



SH35 GISBORNE TO TE PUIA SPRINGS, TOWNSHIPS AND BEACHES SPEED REVIEW

Speed consultation summary

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

AUGUST 2020

1. BACKGROUND

Between September and December of 2019, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency consulted with the local East Coast community and road user groups on the safe and appropriate speed limits for State Highway 35 (SH35) townships and beaches between Gisborne and Te Puia Springs.

The formal consultation focused on proposed speed limit changes for the townships and or beaches surrounding, Tamarau, Okitu, Makorori to Pouawa, and Te Puia Springs.

Waka Kotahi had received feedback about difficulties crossing the road on to the new Wainui cycleway, a petition with over 3000 signatures requesting lower speed limits within the Tamarau, Okitu and Makorori areas, as well as feedback from the Te Puia Springs community about lowering the speed limit.

Between 2009 and July 2019 there were 377 crashes between Gisborne and Te Puia Springs, with nine fatalities and 46 serious injuries. Of these deaths and serious injuries 20% were in the locations proposed in this speed review with three fatalities and eight serious injuries on the Makorori to Pouawa section. Three fatalities and two of the serious injuries occurred in 2018 alone.

Waka Kotahi reviewed the speed limits on this route as it was one of the highest risk roads in the region. We wanted to ensure speed limits 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.

This state highway is 335km in length, circumnavigating the East Cape of the North Island between Gisborne in Turanganui-a-kiwa/Poverty Bay, and Ōpōtiki in the Bay of Plenty. The highway connects remote communities with two major ports in the cities of Gisborne and Tauranga which is a further 132 km up SH2 west of Ōpōtiki.

Those who live who on the East Cape rely on SH35 for building and farming supplies, supermarket goods, medical and emergency services as well as regional travel to jobs, schools and recreational facilities. The highway enables regional economic development, particularly for the forestry industry, one of the major employers in the region who ship their product from Eastland Port in Gisborne to domestic and international markets.

SH35 has a unique and challenging geographical makeup typified by highly erodible soils that are susceptible to extreme weather events. Unexpected road conditions like land slips mean drivers need to be mindful of travelling on the road after severe rain and drought.

Traffic volumes, including heavy vehicles, have been increasing, especially in areas where people live and try to go about their day-to-day business. There are also hazards like narrow road shoulders, one lane bridges, large trucks sharing the road with smaller passenger vehicles and steep drop-offs or ditches on the roadside.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

Prior to undertaking the formal consultation process, we completed a speed management technical assessment of the road. This identified if the current speed limits on the road were safe and appropriate for the current road characteristics and roadside environments along this corridor.

On 4 November 2019 we commenced formal consultation on proposed new speed limits for SH35 Gisborne to Te Puia Springs townships and beaches. Formal Consultation was open for five weeks and closed on 6 December 2019.

We consulted with the public and received formal submissions from Gisborne District Council, Eastland Wood Council, RTA, the Automobile Association, NZ Police, NZ Fire Service, Pacific Haulage, and McKay's Cartage.

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 the Gisborne Herald publications. A media release was issued on Monday 4th November 2019 and resulted in online and print media coverage.

People were able to submit their views through electronic format; hard copy submission forms which were available from locations such as the local dairy, local council offices, Te Puia Springs Hospital, service stations, local schools; and via email or by ringing 0800 44 44 49. Submissions were also received at the drop-in sessions held in the major communities off SH35.

3. 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 with the submissions we received and have documented these factors in the next section of this document.

4. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

We received 353 submissions. We appreciated the response from the community and thank all those who provided their feedback.

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. These included issues about driver behaviour, traffic volumes and enforcement.

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.

