



SH5 WAIOTAPU SPEED REVIEW

Summary of the speed review consultation

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

MAY 2020

1. BACKGROUND

On several occasions stakeholders and the community have raised concerns about speed limits on Bay of Plenty's State Highway 5 (SH5) through the settlement of Waiotapu. To address these concerns, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency undertook a speed review to determine the safe and appropriate speed limit on this section of SH5.

In 2015, a petition requesting the speed limit on this road be reduced to 70km/h (currently it is 100km/h) was presented to Waka Kotahi. The petition was signed by approximately 500 people.

Concerns about speed were also raised during engagement on the SH5 Wairakei to State Highway 38 (SH38) safety improvements project, which started in 2017 and is now in construction. During workshops with key stakeholders and at public engagement events for the project, the speed limit through Waiotapu was repeatedly described as being too high and many cited numerous near misses at this location.

While attending the Rotorua Rural Community Board's February 2017 meeting, the SH5 Wairakei to SH38 project team were presented with a copy of the 2015 petition. The Board and others in attendance also discussed the speed people were driving through Waiotapu. Shirley Trumper, Rotorua Rural Community Board Chairperson, has remained in regular contact with Waka Kotahi and continues to reiterate the community's wish for a lower speed limit.

In October 2019, Waka Kotahi formally consulted with stakeholders and the public on a proposed speed limit change for SH5 through Waiotapu.

The community's views on a speed limit change are supported by the crash history on this road and issues with the way the road is used. Between 2009 and 2018 there were 20 crashes at Waiotapu, and five people were seriously injured. Intersections on this road can also feel unsafe. Many drivers slow down to turn off the road to access rural properties, businesses and tourist destinations in and around Waiotapu, while those travelling through continue to drive at 100km/h.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

As a result of the petition and earlier feedback, Waka Kotahi was aware of community and stakeholder views about the current speed limits on this road. For this reason, the speed limit review only involved light community and stakeholder engagement before the formal consultation process started. On 17 September 2019, emails were sent to all key stakeholders and community members advising that the speed review process was about to start and inviting them to raise any concerns before formal consultation began. No further concerns were raised, or clarification sought, although the Rural Community Board Chair asked that the proposed speed limit be reduced to 60km/h, not 80km/h as Waka Kotahi was advising it would propose.

On 30 September 2019, Waka Kotahi began formal consultation on a proposed speed limit of 80km/h (a reduction from the current 100km/h speed limit) for SH5 through Waiotapu. Consultation closed on 25 October 2019.

Consultation was advertised through social media and on the Waka Kotahi website. A media release was issued on 30 September 2019 and resulted in coverage in [SunMedia](#) and the [NZ Herald](#).

People could submit their views through electronic online form (Survey Monkey), hard copy submission form (available at Benny Bee Café), by phoning Waka Kotahi, and via email. Consultation material included evidence to support the proposed safe and appropriate speed limit.

3. CONSULTATION QUESTION

The consultation material shared factors considered in proposing the speed limit change and sought any additional information from stakeholders or the public that could help inform the decision about the proposed speed limit.

Stakeholders and the public were asked “**Are there any other factors that we should consider when making our decision?**”

4. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

111 submissions were received from the public and stakeholder organisations. Submissions were received through three sources (Survey Monkey online questionnaire 77%, formal consultation forms 13%, and e-mail or letter 11%).

Most submitters felt the current speed limit for SH5 through Waiotapu was too fast and supported a lower speed (42%). However, some submitters (while supportive of the speed limit reduction) believed that it should be reduced further to either 60km/h or 70km/h (33%). Very few felt the speed limit was safe at the current 100km/h (7%).

Waka Kotahi is always looking for ways to prevent deaths and serious injuries on our roads and reviewed all public feedback on how it could improve safety on this route.

Some of the specific submission factors are addressed below:

Factors	NZ Transport Agency comment
A reduction in the speed limit to 80km/h is not sufficient and it needs to be further reduced to 60km/h or 70km/h.	When setting a limit, Waka Kotahi or any other road controlling authority needs to consider a range of factors. Some of these are described in the Setting of Speed Limits Rule 2017, and include what the road is like, how it is used, how safe it is and what the risks are. Other considerations include potential development that could generate more traffic, the number of property accessways, the volume of traffic, and the severity of crashes that have occurred along this section of highway. For SH5 Waiotapu, Waka Kotahi carried out a technical assessment which considered all these factors. It found that the current road environment and development, number of intersections and property accesses, traffic volumes, and crash history meant the safe and appropriate speed is 80km/h. The current road and roadside environment (ie limited development with restricted property access, roadside barriers and wide shoulders) is not conducive to a 60km/h speed limit, and is more consistent with the Parekarangi and Golden Springs rural towns, which have current speed limits of 80km/h.

