



SH35 TE PUIA SPRINGS TO TOKOMARU BAY

Summary of the speed review consultation

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

2021



1. BACKGROUND

Between 21 September 2020 and 19 October 2020 (inclusive), Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency re-consulted with the local community and road user groups on the safe and appropriate speed limits for a 10.8km section of State Highway 35 (SH35) between Te Puia Springs and Tokomaru Bay.

There have been 20 crashes on this length of state highway in the last ten years (2010-19). One person has died, three people were seriously injured, and another seven received minor injuries. Considerable portions of the SH35 Opotiki to Gisborne corridor have been identified as and being in the top 10% for Deaths and Serious Injuries (DSI) in New Zealand.

There are approximately 1,100 vehicles per day that travel this section of SH35 of which 11.5% are heavy vehicles.

Previous consultation in November/December 2019 showed that there was clear support for 50 km/h through Te Puia Springs township. This was lower than the 60 km/h initially proposed. The strong community support for a speed lower than the 'safe and appropriate' speed, as outlined through the technical speed review process, has been agreed.

The new permanent speed limits will have minimal impact on travel times. Over this 10.8km section of state highway it will likely increase the current travel time for drivers by less than a minute based on mean operating speeds.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

Prior to undertaking the formal consultation process, we completed numerous steps, including a speed management technical assessment of the road. This identified the various existing speed limits on the road were not safe and appropriate for the current road characteristics and roadside environments along this corridor. In late 2019, we completed our public consultation. Along with the public we talked with councils, the local police, AA and local businesses about the current open road speed limits between Te Puia Springs and Gisborne.

Some of the main points from the feedback included:

- Reducing the limit to 80km would be appropriate in some areas where there is a high risk of crashes.
- Cars and trucks driving at the same speed would reduce driver frustration.
- Lowering the speed limit would negatively impact residents and businesses due to slower journey times.
- Driver behaviour is a bigger problem than speed.
- Reducing speed limits would make it harder for people to access goods and services.
- Poor road conditions cause many of the problems on the highway.

The consultation also gave the opportunity to re-consult about the proposed speed limit for Te Puia Springs township. 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, on the Waka Kotahi website and in the Gisborne Herald. A media release was issued 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.

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

4. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

We received nine submissions during this consultation. We appreciated the response from the community and thank those who provided their feedback. We believe the lower than expected submissions for the second round of consultation reflects the communities feeling that they had already been clear at the first consultation that there is minimal appetite to see mass changes of the current posted speed limits on the higher volume sections of SH35. Also, there was a clear sentiment that 50 km/h was their preferred speed that felt safe and appropriate for Te Puia Springs.

While several 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.

Comment	Waka Kotahi comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowering the speed limit to 80 km/h on the open road between Tokomaru Bay and Puketiti Road will increase travel time and driver frustration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current mean speeds on the 100 km/h section are currently between 70 and 74 km/h. Impact on the majority of the traffic is expected to be minimal. The estimated journey time impact is approximately eight seconds. Any frustration caused to motorists is within acceptable limits and will be monitored by NZ Police who will enforce the speed limit along with the wider set of road rules.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Object to consultation of speed reviews because outcome predetermined /ability to influence limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the consultation phase is to seek additional information from stakeholders or the public that will help inform the decision about this proposed speed limit change. During formal consultation we proposed a new speed limit and asked the public the following question “Please tell us if there any other factors that we should consider when making our decision?” We consider all factors raised during formal consultation when making our decision on new permanent speed limits. Setting safe speed limits are key so we can achieve the Road to Zero vision for New Zealand where no one is killed or seriously injured in road crashes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support 60 km/h rather than 50 km/h in Te Puia Springs township 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ‘safe and appropriate’ speed was found to be 60 km/h which was taken to the first round of consultation. Overwhelming community support for 50 km/h was received at this consultation. There is a negligible difference in journey time impact (seconds) between 60 km/h and 50 km/h and it was felt driver compliance would be similar. The Waka Kotahi speed review board felt that the community support for a specific speed lower than the safe and appropriate speed as outlined in the technical speed review could be accommodated with little impact on drivers or the economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speeds at the entrance to Tokomaru Bay from Te Puia Springs are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed southern speed limit change point is further north than the existing 70/100 km/h change point to be located at an obvious change in roadside development or environment and meet the minimum reasonable and safe lengths in accordance with the Setting of Speed Limits Rule.

Comment	Waka Kotahi comment
too high. We need Waka Kotahi to do more than just a speed limit change to feel safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance electronic warning signage will be added north of the Tokomaru Bay 50 km/h speed limit zone (for southbound direction) to reinforce the lower township speed limit and help drivers slow down in advance of the (new) 80/50 km/h speed limit change point.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oppose lowering speeds to 60km/h between Puketiti and Te Puia Springs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speed tube surveys conducted on this section showed seven day mean speeds around 60km/h. The surveys also showed 85th percentile speeds of 72.4km/h and 67km/h indicating that for most people a lower speed limit will have limited impact on their journey times. The road environment in this section is one of the factors that result in drivers naturally aligning their travel speed to what the speed review proposed.

5. DECISION

The table below shows the recommendations Waka Kotahi formally consulted on between 21 September and 19 October 2020. 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 15 October 2021.

Additional supporting infrastructure that is proposed to be investigated further for its feasibility is:

- Township threshold signage for Te Puia Springs
- Feasibility of installing a crossing facility in Te Puia Springs

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 15 October 2021.

SH35 Te Puia Springs to Tokomaru Bay	Corridor length: 10.8 km		Existing Speed Limit	New Speed Limit
	(km)			
Te Puia Springs Township	0.94		70	50
Rural open road between Puketiti Road and Te Puia Springs	1.80		70,100	60
Rural open road between Tokomaru Bay and Puketiti Road	8.06		100	80

NEW PERMANENT SPEED LIMITS



6. SUBMISSIONS

[View the submissions we received for this speed review](#)