

# SH1B Telephone Road rail crossing Community survey analysis

## Project background

The rail crossing on State Highway 1B (SH1B) Telephone Road has been closed since April 2022 due to safety concerns, after a vehicle hit and dislodged a section of rail track.

Since then, Waikato District Council, KiwiRail and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency have been working together to determine the best long-term option for the future of the crossing.

A report commissioned by Waka Kotahi took a thorough look at all the available solutions and found those that resolved all the safety concerns and kept the crossing open are estimated to cost between \$8 million and \$11 million.

The report also included an option for permanent closure of the crossing. The full report is available at [nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-railcrossing](https://nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-railcrossing).

A further option put forward after the report was finalised involves closing Holland Road on the western side of the Telephone Road/Marshmeadow Road intersection and realigning Telephone Road so that it connects directly onto Marshmeadow Road.

To get a better understanding of the view of the closure and potential long-term option, the community was invited to complete a short survey in late 2023.

No funding is available for the necessary work to allow the crossing to reopen within the current funding cycle (the 2021-24 National Land Transport Programme), however this project has been put forward for consideration in the 2024-27 NLTP process.

Understanding the impact of the closure, how it is affecting local traffic patterns and the key community concerns will help inform this process.

## Community survey background and analysis methods

The survey was available to complete between 10 October and 3 November 2023. It was delivered to around 450 households in the Puketaha area. It was also available to complete directly online via the project page, [nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-railcrossing](https://nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-railcrossing).

When the survey closed 254 separate responses had been received. A small number were duplicate answers or one respondent filling out a second survey to include additional or subsequent comments. For the purposes of statistical analysis these have been treated as one response. There were also a number of partially completed surveys submitted.

Of the surveys received 243 were submitted directly via the online form on the web page, while 11 were emailed or posted directly to Waka Kotahi.

For the purposes of analysing the results values were assigned to get a gauge of the level of sentiment for or against, or in the case of the first question the amount of travel impacted.

The sample comments provided below were selected to reflect the range and sentiment of responses provided to each question.

### Community survey Q1

*When it was open, how often did you use the SH1B rail crossing? What was the reason for your travel? For example, were you travelling to work, school or to visit friends/family/community group?*

Q1 Survey response analysis:

Total answers	221
Every day (includes multiple times a day)	82 (37%)
Weekly (2-5 times a week)	82 (36%)
Monthly (1-3 times a month)	20 (9%)
Rarely (all other responses)	38 (17%)

Sample of comments:

“We have 3 full license drivers in our household. Between us we would use the crossing on a weekday 8 times a day prior to the closure and 4 times on weekend days. Movement is mainly to work & school with some personal travel.”

“At least 2 times a day if not more, travel to drop kids to school, sport and exercise at Waikato University, travel to work in Central Hamilton, travel to Morrinsville to visit family, into supermarket.”

“As a couple we travelled through the intersection 6 times per day. One person to work and home again. The other to drop the kids at school and daycare then home in the morning then to pick them up then home in the afternoon.”

“Daily. For all of the above reasons. I live on one side of the crossing, and my kids went to school on the other side (Puketaha). I also own farms on opposing sides of the closure.”

“Every time I needed to go to the Chartwell or Te Rapa side of town. Also every time we went to Auckland. This would equate to at least once a fortnight.”

“Quickest way to visit family in TA and Eureka.”

“A few times a week - Access to sports and recreation facilities, visiting friends and family, visiting customers, transport of crops sold from our property.”

“Originally it was our main route to Cambridge now with the expressway it’s no longer needed.”

“Didn’t use the rail crossing but certainly used Holland road each day to get to and from work in Hamilton.”

“Pre expressway monthly to visit family. Now not at all I use the expressway.”

“Have just moved onto Puketaha Rd this year and love the fact we have less traffic on Puketaha rd so vote to not reopen.”

## Community survey Q2

*How has it affected your local journeys having the rail crossing closed? What alternative routes around the area do you use and how often do you use them? How many additional kilometres of travel would you do in a day or a week? How much longer does this take?*

Q2 Survey response analysis:

Total answers	218
Positive	13 (6%)
Negative	157 (72%)
Neutral	48 (22%)

Sample of comments:

“We now have to use the Telephone road to Puketaha, Seddon, Waverly and then along Holland to get back to the crossing and continue onwards. We all drive this way. It adds 14km each way per vehicle for a total extra distance of 112km per day. It soaks up 25 minutes each person every day. It’s unacceptable.”

