

23 SH23 and SH39 Whatawhata

39 Engagement summary



Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has been looking at options to make the intersection of State Highway 23 and State Highway 39 in Whatawhata safer, to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on these roads.

We believe the best approach to improving safety at this site is a roundabout. To help us finalise our designs and fully understand the issues at this intersection, we asked locals and regular road users to give us their views on our proposed safety improvements.

What we did



- We held a drop-in session in Whatawhata which was promoted via local media, Facebook and direct letter.
- Around 30 people attended and we had some very useful conversations. Twelve feedback forms were collected during this event.
- People were also able to submit feedback via email, with 64 emails received.

We contacted residents directly and talked to local businesses and organisations in the area, including Waikato District Council, Police and AA.



We are also in ongoing contact with Ngāti Māhanga as mana whenua, and community representatives, including the Whatawhata Community Association.

What we heard

The support was overwhelmingly positive for a roundabout at this location, with many stating this should have occurred already.

'I fully support the proposed new roundabout at Whatawhata. It's such a dangerous junction at present. With increasing traffic and a lot of very large trucks. A roundabout should make it a lot safer. I hope work can start soon.'



'A roundabout will reduce speeds and stop drivers getting impatient waiting for traffic to clear in all directions. Result will be less accidents.'



'My view is that this should proceed as quickly as possible. This is a dangerous crossroads that I use regularly. The road is very busy at times and turning from say Whatawhata towards Raglan is dangerous. Just get on and do it.'

'Yes definitely a BIG YES! This road is only getting busier and busier, daily you can see the near misses! Please, please get this underway!'



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'I've been travelling to and from Raglan to Hamilton for more than 50 years. Speed, inattention, ignorance and poor driving has certainly increased. I have witnessed many near misses at this intersection and have been first responder to crashes that have resulted in injury. A roundabout would be very welcome. Thank you.'



Some other key themes raised were: **What our stakeholders said**

Provisions for walking and cycling

'If a roundabout is to be built, it should include a subway, or bridge for cyclists and pedestrians. Safe routes are needed to Whatawhata School. Without this provision, the roundabout will be yet another step to increase safety for motor vehicles, whilst increasing risk to more environmentally friendly road users.'

'I understand that bike numbers may be low at present, but this could, and probably will change over the next decades, and provision should be included now, so a more expensive retrofit won't be needed in the future.'

It needs to be two-lanes

'The proposed roundabout at Whatawhata must not be single lane, it needs two lanes all ways or an alternative solution sought in my humble opinion (or you will have a line of cars back to Hamilton trying to return to Raglan).'

'I think that a roundabout at this intersection is a very good idea. But as you say this intersection is getting busier every day so my only plea would be that you make it a two-lane entry and exit roundabout to accommodate for future growth.'

'The increased capacity of a two-lane roundabout would future proof the intersection for increased traffic volumes due to strong population growth at both ends of the SH23 corridor.'

It needs to include a safe place for trucks to stop

'There's very much a lack of places for heavy trucks to stop when they need to take their rest breaks and quite often when they need to stop it will be in places not intended for trucks to park potentially causing surface damage.'

'I strongly believe that this factor needs to be considered. The traffic flow of State Highway 39 really benefits from this truck stop and it would be a great loss should this proposal not be changed to accommodate it.'

NZ Police

NZ Police were briefed on the proposed roundabout and were comfortable with the information provided, along with the proposed speed reductions. They queried whether it should be double lane to handle peak flows but accepted that land availability, project scope and cost were all reasonable factors in this decision.

Mana whenua

Waka Kotahi has worked with mana whenua, Ngāti Māhanga as partners through hui in November, December 2022 and February 2023, where they have been briefed on all elements of the project. Ngāti Māhanga have provided input into a range of design matters that they identified as important to them including safety, crossing locations, speed limits and stormwater treatment options analysis. They've been involved in guiding Waka Kotahi and will continue to do so through any future physical works, in relation to cultural, archaeological and stormwater matters.

Community Association

The Whatawhata Community Association has long advocated for this project. They are strongly supportive of the project and want to see it completed as soon as possible along with the proposed speed limit reductions. They also provided feedback on pedestrian crossing locations and advocated for a zebra crossing near the main area of shops. The project team met with them through their regular meeting and at our public drop-in session.

Waikato District Council

The Waka Kotahi project team has met with representatives of Waikato District Council who have long advocated for this project as a top priority for the Whatawhata community. This project is supported at both staff and political level. Waka Kotahi will continue to engage with the council as the project progresses, in particular in relation to the newly constructed Whatawhata Community Hub and the location of its accessway.

NZ Automobile Association (AA)

The AA was invited to provide feedback on the proposed roundabout and was generally supportive of the project. However, the association queried the logic of building a single lane roundabout at this site and wanted to ensure it would be 'truck friendly' to avoid rollovers, with good signage regarding any changes to the speed limit.

Waka Kotahi responses to feedback

Two lanes

This project's focus is to reduce death and serious injury crashes quickly through low-cost, targeted changes. As much as possible, we make design improvements within the existing road corridor to give ourselves the best chance of gaining construction funding.

A larger roundabout would require purchasing property which significantly increases the cost of projects and timeframes. We're focused on reducing deaths and serious injuries caused by crashes on this road and we believe this design strikes the right balance.

Walking and cycling

Waka Kotahi is committed to making travel safer for people who choose to walk or cycle, although the project scope does not include separated cycle lanes. We believe the dedicated crossings for those on bike or on foot and the roundabout will significantly slow drivers down so that on-road cyclists can take the lane more safely.

As a result of the feedback received, we are currently working through options to relocate the proposed raised pedestrian crossing further north on SH39.

Truck rest area

We can appreciate the points raised, although this project is focused on improving the safety of the current intersection and does not include a separate truck rest area. We have captured this feedback to be considered in any longer-term plans.

Speed review

Speed in this area was also recently consulted on as part of our Interim State Highway Speed Management Plan.

We're currently considering feedback from this consultation alongside existing information to finalise the interim plan and will share an update in the coming months.

What's going to happen next?

From here, we will take into account the feedback received and see whether any tweaks need to be made to our initial design.

Conversation with landowners, mana whenua and key stakeholders will be ongoing.

We now need to apply for construction funding and consents under the Resource Management Act.

The approved pre-implementation phase funding covers the design and consents. We still need to apply for around \$8 million for construction in the 2021-24 National Land Transport Programme (NLTP).

There's no guarantee this funding will be available as there are funding pressures nationally. However, the project will be in the best possible position to proceed should funding be granted.

We are committed to keeping the community updated throughout this process.



For more information visit the project webpage or email the team:



nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh23-sh39-intersection-safety-improvements



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