

SH1 Brynderwyn Hills Closure

Engagement survey - summary report

19 December 2023



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To better understand the road user preferences for a proposed closure of SH1 Brynderwyn Hills, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi ran a public survey from Monday 4 December to Sunday 10 December 2023. This document is a summary of survey results on the potential timing for the proposed closure to enable recovery and enabling works.

Thanks to everyone who gave us feedback via the survey.

Summary of key points survey respondents asked us to consider

Respondents to a survey about the proposed closure of the State Highway 1 (SH1) Brynderwyn Hills provided feedback on the issues and areas of particular concern that they wanted us to carefully consider.

The issue resulting in the most commentary from respondents to the survey was about the **alternative routes**. People wanted us to consider how usage of these routes could be monitored and how the road conditions of alternative routes would be maintained.

Other key issues people want us to carefully consider include:

- Traffic management and safety
- Communication
- The impact on business and Northland's economy
- Long-term solutions.

Our response to these key points

Alternative (detour) routes

We are working closely with our partners, the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA), to make sure local detour routes are appropriate for the additional traffic. This means repairing the roads to be as high quality as possible. We have already started this work and have also brought forward related work programmes to make sure we complete as much as we can before the closure starts.

We are working to improve the quality of the alternative/detour route on SH12 and SH14. This work includes:

- Repairs to seven slips – this work is underway
- Applying 23,000m of new chipseal
- Applying 500m² of thin asphalt concrete
- Working on 8 slumping repair sites.

We are working with the freight industry to educate companies and drivers about the types of vehicles can use different alternative/ detour routes. This includes information about trucks vs HPMVs, and what type of vehicles can use each route and where there are restrictions for some trucks or HPMVs.

We will continue to be working closely with the NTA and NZ Police to ensure that the correct routes are taken by different vehicles.

We are committed to regularly assessing the condition of the roads on alternative/detour routes and funding repairs on the Mangawhai-Waipū-Cove route and Paparoa-Oakleigh Road.

Communicating with the public and stakeholders

We acknowledge that the wayfinding signage used during earlier closures needs improvement. This is a key focus area, and we are working alongside our partners at NTA to improve this for the 2024 closure.

Leading up to and during the closure we will communicate with road users through:

- A dedicated project website including project team contact details
- E-newsletter and social media updates
- A detour campaign using radio, newspaper and online advertising letting people know Northland is accessible and how to plan their journey
- Increased VMS (variable message sign) and wayfinding on all detour routes
- Key stakeholders in the tourism and freight industry sharing messaging with their networks.

There are a small number of residents who need direct access to properties in the closure area. We are working closely with the residents to understand their needs and help to minimise disruptions as much as possible.

Traffic management and safety

We are implementing learnings from similar projects like the SH25A closure. We are engaging key staff from the SH25A project and using local resources to get the job done quickly and safely.

We are working with emergency services to better understand their needs and to address any concerns they may have. We will provide them with closure details as soon as we can so they can plan and prepare.

The impact on businesses and Northland's economy

We are supporting Northland Inc's 'Northland campaign' over the closure period to make sure people know that Northland is open and ready for business. Maps will show the alternative routes and difference in length of routes.

Consider long-term solutions

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi is aware of the considerable interest in the longer-term plan for the Brynderwyn Hills as well as the current resilience work for SH1 and the Brynderwyn Hills section.

The long-term plan for the section of SH1 from Port Marsden to Te Hana is in our strategic investment programme. However before it can progress, we require funding to be allocated to it as a prioritised project. Once funding is allocated, our people are ready to start the business case which will follow normal business processes. The assessment will explore a range of options including those provided by the Northland community.

We will keep the community and stakeholders up to date as we work through this process.

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1. Background

State Highway 1 (SH1) Brynderwyn Hills is a vital connection between Auckland and Northland. Following extensive damage caused by Cyclone Gabrielle and other major weather events in early 2023, the Brynderwyn Hills were closed to complete emergency repairs in both directions for 36 days and closed southbound only for 37 days – totalling 73 days.

Repairs at the time were focused on getting the road open by providing short term options, such as temporary walls and retaining systems.

