June 2022

Ngāūranga to Featherston
speed review and safety improvements
Public engagement report

Background

State Highway 2 is an important, busy road that carries large volumes of people and products every day, connecting Wellington and the Hutt Valley to Wairarapa and beyond. This project is considering safety improvements for SH2 between Ngāūranga and Featherston – through the Hutt Valley and over the Remutaka Hill.

We all need this route to work safely and effectively so that we can move around our region. It is an important route for freight, connecting industries to local markets and the port in Wellington.

Tragically, we know from experience that parts of State Highway 2 in the Hutt Valley are unsafe. In the 10 years from 2011-2020 there were 2313 crashes along this corridor, killing 15 people and leaving 149 people seriously injured.

In 2020, there were four people killed, the highest number in the past 10 years. These numbers represent families whose loved ones didn't make it home and lives permanently impacted by major injuries.

From Ngāūranga to Featherston the road changes from fully separated expressways to urban arterial roads, to the steep, narrow Remutaka Hill road and rural roads. You could encounter many different road environments depending on your journey along this 47km stretch of road.

22-163

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
ROAD TO ZERO
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government

Project overview

We are carrying out a review of the current speed limits and developing two safety improvements projects. These projects are closely linked to one another and have the goal of improving safety quickly and cost-effectively.

Hutt Valley safety improvements – focussed on improving the safety of intersections

Remutaka Hill safety improvements – focussed on improving the winding hill road section

Ngāūranga to Featherston – review of speed limits

What are these projects all about?

Some of these changes are small but they are all proven to save lives. They include changes such as new safety barriers in the centre median and at the side of roads, and widening road shoulders. They also include changing the design of intersections to reduce the risk of serious crashes, and to reduce the severity of crashes when a mistake is made.

We also consider speed limits as part of Road to Zero because speed is a factor in every crash. The higher the speed a vehicle is travelling when a crash happens, the greater the risk that people inside or outside the vehicle will be killed or seriously hurt.

What about major road upgrades?

We know that many people would like to see more major projects to upgrade SH2 – new interchanges, more lanes in some places, and new bridges. While these ideas are popular, they cannot be delivered as part of these safety projects.

We have large projects underway along SH2 including Te Ara Tupua – the walking and cycling route, and a new Melling Interchange as part of RiverLink, but we also need safety improvements to save lives on the entire route.

Construction of one additional new interchange (with an overbridge, and on- and off-ramps) would cost more than the budget for the entire Hutt Valley safety improvements project. If we invested in this way, serious safety risks at other intersections would go unaddressed, and more lives would be lost.

What we did

We asked what you thought about safety, including the current speed limits, on State Highway 2 between Ngāūranga and Featherston.

Comments were open for a period of 6 weeks between 20th September and 1st November 2021. We provided a range of online options to share comments, including an online Social Pinpoint map, online drop-in sessions with our safety experts, and the option to email. To keep people safe from COVID-19, we did not offer face to face meetings.

We also engaged with key stakeholders including groups representing road transport and freight, motorists, cycling advocates, neighbouring communities and our local iwi partners.

These groups participated in workshops with us as the voices of their communities and members to explore more detailed safety and speed improvements.

Online Social Pinpoint Map

Virtual drop-in sessions

Email inbox

What we heard

It's clear this stretch of highway is important to you.

We received a large response, directly receiving just over 1200 pieces of feedback from approximately 370 people on speed limits, high risk areas and safety improvements on the various journeys between Ngāūranga and Featherston.

We also received the online petition Make the intersections in Upper Hutt safe signed by over 4,800 people.

The feedback you provided to us showed that there are a range of views, we identified these themes from the comments and submissions we received.

- Many people want to see changes made to improve safety at dangerous points along the corridor. The intersections and the Remutaka Hill attracted the most comments.
- Many comments called for safety improvements such as roundabouts, turning bays and improved merging lanes in specific locations.
- Many people wanted to see more of the busy intersections upgraded, supporting large projects to upgrade interchanges with overbridges or underpasses, and on- and off-ramps to separate traffic moving in different directions.
- Many comments supported lower speeds at certain intersections and on specific stretches of road. Some people felt that these lower speed limits could be used as a short-term measure in places until major road upgrades can be delivered.
- On the other hand, many comments focussed on ensuring journeys are not slowed down and asked us not to reduce the current speed limits.
- Some comments asked for more passing lanes, and more signs to encourage slower vehicles to pull over where slow vehicle bays exist.
- Comments from some people called for more enforcement of traffic rules, and improved driving, to improve safety.

292 users made a total of **1102 comments** on **Social Pinpoint**

51 people emailed feedback to us

65 virtual meeting comments

11 submissions or documents sent by email

One petition with over **4800 signatures**

Stakeholders and Partners

As well as feedback from the community, we engaged with key groups that have an interest in the corridor. This included representatives of people who use SH2 – including motorists, freight operators and drivers, and people who cycle.

We are working closely with the four councils in the area – Greater Wellington Regional Council, Upper Hutt City and Hutt City Councils, and South Wairarapa District. Central government organisations ACC and Police have been engaged too.

