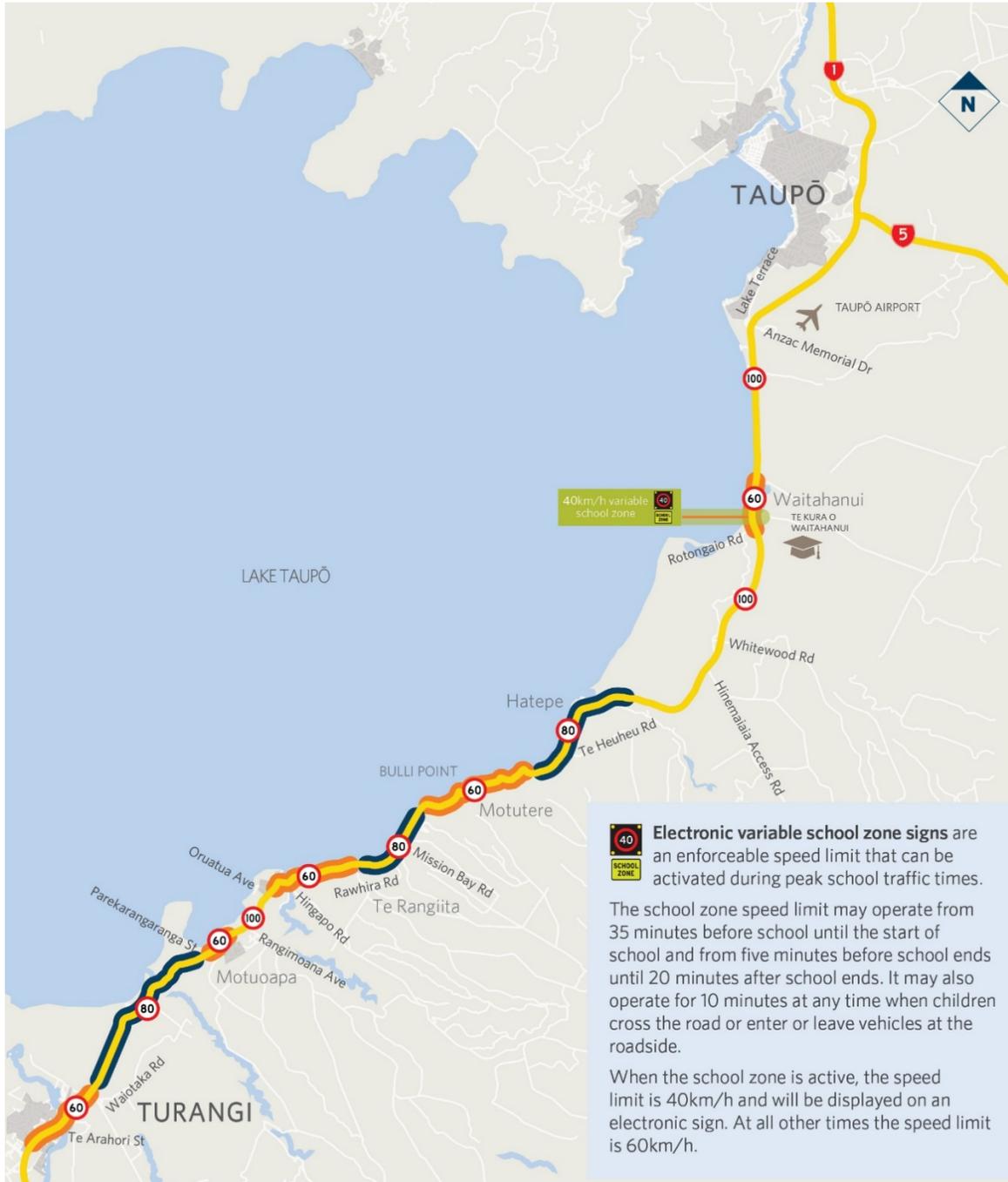
New speed limit

Turangi

60km/h

230m south of Waiotaka Road to 345m south of Te Arahori Street, Turangi.

Map showing the permanent speed limits



6. SUBMISSIONS

The submissions we received for this speed review can be viewed on our website: www.nzta.govt.nz/taupo-to-turangi