

22 December 2022

Out of Scope

REF: OIA-11570

Dear Out of Scope

### **Request made under the Official Information Act 1982**

Thank you for your email of 25 November 2022 requesting information regarding the State Highway 2 (SH2) Ngāūranga to Featherston speed review and safety improvements public engagement as well as safety assessments on Liverton Road and Hebden Road, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I will address each of your questions in turn and have grouped these together for convenience as follows:

- 1. *How was this advertised***
- 2. *What happened to this engagement***

In 2021, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency asked the entire Hutt Valley and Wairarapa communities for their views on the existing speed limits and existing safety issues for SH2 from Ngāūranga to Featherston through a public engagement process.

This was advertised in local papers (the Hutt News, the Upper Hutt Leader, Dominion Post and Wairarapa Times Age), digital advertising, through a flyer of which 60,000 copies were printed and delivered via the distribution service called Reach Media, to homes in both the Hutt Valley and Featherston. In addition, information was available on our website, letters were sent to local stakeholders, and communications were notified about virtual drop-in sessions.

While no specific proposals were published at that stage, we received feedback about many of the intersections including those in the Hebden Crescent area. A report on the key themes from that engagement process is available, and all original comments made via our online feedback platform Social Pinpoint are publicly available on our website:

- Engagement Report: [www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/sh2-ngauranga-to-featherston/sh2-ngauranga-to-featherston-engagement-report-june-2022.pdf](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/sh2-ngauranga-to-featherston/sh2-ngauranga-to-featherston-engagement-report-june-2022.pdf)
- Online Feedback: [nzta.mysocialpinpoint.com/sh2n2f](https://nzta.mysocialpinpoint.com/sh2n2f)

As part of this consultation, we held a stakeholder workshop looking at the safety improvements along the SH2 Ngāūranga to Featherston corridor. The workshop included council officers from Hutt City

Council, Upper Hutt City Council, South Wairarapa District Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council, road freight organisations, the AA and cycling organisations.

Through these processes, we received feedback that the intersection was viewed as unsafe from both members of the public through our online engagement and some formal stakeholder submissions.

### **3. *Why weren't we contacted***

Waka Kotahi is committed to delivering the Government's target of a 40 percent decrease in deaths and serious injuries by 2030. In order to do this, we are assessing the safety of all our state highway corridors, as well as working in partnership with local government as they assess local roads.

When considering the options for achieving these targets, we are considering how to reduce the collective risk (i.e., the risk to all road users) on a corridor, while maintaining access for residents and other road users. An uncontrolled right turn intersection on a two-lane high-volume state highway with a 100km/h speed limit is high risk, and this has led to our decision to make the intersection safer.

We acknowledge that the changes we are planning will increase some journey times and distances for people when leaving the area to travel south towards Lower Hutt and Wellington. In this instance, we did not consult on the proposal because we do not believe there is a feasible alternative.

Except for cases where consultation is a legal or regulatory requirement (as with speed limit changes), our approach is to consult where there is the opportunity for the community to influence the decision. In this case, while we acknowledge the impact of the decision on people who live and work in the area, we are required to prioritise the safety of all SH2 users. We have made the decision to close the right-hand turn access, which is consistent with our approach along the corridor over recent years.

It is important to us to engage with people and keep communities informed. We wrote to people in the area to let them know when our decision was announced, in advance of the change, which will be in 2023. The exact timing is yet to be confirmed.

We have received feedback and questions in response to our letter and public announcement, including a mix of opposition and support for the plans, which we acknowledge. While we will not reconsider the decision to close the right-turn access, we will investigate potential changes to mitigate some concerns raised.

These changes could include considering a better turning location for vehicles needing to make the sharp turn into Liverton Road from Hebden Crescent, way-finding signage to reduce the risk of heavy vehicles continuing to travel to the southern end of Hebden Crescent and working with Hutt City Council to consider the effects on Gurney Road and Hebden Crescent.

4. ***Has a safety assessment been carried out for the junction of Liverton Road and Hebden Crescent given the increased number of both light and heavy vehicles that will be travelling along the road and the challenges mentioned above of exiting Liverton Road? Please can we see that data to know that our safety has been considered?***
5. ***Has any safety assessment been carried out of cyclists or pedestrians along Hebden? There are no footpaths or cycleways along Hebden. It seems Waka Kotahi is very engaged with cyclists (indeed they were consulted about these changes but not the residents), what was their view on the changes proposing increases traffic along Hebden?***
6. ***Is closing the junction the safest option for all those effected (bearing in mind a safety assessment for Liverton Road and Hebden Junction) or just the cheapest?***
7. ***Is Waka Kotahi willing to share the information it has based its decisions on?***
8. ***Have the financial implications of this decision been considered by Waka Kotahi? How are the residents and businesses affected by this change expected to manage? The businesses may be borderline viable after Covid and now require additional fuel and time in their journeys.***
9. ***Please provide the safety assessment for the proposed changes on Liverton Road and Hebden Crescent and the evidence your decision to close the junction is based on, to all those affected (Liverton Road, Gurney Road and Hebden Crescent).***

In response to questions four to nine, we have completed a safe system assessment on the existing intersections and the changes that we plan to make to them. While there is no separate safety assessment undertaken for cyclists, the safe system assessment takes into account the presence of cyclists.

I have enclosed the SH2 Hutt Valley Feasibility Assessment report and its appendices. Some information has been marked as falling outside of the scope of your request. Other information has been withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- Section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.
- Section 9(2)(b)(ii) to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

The greatest danger of death and serious injury is posed by side-on crashes at 100km/h, which are possible where there are uncontrolled right-hand turns across SH2. The safe system assessment reflects the reduction in risk from removing these turns. Increased traffic on other roads does not create this type of risk.

The assessment does not consider financial impact, as the aim of the safety assessment is to significantly reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries. Each death and serious injury has a devastating and wide-reaching impact. Road crashes have a social cost to New Zealand of \$84 million per week, or nearly \$4.7 billion a year. That includes things like loss of life, quality of life, medical costs, legal costs and damage to vehicles. We acknowledge that the change we are planning will create longer journey times and distances for some people in the area.

We do not believe that leaving the intersection unchanged is an acceptable option for the long-term. We considered three options for change – a full closure, closure of right-hand turns, and adding traffic signals. A full closure was ruled out. Signals were ruled out for a number of reasons, including that they would not eliminate the risk of side-on crashes, and lower speeds would be required through the intersection to avoid this.

Moving to left-in and left-out is in line with other changes made to improve the safety of SH2 including the change at Horokiwi which was completed in 2010. With the SH2-SH58 Haywards interchange, there is a safe turnaround point for these journeys.

With respect to the information that has been withheld, I do not consider there are any other factors which would render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold this information. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://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 at [official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



**Liane Powell**

Acting National Manager, Infrastructure Delivery