

OIA-15562 Request for customer correspondence - Remutaka Hill Safety - NZTA SAP CRMS

<b>8000160876, SH2, Remutaka Hill - Safety Concerns</b>
14.05.2024 10:43:02 out of scope
Do you wish to remain anonymous? No
First name section 9(2)
Last name section 9(2)(a)
Preferred method of contact
Email address section 9(2)(a)
Phone number section 9(2)(a)
What is your complaint about? State highways/roads
Tell us your concern
Dear Sir Madam.
I am a frequent user of the State Highway 2 Rumatuka Hill Road.
Recently several changes have been made on the Featherston side to add painted slow lanes.
I am not a traffic engineer but I have held a licence over 55 years, have driven all over the world, no accidents. I worked 40 years in engineering and research in the oil and gas industry. Hold post graduate Science degrees and years of HSE training including formal UK HSE certification.
The new markings recently added are dangerous and confusing. I have personally seen two near misses in the past month. In particular one painted strip on the Featherston side looks very similar to the offroad parking and stopping bays. In the dark it is very deceptive.
In my opinion these new slow lane changes are a serious mistake. They are dangerous and will cause more accidents.
What safety assessments were completed prior to these changes? Are the new layouts being monitored for near misses and accidents? What review processes are in place?
Looking forward to your response. I'm not trying to be difficult. I genuinely believe this road is now more dangerous and strongly recommend you have a hard look at what is now happening
Regards
section 9(2)(a)

<b>8000161668, SH 2 Remutaka Safety Improvements</b>
30.05.2024 17:15:28 out of scope
Full name: section 9(2)(a)
Email address: section 9(2)(a)
Phone number: section 9(2)(a)
State Highway number and location: SH2 Remutaka Hill Safety Improvements
Reference number (if you have one):
Tell us your question or feedback:

section 9(2)(a)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

29 May 2024

Project Manager – SH2 Remutaka Hill Safety Improvements

Waka Kotahi

Wellington

Dear Madam/Sir

Reference: SH2 Remutaka Hill Safety Improvements

I refer you to the Waka Kotahi 8 May 2024 project update available on the website related to the Remutaka Hill Safety improvements where it is quoted:

“Safety improvements also include the replacement of passing lanes with slow vehicle bays, and improved road signage and markings.

These new improvements will help make the Remutaka Hill safer for the people who use it.”

As a car driver who has travelled the Remutaka Hill road at least twice each week for the last 20 years, I am compelled to write regarding the latest hill safety improvements. Over the last few years the road has improved significantly (alignment, surface, barriers etc) which has allowed a stress-free trip between Wellington and the Wairarapa, and back.

However, the recent replacement of passing lanes with slow vehicle bays now makes me anxious and feeling physically unsafe in driving over the hill for the first time in those 20 years. The passing lanes (now gone) have generally worked in allowing good traffic movement via the ‘fast’ lane. Although the road is technically a 100kph road, this upper limit has never been appropriate and therefore does rely on all drivers being constantly aware of others, being courteous, indicating their intentions and driving to the conditions.

The new slow vehicle lanes are now shorter than the previous passing lanes but 90% of drivers still seem to consider this double lane zone as a passing lane situation by pulling over to the left and then in very short time trying to merge back into the single lane with similar speed vehicles legitimately and correctly travelling in the right-hand lane. My observation is that trucks and cars towing trailers or caravans using the slow vehicle lane are the only vehicles using the slow lane effectively, although some slow long vehicles do not use it at all because of the short left-hand lanes now provided.

Since the advent of the slow vehicle lanes my experience at every one of them (without exception) has been one of the following example scenarios:

- Drivers defaulting to the left lane do not slow down and literally force their way back into the right-hand (priority) lane of vehicles travelling at a similar speed, quite often with no indication, requiring evasive action or braking by following vehicles.
- While keeping legitimately to the right-hand lane through a slow vehicle lane zone when there is no traffic observed ahead of me, being suddenly “undertaken” on the left by a group of speeding motorbikes who have appeared out of nowhere and risk being in my blind spot.
- Being in the correct right-hand lane travelling at a safe speed more than appropriate to the conditions and having a driver immediately behind me using either flashing lights, horn or intimidating hand gestures implying he/she has the absolute right to travel at a speed more than anyone else, usually inappropriate or illegal, and that I should not be in what they still consider the passing lane.

