

Urunga me haumaruru

Access and safety

The upgraded state highway between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway (SH15) will be built to a high standard to reduce deaths and serious injuries. Improving safety and access to the corridor will provide for safer, easier and more reliable journeys for everyone.

Access to the highway

The upgraded four-lane corridor will have a continuous centre median barrier to stop head-on crashes caused by vehicles crossing the centre line. While separating opposing traffic will result in significant safety improvements, it will mean access to properties and business along the upgraded corridor will change.

For homes and businesses in the urban section, drivers will be restricted to left turns only into and out of properties. Drivers will travel a short distance to the nearest controlled intersection (traffic signals or roundabouts) to make a safe right turn to enable travel in the opposite direction.

Access to the upgraded highway in the rural section, south of Toetoe Road, will also require driving to the nearest intersection to make a safe right turn. Where a number of driveways are located close together, the project team are considering design solutions such as 'service lanes' built alongside the upgraded corridor to connect multiple properties to the nearest intersection.

Flexible road safety barriers

The section of state highway between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway has a high history of death and serious injury crashes. Most of these crashes involved drivers crossing the centreline and colliding with oncoming traffic.

We use flexible road safety barriers down the middle of the highway to prevent head-on collisions and along the edge of the road to reduce the consequences of run-off-road crashes.

Roadside and median flexible safety barriers are highly effective in preventing deaths and injuries for all road users. Results show a 70-80 per cent reduction in road fatalities wherever they are installed.

When a vehicle hits these barriers the high-tension wire cables flex, slowing down the vehicle and redirecting it away from the hazard. This flexibility means that the barrier absorbs the energy, reducing the force on the people in the vehicles, resulting in less severe injuries than other safety barrier systems and from collision with roadside hazards or other vehicles.

Flexible road safety barriers are designed so as not to penetrate the passenger compartment of a vehicle and the vehicle remains upright during and after a collision. They are also designed so that after impact the vehicle should not be deflected into an adjacent traffic lane.

Motorcyclists and the myth of the 'cheese cutter'

Some motorcyclists oppose flexible road safety barriers as they believe the steel ropes will act as a 'cheese cutter' if hit by a rider. Studies show the fear that the steel ropes will 'slice' motorcyclists is unfounded, and that flexible barriers are more forgiving than traditional steel barriers.

Motorcyclists are more likely to survive an impact with a flexible road safety barrier than an impact with trees, poles or oncoming vehicles.

Crash data from January 2001 to July 2013 shows of 20 motorcycle fatalities sustained as a result of hitting a roadside or median barrier, just three involved flexible safety (wire rope) barriers. Over the same time period there were 97 motorcycle fatalities from collisions with posts or poles, 70 from hitting traffic signs and 93 from crashing into unprotected trees.

