

18 September 2023

██████████
██████████
Wairarapa Times-Age
██████████@age.co.nz

REF: OIA-13413

Dear ██████████

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 21 August 2023 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Could I please see the cost/benefit analysis for the SH2 Masterton to Featherston Safety Improvements and Speed Review? I'm not sure if it was all analysed together, but I'd like the cost/benefit analysis for:

-the three roundabouts, the median barrier, road widening, the turnaround bay etc. between Masterton and Carterton

The most recent benefit cost ratio (BCR) for the Masterton to Carterton Speed and Infrastructure (SIP) project is 1.2.

-the speed review from Masterton to Featherston

A cost benefit analysis was not undertaken for the State Highway 2 Masterton to Featherston Speed Review. There is no requirement for any road controlling authorities to conduct a cost benefit analysis on proposed speed changes or a speed management plan (SMP). Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency does benefit cost ratios at Programme Business Case level and not at SMP or individual corridor level.

The open road 100 km/h sections were reduced to 80 km/h to help prevent people from dying or being seriously injured if they crash. These sections of road had seen the most fatal and serious injury crashes. In the decade before consultation began on the proposal to reduce the speed limit - between January 2010 and December 2019 - there were 488 reported crashes on SH2 between Masterton and Featherston. Four people were killed, and 28 were seriously injured as a result of these accidents.

Each death and serious injury on our roads has a devastating and wide-reaching impact. It also has a social cost to New Zealand of \$84 million per week, or nearly \$4.7 billion a year. That includes loss of life, quality of life, medical costs, legal costs and damage to vehicles.

The decision to do a speed review only came after a thorough technical assessment of this section of SH2 had been done. It looked at what a safe and appropriate speed for the road should be and if it was out of step with the 100 km/h speed limit that had been in place.

During the assessment, we looked at the previous crash history, the average speed people were travelling at, the number of cars and trucks using the road each day, and what was happening near the road in terms of housing, urban development, businesses, and other activities.

While safety improvements including central median barriers and new roundabouts have been built between Masterton and Carterton, this section of SH2 has had run-off and loss of control crashes. There are roadside hazards on the route and limited shoulder/recovery space in some locations. The highway is also commonly used by cyclists and slower agricultural vehicles. A lower speed limit helps reduce the risk to these road users and improves the outcomes of any crashes that may occur.

Changing speed limits is about protecting the lives of all who use our streets and roads and is based on an evidential approach. The previous speeds on this section of SH2 were harming people, and as a road safety regulator, we had an obligation to look at changes to keep people safe.

-The raised pedestrian crossings in Masterton, Carterton, Greytown, and Featherston

Projects within the small infrastructure safety improvements programme are not required to calculate a BCR.

I'd also like to see the comparative economic analysis between completing the project in one construction and completing it on two seasons, given it was initially planned to take two years.

This section of SH2 is a high-risk stretch of road with a history of serious crashes. From 2016 to 2020, 10 crashes resulted in people dying or being seriously injured along this stretch of road. Traffic volumes have also been increasing on this section of SH2.

The improvements will significantly improve safety along this busy corridor, reducing the likelihood of crashes occurring and ensuring that when drivers make mistakes, those mistakes don't cost lives. Research shows the central median barriers are ideally suited to many New Zealand roads because they can often be installed without significant road widening. They are also cost-effective, and they work – results show a 70–80 percent reduction in road fatalities. The new roundabouts remove the need for intersection speed zones and also make it easier and safer for drivers coming from side roads to turn on to SH2. Drivers no longer have to turn across oncoming traffic onto a stretch of highway that carries, on average, well over 13,000 vehicles a day. The changes being introduced are what the community had been asking for before the project was initiated.

The BCR presented in the business case in 2019 considered the benefits of constructing this project over the two-year construction season window. Whilst no analysis was undertaken for completing this project in one season, to reduce the project's overall impact on the community, it was decided to complete the works in a shorter time frame - approximately one year. We appreciate the project has impacted the community and created traffic congestion and longer travel times. However, these have been significant works, and some impact on the community and traffic flows was unavoidable.

I'd also like to confirm the total budget for the entire project broken down into costs for each of the different parts of the project.

As at 31 August 2023, \$26.4 million has been spent on the Masterton to Carterton Corridor Improvements project.

Phase	Cost
Pre-implementation	\$2.5 million
Implementation	\$23.9 million

In line with Waka Kotahi policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Felix Marwick, Lower North Island Media Manager, by email to felix.marwick@nzta.govt.nz

Yours sincerely



Mark Kinvig
National Manager, Infrastructure Delivery