



# Whanganui to Bulls safety improvements



State Highway 3 (SH3) between Whanganui and Bulls is a key route for locals, tourists and freight, but too many people are being killed or seriously injured in crashes while travelling it.

Between 2019 and 2023, there were 159 crashes on SH3 between Whanganui and Bulls, which resulted in 7 people dying and 19 being seriously injured.

We want to make this a safer stretch of road so that everyone living on and using this section of SH3 can get where they are going safely.

## What we're doing to make this road safer

In 2022, we undertook a study to understand which types of safety improvements would work best for this road. We identified that adding sections of flexible median barrier and wide centrelines to the route would be very effective at reducing deaths and serious injuries from crashes.

**Three of the deaths and 10 of the serious injuries may have been prevented if flexible median barrier had been in place on the road.**

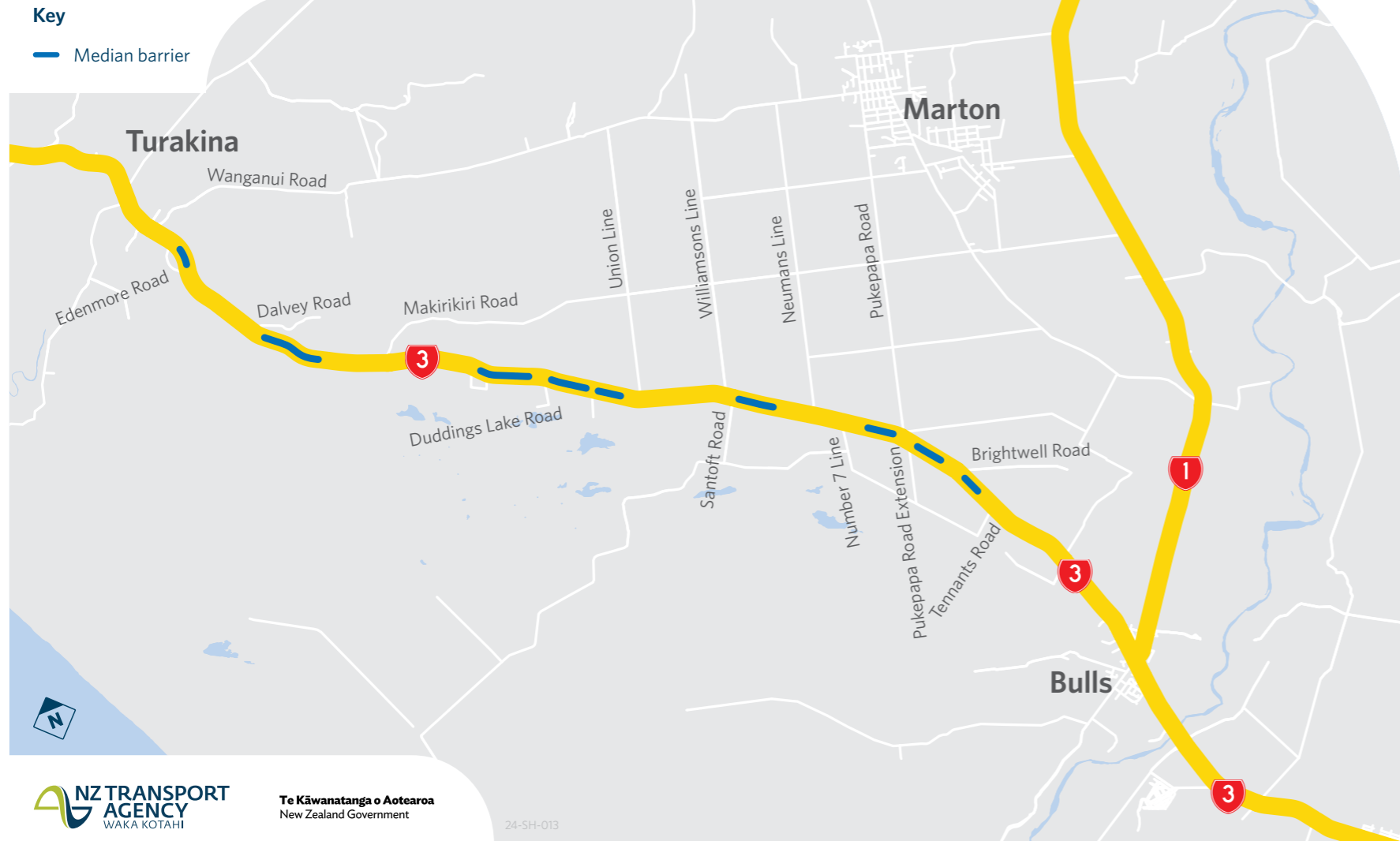
From March 2024, we'll begin installing our first stretches of median barrier along the route, totalling 5-6km. These stretches of median barrier will mark the start of a wider programme of safety improvements, which will see median barrier and turnaround facilities installed along much of the highway between Whanganui and Bulls.

