

20 October 2022

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-11172

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your emails of 9 October 2022 requesting information regarding potholes under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I will address each of your requests in turn below.

please send me the following by year back to 2011 (2022 partial year is fine):

1. the number of potholes reported by members of the public

The statistics you requested is provided in the following table:

Year	Number of reports
2011	Not available
2012	Not available
2013	70
2014	158
2015	243
2016	299
2017	663
2018	1,068
2019	1,129
2020	729
2021	959
2022 (as of 10 October)	1,099
	6,417

This should be read in conjunction with the following caveats:

- The data includes all customer interactions made to Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency and its contractors, which are recorded in the Customer Relation Management System (CRMS).
- CRMS was first implemented on 1 July 2013, therefore there is no data available before this date.
- The data captures the period from 1 July 2013 to 10 October 2022.
- These interactions comprise of general queries, requests for service, complaints, feedback, and compliments, which are not categorised separately in CRMS.
- A search based on the keyword "pothole" across the 11-year timeframe has provided this information.

- The data excludes customer interactions that are:
 - received directly by individual capital projects
 - received directly by the Auckland Motorway Alliance and Auckland System Management
 - received via media or social media channels; and
 - relating to local roads.

2. the number of potholes identified by NZTA in total (either reported or identified by other means)

3. the number of potholes repaired

The following response addresses questions 2 and 3.

Waka Kotahi is unable to provide this information as it is not held in a readily available format. Waka Kotahi uses the Network Outcomes Contract (NOC) for highway maintenance, as well as a maintenance Alliance model to deliver state highway maintenance. Each contractor responsible for each NOC area is required to carry out routine inspection/patrol runs of the state highway network at intervals, as set out in section 3.6.1 of the Waka Kotahi Network Outcome Contracts Proforma Manual SM032 (the Manual). However, the exact number and type of road defects, such as potholes, identified at these inspections and repaired as part of the routine pavement maintenance are not centrally recorded.

I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g)(i) as the requested information is not held by Waka Kotahi and I have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.

To provide reasonable assistance, we have provided the total number of pothole repairs attended in the following table. Please note, the measure of 'attendances' counts the number of times a contractor has fixed one or more potholes in a particular location on a particular date.

Year	Number of pothole repairs attended
2011	8,014
2012	12,528
2013	11,967
2014	15,160
2015	24,774
2016	35,782
2017	51,183
2018	49,894
2019	32,039
2020	33,330
2021	41,945
2022 (as of 11 October)	35,259
	351,875

This should be read in conjunction with the following caveats:

- The data captures the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 August 2022. The latter is the most recent available data due to contractors' data loading deadlines.
- The number of attendances is lower in the earlier years because the Network Outcome Contracts (NOC) which require the recording of pothole repair information were gradually introduced over a period of years in each region as the old maintenance contracts expired. Hence there is a gradual increase in the attendance numbers over a period of time until all contracts were migrated to the NOC contract specification.

4. the number of incidents where potholes were recorded as causing damage to a vehicle

Waka Kotahi is unable to provide this information as it is not held in a readily available format.

Waka Kotahi has received a total of 6,147 reports about potholes nationwide since 1 July 2013 to date. These reports are recorded in the CRMS with a 'free type' field option to enter the subject. To provide the requested information, it would require officials to manually review each of these reports to determine whether the pothole reported was causing damage to a vehicle or not.

As this exercise would amount to substantial collation and research, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act. In refusing this, we have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to your request would help, as required by section 18A of the Act. However, we consider that it is not practicable in this case.

5. the amount spent on fixing potholes by year for the same time period.

The amount spent on pothole repairs is part of a monthly lump sum payment made to our contractors, which includes other cyclic maintenance activities such as minor pavement repairs, cleaning of signs and edge marker posts, graffiti removal etc. Waka Kotahi does not record the actual costs of pothole repairs separately. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the requested information is not held by Waka Kotahi and I have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.

On a final note, I would like to emphasise that the current focus and priority for Waka Kotahi remains to be improving the overall condition of the state highway network. \$2.8 billion has been allocated through the 2021-24 National Land Transport Programme for road maintenance, including an additional \$400 million over the initial budget to be invested in renewing road surfaces and pavements. This summer will see approximately 2,450 lane kilometres of state highway resealed or rebuilt, which will be the largest renewal programme Waka Kotahi has ever undertaken.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to partially refuse this request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

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 the Ministerial Services team by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Neil Walker', with a stylized, flowing script.

Neil Walker

National Manager Maintenance and Operations