Factors	Waka Kotahi comment
<p>Tamarau</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning into side roads and driveways puts drivers at risk. • Children cross the road to access the cycleway. • Strong population growth anticipated. • Some concern that lower speeds slows travel times up the coast. • Constantly changing speed limits through this area (i.e. Kaiti, Tamarau, Wainui and Okitu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed speed limit reduction from 70 / 80km/h to 60km/h will help improve safety at the crossings and intersections. By driving at a lower speed (60km/h), the driver will have more time to react and avoid a potential collision. • After we implement the new speed limit change, we will be monitoring the road to ensure the new speed limits are working effectively. • A consistent 60km/h was considered through the section between Tamarau and Okitu (2 kms). We did not propose this because there are limited accessways or roadside activity. Also, the surrounding rural environment makes it feel different to that of Tamarau or Okitu.

Factors	Waka Kotahi comment
<p>Okitu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volumes of heavy traffic transporting forestry products to the port. • Popular recreation spot for residents, locals who drive from Gisborne and tourists. • Parked vehicle congestion at Okitu store. • Pedestrians, including unsupervised children, crossing the road to access the beach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed speed limit reduction to 60km/h is considered the safe and appropriate speed throughout Okitu. This is because of the single sided residential land-use, the straight road alignment and the openness of the road. • After we implement the new speed limit change, we will be monitoring the road to ensure the new speed limits are working effectively. • Advance warning signage (when approaching the 60km/h section from the north) will be used to help drivers recognise where the speed change occurs and to help reduce engine braking from heavy vehicles through the township. • We will be looking into the feasibility of traffic calming measures such as flush median markings and crossing facilities to help support the lower speed limit.
<p>Makorori to Pouawa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volumes of people pulling into beach access carparks • Poor sight distances from some of the intersecting side road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed speed limit reduction from 100km/h to 80km/h will improve safety at the intersections within the Makorori and Pouawa beach sections by giving turning traffic more time to safely merge. • Extra signage displaying there is a popular surf beach ahead will be investigated.
<p>Te Puia Springs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitters requested a lower speed limit than what was proposed. • Concerns about children waiting for the bus with no safe crossing area. • There is a shop, hospital, council, hotel and cemetery accessible from the highway. • Consistency with the other surrounding rural townships up the coast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following submissions on Te Puia Springs Township and further analysis of our technical data, we've decided to reconsider the proposed speed limit change on this section. We're planning to re-consult with the Te Puia Springs community about a new proposed speed limit. We will provide information on the times and locations for this event in the coming months.
<p>Seasonal speed limit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom campers and families adjacent to the highway using this space for their summer holidays. • Unsupervised children playing near to the highway poses a significant safety hazard for motorists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing seasonal holiday speed period of 20 December to the 1 February remains in place. • The new seasonal speed limit of 60 km/h will help keep holidaymakers who freedom camp beside the highway safe.

5. DECISION

The table below shows the recommendations from Waka Kotahi formally consulted on between 4 November 2019 and 6 December 2019.

Except for Te Puia Springs township, the submissions did not identify any issues that Waka Kotahi had not already considered.

The outcome for the speed limit changes for Tamarau; Okitu Township; Makorori to Pouawa; and Turihaua and Pouawa Beaches (seasonal) was in line with the proposed speed limit changes, and the permanent speed limits outlined below will come into effect on Tuesday 8th September 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 **Tuesday, 8 September 2020**

SH35 Beaches and Townships, Gisborne to Te Puia Springs		Speed limits from 8 September 2020
Tamarau		60km/h
From 20m north-west of Coldstream Road to 60m east of Wheatstone Road.		
Okitu Township		60km/h
From 100m south-west of Wairere Road to 390m north of Sirrah Street		
Makorori to Pouawa		80km/h
From 390m north of Sirrah Street to 400m south of Pouawa Bridge.		
Turihaua and Pouawa Beaches (seasonal)		60km/h
From 600m south of Turihaua Bridge to 400m south of Pouawa Bridge. This seasonal speed limit is from 20 December to 1 February.		

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Map showing the permanent speed limits



6. SUBMISSIONS

You can view the submissions we received for this speed review at: nzta.govt.nz/SH35-Gisborne-speed-review