A full closure of this section of SH1 is necessary to undertake works that will restore the road to pre-Cyclone Gabrielle conditions and ensure the reliability and resilience of the SH1 network.

2. Introduction

Two potential start dates for works were presented to stakeholders and the community in the form of a public survey:

- A closure after Waitangi Day to Easter expected to take around 7.5 weeks.
- A start date after Easter, requiring a longer closure period of around 10-11 weeks, due to the increased number of rain days during April and May.

Stakeholder and community feedback was sought to help inform a decision on the closure timing.

3. Public survey

To better understand the road user preferences for a closure timeframe, NZTA ran a public survey from Monday 4 December to Sunday 10 December 2023. The relatively short timeframe available to conduct this survey was due to a need to get feedback from the community as soon as possible to allow the timing decision to be announced before the end of the year.

To encourage community participation, information about the survey was:

- Promoted the survey on social media (shared by 359 people on Facebook)
- Distributed via email to over 150 direct stakeholder groups including Northland Inc. and Northland Transportation Alliance's networks, community groups and business associations. NZTA also requested that these groups share survey information with their networks
- Promoted by Radio NZ
- Promoted in the Northern Advocate.

We received around 2600 responses to the survey. A summary of the feedback received from this survey is outlined in this engagement summary.

4. Webinars

As part of ongoing engagement and in addition to the public survey, two online webinars were held on:

- Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 6:30 pm.
- Friday 8 December at 10:30 am.

Each webinar started with a short presentation followed by a Q&A session. The sessions were recorded and made publicly available for people unable able to attend. Around 180 people attended the webinar sessions.

Overall, the sentiment from those attending the webinars was although a full closure would impact people and businesses, there is general recognition that recovery works are vital and an acknowledgement that work needs to happen as soon as possible (noting that a preference for a particular timeframe was not obvious at either webinar session).

5. Survey feedback

We received just under 2,600 submissions in response to the survey.

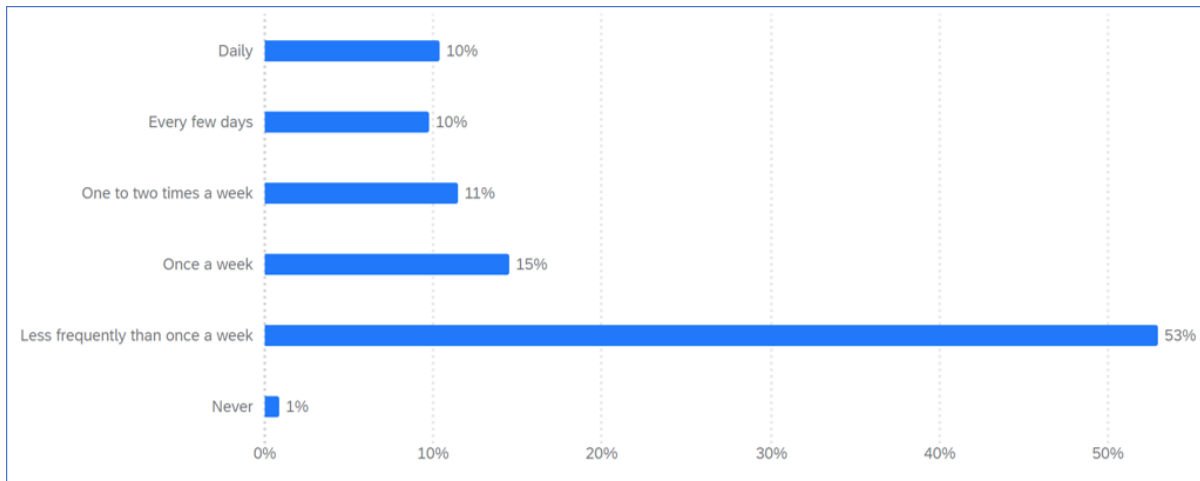
- 2,289 submissions from individuals
- 290 submissions on behalf of a business or organisation

Responses to survey questions

1) How often do you travel SH1 Brynderwyn Hills?

Over half (53%) of respondents travel this section of SH1 less than once a week while 46% of respondents travel the route more frequently (from daily to once a week).

