

19 December 2023

[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-14119

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 21 November 2023 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) regarding State Highway 1B (SH1B) Telephone Road rail crossing.

I will answer each of your questions in turn.

1. Why is this road closed

In April 2022, a truck crossing the railway line at Telephone Road dislodged a section of rail track, which was the third time this type of incident has occurred since 2016. Due to the grave safety risk this presented, KiwiRail and NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) made the decision to immediately close the rail crossing to road traffic.

2. Please send me a copy of all correspondence with kiwi rail on this closure

NZTA publishes Official Information Act responses on our website, which can be found here: www.nzta.govt.nz/about-us/official-information-act/official-information-act-responses/.

We have interpreted your question to be for correspondence with KiwiRail around the time of the incident and subsequent closure. The specific response was from 28 April 2023 titled "Closure of SH1B Telephone Road rail crossing" contains information within the scope of this request. The communications are contained in the "Attachment 1" folder. This contains all relevant correspondence with KiwiRail from 2022 which covers the period around the closure and the safety risks of the crossing.

We have undertaken an initial search of just emails and found approximately 500 items, which would be considered substantial collation and likely to be refused under section 18 of the Act. If you would like specific correspondence between NZTA and KiwiRail, we would be happy to engage with you further about what information you are interested in.

3. How much has been spent and with which consultants to study this problem?

The closure cost is \$1,017,447 to the date of this reply. Please note that this high initial cost was for 24/7 temporary traffic management (TTM) when the road was first closed. This lasted for three months while agreement was reached on a more permanent traffic management set up. When the TTM was formalised, costs fell to maintain the closure, there was cost for site checks, variable message boards and security cameras. Once we have put in place permanent closure signage this week, there will be no further ongoing TTM costs.

We contracted WSP for \$67,000 to produce a report on options for the SH1B Telephone Road/Holland Road intersection. This report can be found online here:

nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-rail-crossing/sh1b-telephone-holland-intersection-report-with-appendices.pdf.

4. What is the problem

5. How are you fixing it

Because of the height of the crossing and this has caused some longer and lower trucks to scrape and dislodge sections of track as they cross. This poses a serious risk to the approximately 38 trains a day which use this line.

NZTA, KiwiRail and Waikato District Council all agree that there are viable and safe options for reopening the rail crossing. These options all involve rebuilding the crossing and the adjacent intersection, while the low-cost options put forward do not meet safety requirements.

Please see our webpage on the SH1B Telephone Road rail crossing for this information and more detail: www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-rail-crossing/.

6. Why is it not fixed

7. When will it be fixed

The permanent remedial option will be under consideration for funding in the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) 2024-27. Projects across the country are weighted and scrutinised against other projects to determine our priorities and which projects should receive funding.

8. By who

If the funding request is approved, NZTA and KiwiRail will work together to deliver the project.

9. How much will it cost

The Investigation report linked in the answer to question 3 contains the options and rough cost estimates. The cost of permanent closure was estimated to be \$2.25 million, while options to upgrade the intersection to make it safe for both road and rail ranged from an estimated \$9.95 million to \$10.58 million.

10. Why is there a delay

While there are viable and safe options for reopening the rail crossing, there is no funding available in the current funding in the 2021-24 NLTP. However, we will put this project forward for consideration in

the 2024-2027 NLTP funding cycle. The 2021-24 NLTP will be determined by the priorities in the new Government's Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS), which is currently being developed by the Minister of Transport.

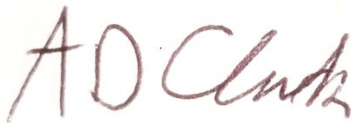
11. How is the surrounding district affected and by how much.

Northbound traffic is being detoured along Holland Road, Waverley Road and Seddon Road, with southbound traffic following the same detour in reverse. This detour adds approximately five minutes to a journey along SH1B.

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

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact the Ministerial Services team by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "AD Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Andrew Clark
National Manager Maintenance & Operations