All the above provide examples of the slow vehicle lanes, not improving safety but the exact opposite in significantly raising the risk of serious crashes through driver frustration, dangerous driving, lack of understanding of road rules, and so on. I am now expecting to witness such resulting carnage. The slow vehicle lanes are not working and pose serious risks to all. Contrary to reports that they were not now compliant, the passing lanes did work, and there was already too few on the hill road. Now there are none.

I note in a recent article in the Wairarapa Times Age that Waka Kotahi stated that these slow vehicle lanes are being constantly reviewed during the ongoing night work scheduled for the hill road. I have noticed that there has been some adjustment of the length of some slow vehicle lanes already by the painting out of the diagonal lines signalling the upcoming merging requirement. This provides additional risk as the painted-out lines look no different to the legitimate lines in dull or wet conditions.

I find this 'trial and error' approach to getting safety issues right as bordering on negligence when the public are the guinea pigs and taxpayers money is funding this 'experimenting'. I am not a traffic planner or roading designer, but I am a similar professional and if in my professional role took a similar attitude of experimenting with my client's money on their design solutions, would have been sacked, then sued.

I suggest that the slow vehicle lanes be either removed altogether, and perhaps become stopping zones to allow slow vehicles to get out of the general traffic flow and stop until all following traffic has passed. I believe that the topography constraints on the hill make this the only safe option.

Regards,

section 9(2)(a)

#### 8000161559, SH 2 - Remutaka Hill - Safety Concern

contact@noreply.nzta.govt.nz

To Complaints.Escalation@nzta.govt.nz

May 27, 2024 at 9:27 AM

Automatic Reply

Do you wish to remain anonymous? No

First name section 9(2)(a)

Last name section 9(2)(a)

Preferred method of contact

Email address section 9(2)(a)

Phone number

What is your complaint about? State highways/roads

Tell us your concern Remutaka Hill Safety Concern.

The new slow vehicles lanes are extremely, I travel from Wellington to Wairarapa daily. This morning I have again witnessed vehicles crossing the centre line due to the confusion from your scribbled whites comito an abrupt end. Also this morning on the last slow vehicle lane prior to a summit a line of traffic coming to a standstill on an upward incline. These lanes are without a doubt going to cause a major accident potentially death. Before these new lanes were put it the road was quite save I now endangered everytime I drive over it. Whoever made the decision regarding these new lanes quite obviously does not use the hill and there has not considered the dangers of these changes

**8000162123, SH2 Remutaka Hill - Road layout**

11.06.2024 14:10:32 out of scope

From: contact@noreply.nzta.govt.nz

Sent: Tuesday, June 11, 2024 11:54 AM

Subject: Website comment - complaint

Do you wish to remain anonymous? No

First name section 9(2)(a)

Last name section 9(2)

Preferred method of contact

Email address section 9(2)(a)

Phone number section 9(2)(a)

What is your complaint about? State highways/roads

Tell us your concern Remutaka Hill road slow vehicle bay not user friendly. Marking of the new bays assounds me, compared to how the previous layout worked. Previously all vehicles would go to the slow lane, and only pass if they chose to, now all vehicles go to the right lane, and slower vehicles must elect to pull to the left, next issue if you pull to the left, the slow lane ends abruptly with no merge back into the main traffic. As a slower moving vehicle it is difficult to merge into faster traffic especially uphill.

I would be inclined not to compromise my speed and momentum by pulling left, if there was a chance I would get stuck at the slow bay lane.

Not witnessed, but the opportunity for under passing now exists when vehicles don't elect to pull to the left from the main traffic lane. This is a potential by-product of this poor road engineering.