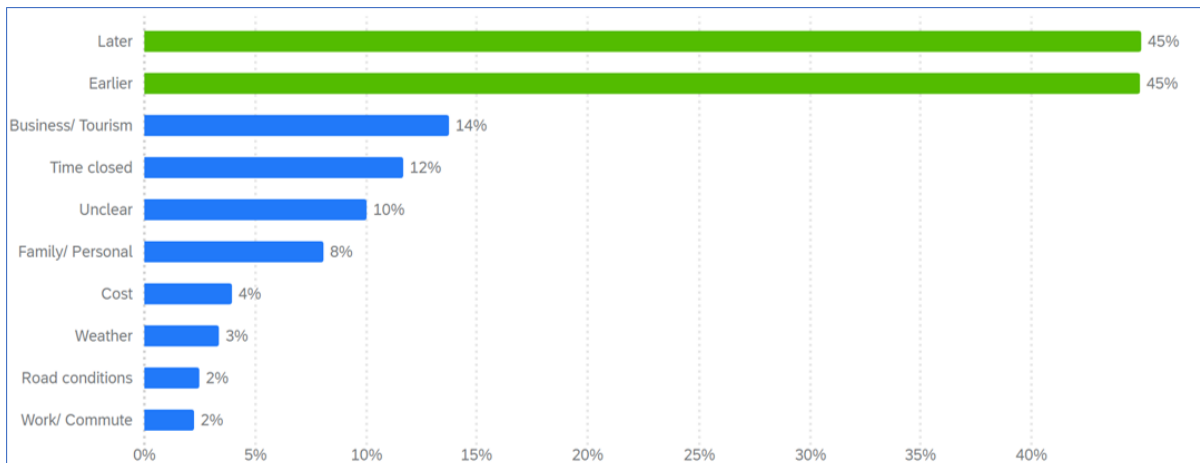
Figure 1: frequency of travel



2) Which closure is more impactful and why?

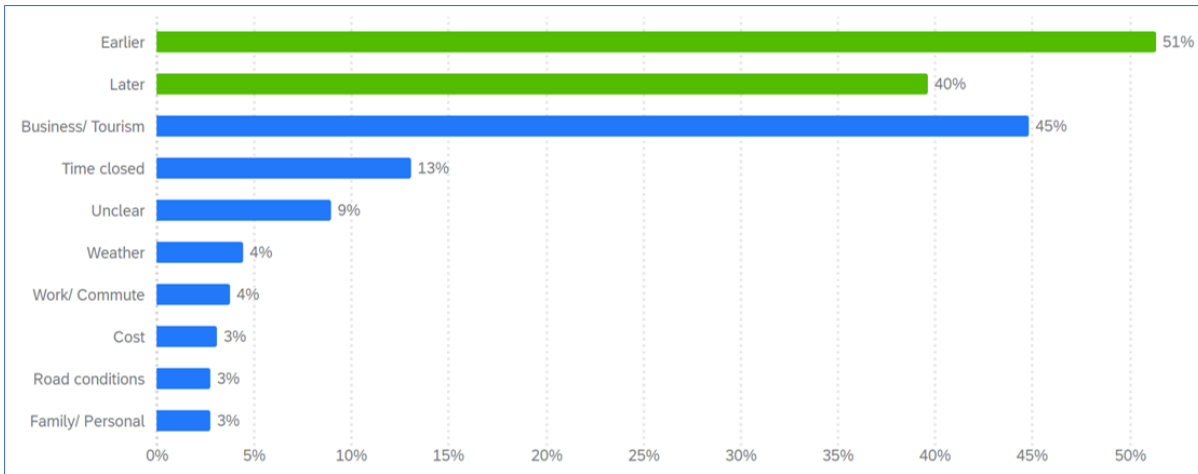
Overall, respondents (n2579) are split in their preference for a closure timeframe between the earlier or later closure. The main reason for considering a timeframe more impactful over the other are related to business/tourism and the length of closure.

Figure 2: overall responses



Responses submitted on behalf of a business or organisation (n290) indicate that an earlier closure would be more impactful for 51% of respondents, while 40% of responses indicate a later closure would be more impactful. The main reasons cited are consistent with overall responses, that is, business/tourism and the time of closure.