Iwi partners for the region, Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika and Ngāti Toa Rangatira have been engaged and involved.

The following groups participated in a project workshop along with project team members:

- Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)
- New Zealand Police
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Hutt City Council
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Upper Hutt City Council
- Automobile Association
- Cycling Action Network
- Cycle Wellington
- GottaRide
- Heavy Haulage Association
- Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting NZ (formerly Road Transport Forum)
- Women in Urbanism

The following groups provided written submissions or statements during the public engagement period:

- Automobile Association Wairarapa
- Automobile Association Wellington
- Angela McLeod and Louise Brodie (organisers of the Make the intersections in Upper Hutt safe petition)
- Belmont Playcentre
- Belmont Residents Improvement Association
- Ia Ara Aotearoa
- Upper Hutt City Council

Your views on SH2 journeys

The road and its design from Ngāūranga to Featherston varies, and so do your views on what changes should be made. We've broken down the journey into 8 sections to take a closer look at the feedback we received.

Location	Themes of feedback
Ngāūranga, Petone and Dowse	There were safety concerns about the Horokiwi Road and Priests Ave / Pito-One Road intersections, including difficulty merging. Many comments agreed that this stretch of road isn't very safe for cycling. Many comments in this area called for upgrades to the road to ease congestion, including supporting a new road from Petone to Grenada linking SH2 and SH1. Some comments called for more vehicle lanes to be added – but some people commented against adding lanes. People felt that the onramps at Petone and at Ngāūranga were not working well, and that some drivers merging incorrectly or changing lanes unnecessarily were adding to congestion.
Around the Melling intersections	Most people who commented agreed that the new Melling Interchange is needed and will improve safety and make journeys easier in this area. Some people were concerned about the areas where there is no shoulder, meaning that there is no space for people to cycle safely. Some people said that the speed should be dropped through the traffic-light controlled intersections until the upgraded interchange is built.

Location	Themes of feedback
Around the Belmont and Kennedy Good Bridge intersections	In this area, many people agreed that there were safety issues at the intersections. Comments called for an interchange to be built in future to replace the existing series of traffic-light controlled intersections. Some comments agreed this is a 'long term' solution for the area. Some people wanted to see speed limits reduced through the intersections to make it safer. Some of these comments specifically called for 80km/h from Melling to Belmont Domain Some people asked for 100km/h to be retained. Several comments expressed concerns about safety for people cycling and walking through or across the intersections. Some people commented that queues to turn off SH2 at the traffic lights cause delays to people travelling straight through. Some people expressed concerns about 'rat-running' along Grounsell Crescent to avoid queues on SH2. The Owen Street intersection was acknowledged as a safety concern. Many people called for the intersection to be closed and access provided via a new connection elsewhere. Some comments called for the speed limit to be reduced through this intersection to make it safer.
North of Belmont intersections to North of the SH58 Interchange	Comments felt that the SH2/SH58 interchange was a good example of how intersections should be designed in future. There were comments supporting retaining the speed limit at 100km/h through this section. Some commenters wanted to see a bridge over the Hutt River linking SH2 with Stokes Valley. Some commenters supported changing the intersections with Hebden Crescent to improve safety, suggesting changes such as closing the right-turn access to and from SH2 (near Liverton Road) and improving merging areas.
Around Silverstream intersection	Many comments supported improvements to the Silverstream Intersection, including changes to reduce the impact of queues, changes to traffic light phases, additional lanes, and a full interchange upgrade. Some comments supported a reduction in speed limits around the intersection, or from Silverstream through Upper Hutt to improve safety.
Around Moonshine Hill Road and Moonshine Road intersections	A very large number of comments were made about the Moonshine Hill Road intersection, with most people agreeing that the existing design is unsafe, particularly with the traffic to and from homes in Riverstone Terraces. Many comments said that speed should be reduced to 70km/h or 80km/h to improve safety and to make it easier to turn in and out of Moonshine Hill Road. Some comments supported traffic lights or a roundabout at Moonshine Hill Road, while others wanted to see an interchange upgrade. Many people felt the Moonshine Bridge over the River was no longer suitable for traffic volumes using it. Several comments pointed out that the area is not safe for cycling.