“As I originally used this multiple times a day it has meant I have to take an alternative route multiple times a day. Usually go via puketaha road then Gordonton road and around. It adds an extra 15km to each trip and around 12 minutes.”

"It has cause massive disruption to our lives. This has been cause for major anxiety over the last year & half. I have been travelling out of telephone road & around Seddon road to drop child at preschool. This adds additional 12-15 minutes to the journey. If I work from home this is additional 40-45 mins a day just because the road is shut. As a working parent finding an additional 3 & 3/4 hrs a week for travel has been a struggle!"

"Extra time and fuel used, most trips ten kilometers further. Extra wear and tear on our vehicles mainly due to the alternative routes being not maintained for the extra volume of traffic."

"Just had a change in mindset that we exit via Puketaha Road, it makes bugger all difference and it is not that bad, it is more the locals on Puketaha who have had their vehicle numbers increase who are the squeaky wheels. We love the current set up, families are out on most days walking and running safely on Telephone road. Kids playing in that closed off area and families meeting in that area between Amber Lane and Rail crossing. The road is quiet and at the start there was still a lot of traffic but everyone now knows its closed. Well most people as it seems the only thing is some GPS still send people this way - don't waste our tax money on the few moaners."

"Since the new motorway opened, we rarely use telephone road using the motorway instead for ease."

"No effect, much easier to use new expressway."

"Has made the road a lot safer. Have not seen an accident on the intersection."

### Community survey Q3

*An alternative proposal has been put forward to close Holland Road westbound towards Hamilton, as a way to keep the rail crossing open. Should this closure go ahead, how would it impact your local journeys?*

Q3 Survey response analysis:

Total answers	224
Positive	84 (38%)
Negative	79 (35%)
Neutral	61 (27%)

Sample of comments:

"It would mean less of an impact compared to the closure of Telephone rd."

"I think this is a great compromise with the back tracking now at the end of Holland Road and the off camber corner at low speed on the old Ruakura Road is not ideal. The main challenge I see is the Vaile Road Railway Crossing that would need major barriers installed."

“It would reconnect us with our Puketaha community and reduce our daily driving time significantly - please do reopen it!”

“I know this isn't a popular option for those people on Holland Road, however I feel this is a good alternative to keep Telephone Road open for the majority of people using the road. It wouldn't really impact our trips, as we used to use Vaile Road regularly anyways. My only concern is that Marshmeadow Road would need a turning bay installed, and Vaile Road would require some work as in it's current state isn't going to withstand the extra traffic (including how narrow it is at some points).”

“No!! Significant impact to us. Would rather leave closed than this option. Significant impact to surrounding land and land wastage. Would increase Vaile Rd traffic also - narrow road and not made for significant traffic levels. Plus pedestrians school students.”

“No it should not. Very expensive solution. Will send volumes of traffic down Marshmeadow and Vaile which the roads are not designed for. Keep the closure. In my view, one or two vested interest parties seem to be making a huge issue over this, the majority of the community are not impacted and ok with the closure.”

“It is unlikely to affect me personally in terms of use of holland rd, but I think it is a bad idea as it will increase road frequency on marshmeadow, rather than sharing traffic between the two roads. I would not appreciate the additional noise. In addition it will encourage people to use SH1b rather than SH1.”

“NO, NO, NO the traffic would use Vaile or Marshmeadow Roads. The majority of residents do not want this.”

“Probably zero-sum, it would add distance to some journeys while reducing it for others.”

“The proposal would not affect our current travel patterns at all. The Waikato Expressway and Wairere Drive are much safer and efficient options. The Gordonton/Puketaha Road roundabout has also greatly improved road safety.”

## Community survey Q4

*If either the rail crossing or Holland Road westbound is closed, would you like to see walking and cycling access provided?*

Q4 Survey response analysis:

Total answers	219
Positive	120 (56%)
Negative	51 (22%)
Neutral	48 (22%)

Sample of comments:

“Always add walking and cycling access. There is nothing but positive outcomes by adding them.”

“Yes this would be at least something for the area. But really both roads need to be open.”

“With this currently close there are a lot more people walking and riding - its really pleasant.”

“Yes. While the intersection has been closed we have seen an increase in the number of cyclists (especially weekend groups out road cycling).”

“Why? Never seen a bike”

“As if people are going to walk or bike from that area! Everyone has a car and uses it to drive to and from work.”

“What would be the point? There are no cycling or walking tracks there to connect to.”

“Cant get a tractor, truck or car on those why waste money on that?!!”

“Not a question that applies to me, my main concern is vehicle related.”