Figure 3: responses submitted on behalf of a business or organisation



Sample quotes from responses received on behalf of businesses or organisations as to why one timeframe would be more impactful than the other.

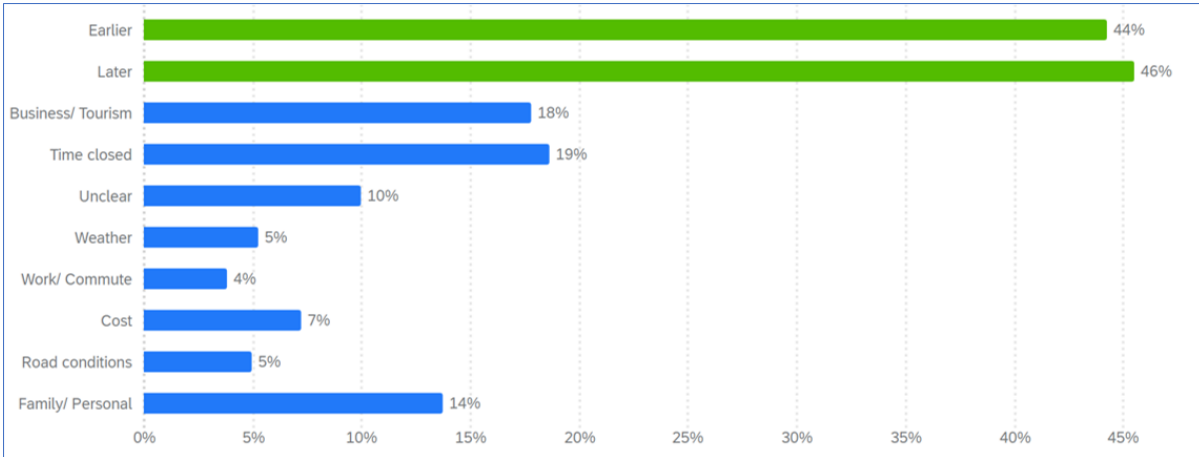
"We have nearly 50% (8/20) of our staff live on the north side of the Brynderwyns, our school is on the south side. They are all travelling daily. The later closure would impact us more because if we have to travel on Gorge Road it is badly affected by bad weather."

"Earlier closure due to it being during our peak tourist season where we have huge numbers of visitors that boost the economy in Northland. This will be essential to the survival of many Northland businesses after a tough few years and the current economic climate."

"Either will have significant negative affect. Transit delays will delay freight deliveries across all of Northland but also will affect the connections of outbound freight VIA AKL to connect with the Linehaul servicing the rest of NZ. depending on the extra time taken on the alternate route, some current overnight connections ex Whangarei and Northland will become a 2-day service or more."

Responses from individuals (n2298) indicate that 44% would be more impacted by an early closure timeframe and 46% would be more impacted by a later closure timeframe. The main reasons for this are consistent with overall responses and those received on behalf of a business or organisation, that is, business/tourism and the length of closure. Family/personal reasons are also highlighted as a reason for impact for individual submitters.

Figure 4: responses submitted on behalf of an individual



Sample quotes from responses received from individuals as to why one timeframe would be more impactful than the other.

"The businesses in the north need visitors and the residents need this route open to move about freely during summer. We're neglected enough in the north, and this won't help. If there aren't as many rain days, it won't cost as much I presume."

"I vote for the earlier closer as it will be closed for a shorter amount of time and will be cheaper. As long as it is open before Easter, so we still get the financial benefits of people traveling north for the long weekend."