The exact lengths of these stretches of median barrier are to be confirmed but they will be installed in locations where the road is already wide enough to support the barrier. The proposed locations for the barrier are shown in the map on the next page.

These barriers will deliver immediate safety benefits while maintaining efficient travel between Whanganui and Bulls.

We're currently developing the plan for improvements along the rest of the route. We've started to engage with iwi and hapū and will engage with residents and businesses along the route and the wider community, as these plans develop.

# 3 Bulls to Turakina median barriers



## Why are you installing median barrier along the route?

Flexible median barriers put a barrier between you and an oncoming car, truck or motorcycle. This means if someone loses control or drifts across the centreline, the result isn't a deadly head-on crash. We know median barriers are very effective, because of the number of times they get hit. Every time this happens, a potentially fatal or serious crash has been prevented.

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## Where will I turn around once median barrier is installed?

Where there are median barriers, you may need to drive a little further to turn right. We leave gaps in the barriers and provide safe places to turn where possible. It's about finding the balance between convenience and protecting everyone.

If your property is near where we are planning to install barrier, we'll speak with you about how you access your property and how you may be impacted, before any barrier is installed.

## How will emergency services get to people in an accident if a flexible median barrier is installed?

Flexible median barriers can be lowered and driven over in emergency situations if needed. Flexible median barriers significantly reduce the number of crashes on roads where they are installed. When developing designs, we work closely with the teams who manage incidents on the road.

## Will the speed limit be changed as part of this work?

No, there are no plans to review the speed limit on this stretch of road as part of this project.

Temporary speed limit reductions will be in place when construction is underway to keep road users and the construction team safe. These will be removed once construction is complete.

## Wouldn't it be better to educate people on driving safely, instead of installing median barrier?

Driver education is important, but we are all human and not able to perform perfectly 100% of the time. A 2017 study in New Zealand found that for around 70% of crashes where vehicle occupants were seriously injured, drivers had generally followed the road rules\*.

Even if everyone obeyed the road rules, New Zealand would still have more than 180 deaths on our roads each year.

We know from past experience that it's possible to drive death and injuries down significantly, but it doesn't happen on its own. A staggering 843 people died on New Zealand roads in 1973. Through a combination of rapid advances in vehicle safety technology, new legislation and targeted enforcement focusing on speed, drink-driving and safety belt wearing, better driver education and safer roads and roadsides, that figure was brought down to 253 in 2013 – a 70% reduction in the space of 40 years.

\* Mackie, H. W., P. Gulliver, R. A. Scott, L. Hirsch, S. Ameratunga and J. de Pont (2017). *Serious injury crashes: how do they differ from fatal crashes? What is the nature of injuries resulting from them?* Auckland. New Zealand: Mackie Research, The University of Auckland, and TERNZ prepared for the AA Research Council.



## Are flexible median barriers safe for motorcyclists?

If you ride a motorcycle, you're at a higher risk of being seriously injured or killed on our roads, as you're more vulnerable in a crash.

Many people who are injured or killed while riding a motorcycle, are struck by vehicles where the driver has lost control and, in some circumstances, crossed the centreline.

Roadside and flexible median barriers are highly effective in preventing deaths and injuries for all road users including motorcyclists. Studies show flexible median barriers can reduce the number of motorcyclists killed by up to 50%\*.

We're investing in improved roads and roadsides that are safer for motorcyclists. Motorcyclists are more likely to survive an impact with a flexible road safety barrier than an impact with trees, poles or oncoming vehicles, which the barrier will prevent them striking in a crash.

\* Carlsson (2009) *Evaluation of 2+1 roads with cable barriers: final report* VTI rapport 636A.

### Contact us

To provide feedback or ask questions about the project, please get in touch with us by emailing:

 [sh3.w2b@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:sh3.w2b@nzta.govt.nz)

For further information about the SH3 Whanganui to Bulls safety improvements project, including upcoming opportunities to discuss the safety improvements with members of the project team, you can sign up to email updates by visiting:

 [nzta.govt.nz/whanganui-to-bulls](https://nzta.govt.nz/whanganui-to-bulls)

