



Speed review of State Highway 8 Tekapo



Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is currently identifying state highways where lower speed limits could make a big difference in preventing deaths and serious injuries, and where communities are calling for change. The Tekapo community has been asking for the speed to be reviewed in their town for many years.

WHAT WE DID

To help us fully understand the Tekapo issues, from August to September 2019 we asked residents to give us their views on speed on this road.

We held a community drop-in session in Tekapo on 28 August to talk to people face-to-face and invited people to give feedback online. We also talked to business owners and organisations based in Tekapo, the MacKenzie District Council, the Tekapo Community Board, the Canterbury Police and a range of road user representative groups including the AA, the NZ Trucking Association and the Road Transport Association.

We had many useful conversations and additionally received written feedback from 41 people.

In the 10-year period between 2009 and 2018, there were 19 crashes on the highway involved in this speed review. Two people were seriously injured as a result, and four incurred minor injuries.

WHAT WE HEARD

The main feedback themes were:

Speed through Tekapo

The majority of the people we talked to told us speeds felt too fast both in the approaches to and in the built-up parts of Tekapo. The general consensus was for a 50 km/h speed limit through the town, but there were varying views on the location for the change points. Most were very supportive of the south section for the change point being past Godley Peaks Road.

Impact of tourists

Many people commented on how the many tourists visiting the town had a significant impact on the traffic and made the road less safe to drive on. The impact included increased pedestrian and cycling activity, through to people stopping or parking in dangerous places to take photos of the beautiful scenery. Hamilton Drive was one location of concern to people with many people parking on one side and crossing the road to take their photos.

Additional engineering

Many people suggested that additional traffic calming/engineering solutions (including side barriers, road markings, signage, turning bays) could be put in to make the road safer in Tekapo. It was also suggested strategic town/traffic planning was needed but a reduction in speed would be an acceptable interim measure.

Safe access on and off the road

There were many comments about not being able to safely access the highway or get off the highway, such as at the Godley Peaks Road/SH8 intersection. The community was also concerned about safety at the Hamilton Drive intersection.

Pedestrian safety

People told us it was difficult to cross the highway in the town due to increased traffic on the road, and the speed the traffic was travelling. There was particular concern about the safety of school children in the area especially at the school bus stop as the bus stops on the lakeside of the road while the children all come from the other side.

Buses also stop on the lakeside of the village while accommodation is on the opposite side of the SH so many visitors walk along the side of the highway without footpaths towards their accommodation.

Tourists accessing the Church of the Good Shepherd, which can be at all times of the day, also creates additional pressure.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT?

We've read all the feedback and will use these insights along with additional technical analysis to determine what is the safe and appropriate speed for this road.

The current and planned significant growth of the town makes this a complex review. The Agency is currently gathering additional technical information, including data on the volume and speed of traffic in the township, as well as the location and crossing behaviour of pedestrian activity. This information, together with the recent community and stakeholder feedback received, will help inform proposals for the speed limits. We will then be coming back to the community to formally consult on these proposed speed limits.

The consultation will give locals and others who are interested an opportunity to let us know if there are any other factors that we should consider when making our decision.

We will also be collaborating with the local council to assess what other solutions could be appropriate to improve the road safety in Tekapo.