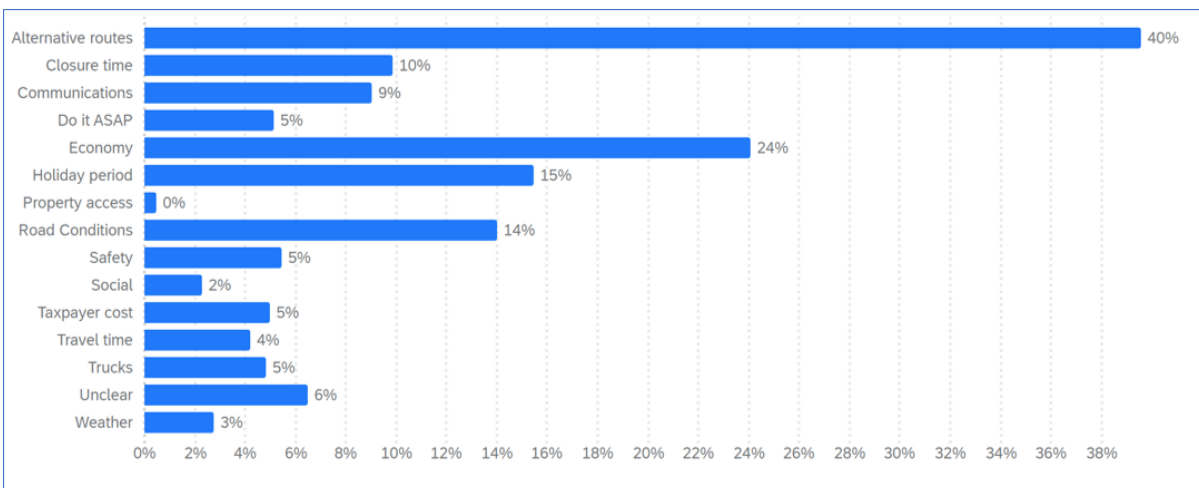
"Both closures will be a pain when travelling to Auckland but understand why it's being done. Logically it seems earlier is better time to do the work due to weather over winter."

3) What should we take into consideration as we plan for this upcoming closure?

Submitters were asked to consider what specific areas of concern, key points and/or issues should be taken into consideration when making decisions about the closure.

Consideration of alternative routes was the most common theme raised by respondents. The economy, holiday periods and the condition of roads are also themes with higher number of related comments.

Figure 5: common themes raised by respondents



Further interrogation of comments related to common themes resulted in the identification of the following key areas for further consideration during decision making.

Alternative routes – how will usage be monitored, and road conditions maintained?

- Concerns about the condition and suitability of alternative routes for heavy traffic.
- Maintenance and upgrade of detour roads (address issues such as potholes/road damage).
- Safety and adequacy of alternative routes, particularly for heavy vehicles.
- Requests for clear and adequate signage on detours for all road users.
- Keeping trucks off specific roads due to safety concerns and potential damage.

Traffic management and safety concerns

- Safety concerns with heavy traffic on alternative routes, potential for accidents.
- Managing traffic flow, especially during peak times, to avoid congestion and delays.
- Request for traffic management such as one-lane systems and restricted access options.
- Ensuring emergency services and patient transfers have priority and can use routes effectively.

Communicating with the public and stakeholders

- Need clear, honest and practical communication about the closure and detour routes.
- Need advance notice and information to minimise disruption and stress for all users.
- Engage with the public and provide advice on alternative routes (not just restricting access).

Consider longer-term solutions

- Calls for a long-term solution (such as building a new road or upgrading existing infrastructure), to prevent future closures.
- Consider the resilience and durability of roads to withstand adverse weather conditions.

The impact on businesses and Northland's economy

- Impact on Northland businesses, especially during peak summer months.
- Economic repercussions, particularly for tourism-dependent businesses.
- Losses faced by local businesses due to closure, especially considering COVID-19 impacts.
- Effects on freight, delivery services and access to goods for businesses.

Managing and timing of closure

- Request for a 'solid' plan, clear timeline and accurate geology surveys.
- Concerns about the duration and timing of closure, avoid peak travel periods such as holidays.
- Minimise closure time to reduce economic impact and inconvenience.

6. What we heard and what we're doing

In response to your feedback, we will be doing the following:

Alternative (detour) routes

We are working closely with our partners, the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA), to make sure local detour routes are appropriate for the additional traffic. This means repairing the roads to be as high quality as possible. We have already started this work and have also brought forward related work programmes to make sure we complete as much as we can before the closure starts.

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Communicating with the public and stakeholders

We acknowledge that the wayfinding signage used during earlier closures did not meet the mark. We have a dedicated team, including NTA, to improve this for the 2024 closure.

