

5 Tīrau to Tārukenga

Engagement summary



The Waikato region has some of the busiest rural highways in the country and traffic volumes on Waikato highways continue to grow. Disturbingly, more than 20% of New Zealand's annual road deaths and serious injuries occur in the Waikato region.

Project overview

State Highway 5 (SH5) between Tīrau and Tārukenga is an important route for locals and tourists, and heavy commercial and agricultural vehicles travelling in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty. This stretch of road has high traffic volumes on a road with a speed limit of 100km/h with no separation between opposing vehicles. It can be made safer with proven interventions that save lives, such as median and roadside barriers and roundabouts at key intersections.

Waka Kotahi is developing the detailed design for safety improvements for the 2.5km section between Whites Road and Harwoods Road. The current proposal is to build roundabouts at the SH5 intersections with both Harwoods Road and Whites Road, installing flexible median safety barriers and widening the road shoulders where necessary to accommodate the barriers and give space for people to pull over in an emergency.

The proposed improvements will complement work already completed between Tārukenga and Ngongotahā on SH5 and work underway at several locations along SH1 between Cambridge and Taupō.



Purpose of engagement

To help us finalise our designs and fully understand the issues, we've engaged with local residents, iwi, council, police, emergency services, bus operators and other road users to understand how the road is used by people who travel on it frequently, and their views on the proposed safety improvements.

What we did

- Hui with mana whenua.
- Met with residents of Waimakariri Road, adjacent landowners on SH5, council, police and emergency services.
- Had discussions with the three bus companies with regular school routes between Harwoods and Whites Roads to understand their operational requirements.
- Held public drop-in sessions in Tirau on Wednesday 6 September and Saturday 9 September to discuss the safety improvements proposed on SH1 between Piarere and Tirau, and those on SH5 from Tirau to Tārukenga. The drop-in sessions were advertised in the local paper, on social media and letters were sent to residents in the vicinity of the project area.

What we heard

There was a good level of support for the safety improvements in general. Many people, including Waimakariri Road residents and Ruapeka marae whanau, reported they felt unsafe turning in and out of their road/marae. Many also expressed concern at the speeds people were travelling at in this area.

Mana whenua

We engaged with Raukawa and the local marae at Ruapeka and have been in contact with Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Tura Ngāti Te Ngākau Hapū Trust and Tāpapa marae whānau. Safety improvements were well supported, and in addition:

- Mana whenua would like to see speeds lowered through the Tūkorehe (Fitzgerald Glade) Scenic Reserve and outside marae.
- Many felt unsafe turning right out of marae grounds, and would like to see access being made safer.
- Many would welcome more bilingual signage in the area.



What we heard (continued)



Waimakariri Road residents

We heard that they:

- want to see safer entry into Waimakariri Road
- were concerned at the high speed of traffic on SH5
- wanted to make it safer for children getting on and off school buses
- had experienced many near misses at the intersection of their road and SH5
- were concerned road safety barriers could potentially disrupt farming and logging operations.



NZ Police

The police supported the proposed safety improvements and the iwi request to have speed reduced outside the Ruapeka marae. They also agreed that the safety improvements will make Waimakariri Road safer.

South Waikato District Council

Overall feedback was positive with support shown for the proposals and no specific issues identified.



Bus operators

Waimakariri Road is a common bus stop for all routes. Drivers either pull into Waimakariri Road or park near, across or opposite it on SH 5 depending on traffic conditions and bus size. The main issue is being able to safely pick up and drop off students in a constrained space. Traffic speed in the area was also noted as a concern. There was support overall for the proposed improvements as operators acknowledged that it would make the area safer.



Public drop-in sessions

- Nearly 50 people attended the public drop-in sessions held in Tirau in September. There was general support for the safety initiatives proposed on SH5.
- There was some concern expressed that extra time may be added if emergency services were required at an address with a flexible median barrier in front of the driveway.



Additional comments made about the improvements on SH5

- Concern about the danger for crews to replace side barriers when they were damaged.
- A stopping bay/rest area was suggested between Ngongotahā and Tirau.
- Names of areas along SH5 should have Māori names as this area has a strong Māori history.

Next steps

We're considering the feedback that we've received and will be using this to finalise our design and then apply for funding. Conversations with interested parties will be ongoing as necessary.

Speed review

We have noted the concerns people have expressed about the speeds in this area.



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



nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh5-tirau-to-tarukenga-safety-improvements



waikato.projects@nzta.govt.nz