Factors	NZ Transport Agency comment
<p>Weather conditions, such as fog, create poor visibility on this stretch of road, particularly for vehicles travelling through intersections.</p>	<p>As weather conditions vary throughout the year, permanent speed limits cannot be set to accommodate them. Instead, Waka Kotahi can monitor the road following the change in speed limits and consider whether improvements to signs or variable (warning) messaging on the roadside needed.</p>
<p>The 80km/h speed limit should be extended further north to the SH38 intersection, given there are other tourist attractions on that stretch of SH5, such as Rainbow Mountain and Kerosene Creek.</p>	<p>The Setting of Speed Limits Rule 2017 states that when considering a new speed limit, the point at which the speed limit changes needs to be signposted at a point of change on the road or the area or environment around it. The Waiotapu speed limit change points are located close enough to the more developed areas, where drivers can understand why they need to reduce their speed.</p> <p>If we were to extend the speed limit zone further north it would mean the speed limit change point is in places where the need to slow down is less obvious because the road or surrounding area is still undeveloped farmland. Drivers will not have urban areas or towns, prompting them to slow down and would therefore be less likely to obey a new limit.</p>
<p>Better tourist attraction signs are required when approaching Waiotapu, so tourists know where to go.</p>	<p>While not specifically tourist attraction signs, new signs installed as part of the speed limit change will better inform drivers, they are approaching Waiotapu, complementing existing tourist attraction signs.</p>
<p>The intersections at Waiotapu need improving and a merge lane should be installed.</p>	<p>In recent years, safety improvements have been made along the roadside and at the intersection – including a merge with the existing right turn lane. Following the speed limit change, Waka Kotahi will monitor the road and consider whether it needs further improvement.</p>

5. DECISION

The table below shows the speed limit change recommendation that Waka Kotahi consulted on between 30 September and 25 October 2019.

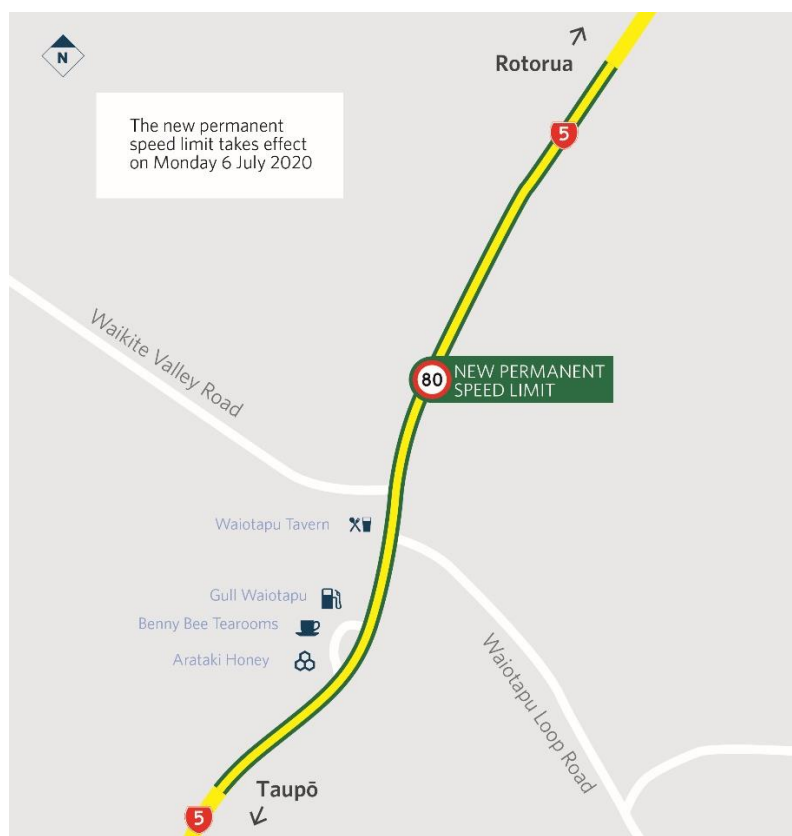
Submissions did not identify any issues that Waka Kotahi had not already considered.

The outcome of the speed review was in line with the proposed speed limit change, and the permanent speed limit outlined below will come into effect on Monday 6 July 2020.

SH5 Waiotapu	New speed limit in effect from 6 July 2020
SH5 - from 551m north-east of Waikite Valley Road to 369m south-west of Waiotapu Loop Road (a stretch of 977m through the settlement of Waiotapu).	80km/h

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

Following the new speed limit signs being installed, 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.



6. SUBMISSIONS

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