Leading up to and during the closure we will communicate with road users through:

- A dedicated project website including project team contact details
- E-newsletter and social media updates
- A detour campaign using radio, newspaper and online advertising letting people know Northland is accessible and how to plan their journey
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There are a small number of residents who need direct access to properties in the closure area. We are working closely with the residents to understand their needs and help to minimise disruptions as much as possible.

Traffic management and safety

We are implementing learnings from projects not dissimilar to this one such as the SH25A closure. We are engaging key staff from the SH25A project and using local resources to get the job done quickly and safely.

We are working with emergency services to better understand their needs and to address any concerns they may have. We will provide them with closure details as soon as we can so they can plan and prepare.

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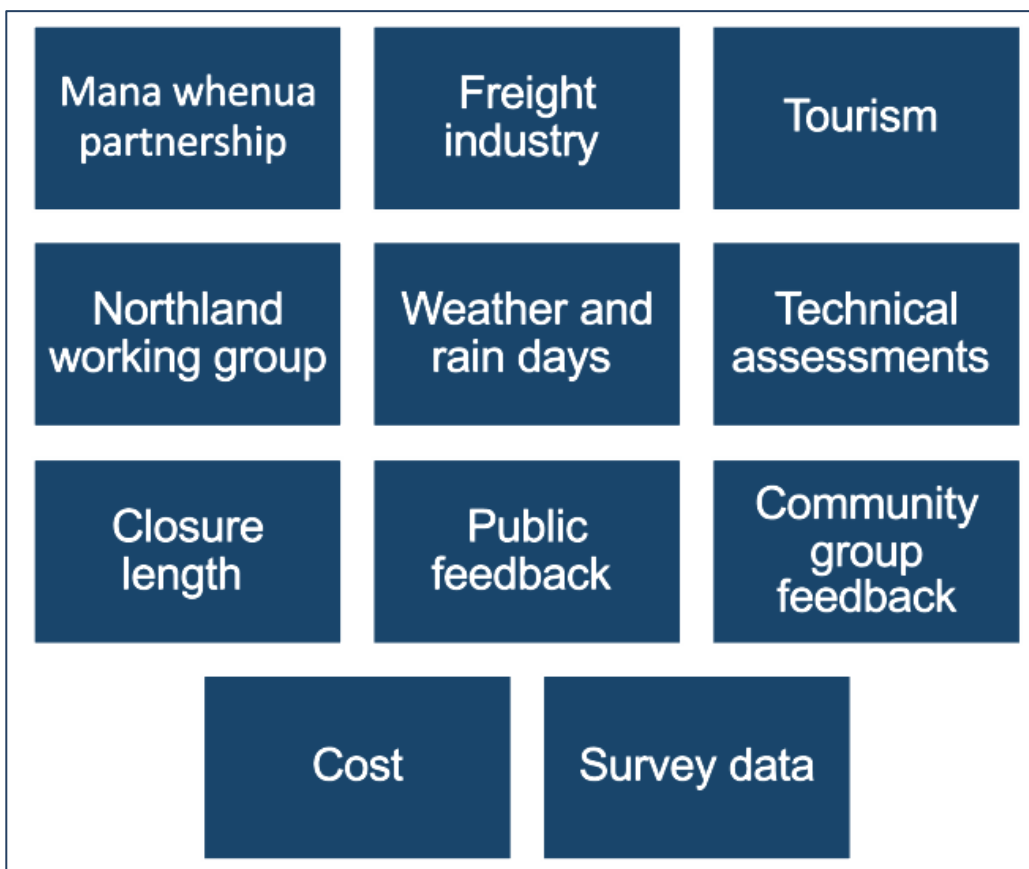
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We will keep the community and stakeholders up to date as we work through this process.

7. Key factors informing decision making

Key factors to be considered during decision making about the closure are outlined in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: key factors to be considered to inform decision making.



8. Next steps

Following a review of the key factors outlined about, NZTA will announce the timeframe for closure of SH1 Brynderwyn Hills to undertake recovery and enabling works before the end of 2023.

All submitters who provided contact details via the survey will be advised of the outcome and decisions about the closure will be published on our [website](#).

An information campaign advising the public and stakeholders of the closure timeframe will be undertaken prior to and during the closure.