Location	Themes of feedback
Whakatiki Street to Plateau Road	In this area many comments felt that the road is not suitable for the volumes of traffic using it, with a focus on congestion. Many comments wanted to see speed limits reduced between Fergusson Drive / Mangaroa Hill Road and Plateau Road due to the number of driveway accesses and intersections. North of Topaz Street there were concerns about a lack of space for cycling and walking. Many comments were about specific intersections on the route: **Whakatiki Street**: Many of the comments here were focussed on congestion and called for an interchange upgrade. **Gibbons Street:** Some comments wanted to see the intersection upgraded to an interchange. Other comments supported a speed reduction to improve safety, while some comments also called for safer access for cycling. **Totara Park Road:** Many comments here expressed concern about danger for walking or biking across SH2, and about red light running. Some comments said phasing of the lights should be improved. Some comments called for an interchange upgrade or removal of the traffic lights. **Ferguson Drive / Mangaroa Hill Road:** Comments said this intersection was affected by congestion, causing driver frustration. **Moeraki Road:** Comments here said it was difficult to use the intersection in heavy traffic and difficult to access the service station. **Vista Cres / Akatarawa Road:** Many comments said this intersection is dangerous. Comments said it is difficult and unsafe to turn at the intersection and difficult to get in and out of Vista Crescent. Some felt there should be traffic lights here, and some felt the speed limit should be lowered. **Topaz Street:** There were a small number of comments at this intersection. Some people felt it was difficult to turn in and out, and some wanted to see the speed reduced.
Remutaka Hill Road	Many comments supported a reduction in the speed limit with suggestions including specific suggestions of 60km/h, 70km/h or 80km/h over the hill to improve safety. Other comments specifically opposed changing the speed limit, calling for 100km/h to be retained. Many commenters felt that poor driver behaviour was an issue, wanting better use of slow vehicle bays to allow faster vehicles to pass. People wanted to see more slow vehicle lanes and passing lanes for the same reason. Some comments suggested that certain types of trips should be restricted (e.g. log trucks only using the road overnight) Some people wanted to see a tunnel to replace the hill road. Some comments requested a separated cycle lane.

Next Steps

We are considering all of the feedback that has been provided, alongside the evidence of our technical assessments and the advice of engineers and road safety specialists, to develop plans for the safety improvement projects, and a proposal for speed limit changes.

Safety improvements

We are progressing two safety improvement projects linked to this engagement – one over the Remutaka Hill and one between Ngāūranga and Upper Hutt (Hutt Valley safety improvements). These projects look at road and intersection design, and will make mainly small but effective changes aimed primarily at reducing the risk of people dying and being seriously injured from crashes.

We are developing proposals for the design of these two projects, based on our toolkit of proven safety improvements. It is likely that any changes will be delivered in a staged way.

We will share our proposed designs, and plans for delivery, once the next steps and funding are confirmed.

Review of speed limits

We are also continuing to look at the speed limits on SH2 from Ngāūranga to Featherston. Considering evidence from technical assessments, and the feedback we have received, we will propose new speed limits in those places where lower speed limits will make the biggest difference in terms of saving lives.

Before a speed limit is changed, formal consultation is required. Changing a speed limit is a legal process, so this step is when we share a detailed plan of proposed speed limits for a stretch of highway.

During this consultation stage, we will ask the public and stakeholders for any additional information that might have an impact on the final decision.

How will the feedback be used?

Understanding people's views – your concerns, frustrations and hopes for roads in your community – is important to us. Our decisions about speed limits and safety improvements must consider many factors, including public feedback.

There are a range of views within any community when it comes to questions about key transport routes and road safety. That's one reason why the engagement and consultation we carry out is not a vote.

Under Road to Zero, New Zealand's road safety strategy, Waka Kotahi has the objective of reducing death and serious injury on our roads. As part of achieving this, we have to consider:

- Views shared by stakeholders and the community
- Technical assessments of where safety risks exist and what changes could reduce them
- Getting the best value for money in terms of preventing people from dying or being seriously hurt
- Making the greatest progress towards our goals under Road to Zero

The SH2 Story

Large projects completed and underway

Since 2009 we've made a series of major improvements to this stretch of highway to improve safety and improve journeys for people driving, walking and cycling. Together, these give you more choice for getting around the region and provide better access to public transport.

Dowse Drive Interchange (Dowse to Petone Project)

Constructed 2007-2009

A $78.5 million investment in a major new interchange providing better connectivity to the state highway from Hutt Road and Dowse Drive as well as a new overbridge from Korokoro to Hutt Road.

SH2/SH58 Haywards Interchange

Constructed 2015-2017

A $43 million investment in a new interchange at the Western Hutt/Haywards Hill roads (State Highway 2/State Highway 58) intersection, and also includes realignment of the Manor Park highway connection, McDougall Grove and Hebden Crescent, a park and-ride car park and a pedestrian bridge to Manor Park Rail Station.

Te Ara Tupua – walking and cycling route

Two connected projects representing a major investment in a walking and cycling link between Wellington and Lower Hutt. It will deliver a safe, connected and attractive route, separated from vehicle traffic. These projects will enable more people to walk or bike, and connect with local paths in both Wellington and the Hutt Valley.

Pito-One to Melling section
Construction 2019-2023

Ngā Ūranga ki Pito-One section
Construction expected 2022-2025

Melling Interchange (RiverLink project)

Construction expected 2023

This project involves an investment of up to $420 million through the NZ Upgrade Programme to provide a safer, more resilient transport system in Lower Hutt. The project includes a new Melling interchange to replace the existing intersections and traffic lights on SH2, as well as a new bridge over the Hutt River and new Melling train station. New walking and cycling routes connecting to Te Ara Tupua are included. The transport project is integrated with flood protection and urban revitalisation projects as part of RiverLink.