I don't believe this is creating safer roads.

**8000159147, SH 2 - Remutaka Hill**

04.04.2024 11:47:45 out of scope

Regarding, the recent changes from the Remutaka Hill passing lanes to passing bays.

I have been doing the return commute over the hill for 7.5 years, around 5 days per week. In the past fortnight I have seen more near misses than I have in the past 7 years.

The slow bays are much shorter than the passing lanes were. The length matters when the road is used by lots of big trucks, caravans etc and just a lot of slow traffic. Because it's on an uphill, it takes a little time to get past slow moving traffic.

People don't know how to use slow bays, pulling out into traffic at the end causing cars in the regular lane to slam on brakes. This nearly caused a 4 car pile up this week - luckily two cars managed to swerve into the slow bay. It also seems like a lot of big trucks are having to come to a complete halt on an uphill rather than being able to merge like a zip back in.

There also is not great signage about where a passing bay ends and given they have been shortened this is catching many people by surprise.

I am genuinely scared about what will happen if any of the near misses I had seen occurred on a day when the road is slippery - wet or icy. I fear there will be a bad collision before long.

Please consider having your staff that created the changes do the drive at different times themselves or talk to some regular drivers. A camera set up on these slow bays may show what we are experiencing in the road. There's been a lot of chat about it locally.

**8000159921, sh2, Roadworks complaints, Remutaka Hill**

21.04.2024 13:01:24 out of scope

Full name: section 9(2)(a)

Email address: section 9(2)(a)

Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

State Highway number and location: SH2 Rimutaka

Reference number (if you have one):

Tell us your question or feedback:

Hi. I want to complain about the recent changes to passing lanes on the Rimutakas.

Now that the default lane is the right one, traffic no longer can pass slower traffic who don't now move to the left automatically. Therefore traffic becomes much more backed up, leading to frustration and more cars in closer proximity to each other.

It also has prompted dangerous manouvers by people passing on the left, including trucks with trailers and motorcycles passing cars on the left side, which i have seen.

These changes were very poorly thought out, and have resulted in one of NZ's most safe complex roads, becoming what feels like unsafe bottleneck now.

I wish roads were designed to take into account the odd nut case which the rimutakas certainly has. The changes make their responses to the lack of passing places dangerous. Modeling based on how people SHOULD behave is useless when predicting how P'd up people will behave. They are on our roads so you should plan for them and aim to reduce frustration levels, by not allowing tarffic to bunch up.

It seems to me you have messed with a well functioning road for no good reason, when there are plenty of other bad spots that deserve attention.

Cheers

**8000160286, SH2 Remutaka Hill - design dangerous**

30.04.2024 16:22:58 out of scope

From: contact@noreply.nzta.govt.nz

Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2024 3:45 PM

Subject: Website comment - complaint

Do you wish to remain anonymous? No

First name section 9(2)(a)

Last name section 9(2)(a)

Preferred method of contact

Email address section 9(2)(a)

Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

What is your complaint about? State highways/roads

Tell us your concern The recent changes to the passing lanes on the Remutaka hill have made the road very dangerous. I have witnessed several near miss accidents because of the bad design of the changes.

**8000158821, SH2 Remutaka Hill safety concern**

27.03.2024 10:28:35 out of scope

email contact form rec 22/03:

Assignment: CS Emails

What is your question or feedback about?: General feedback

Full name: section 9(2)(a)

Email address: section 9(2)(a)

Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

Tell us your question or feedback: Hey there, hope all is well?

Just wondering, having driven SH2 over the Remutakas in the last two weeks have been confused by the new road layout, as have many other drivers who have posted in the local commuters Facebook group.

Would be grateful if you could explain the reasoning for the change from passing lanes to slow vehicle lanes, and also reducing the length.

It seems to be clogging up traffic more, and I've counted (in the eight times I've used it since the change) 12 near-accidents around merging and people absolutely racing to use the shortened lanes. Compared to the zero near or actual accidents in the previous six months (albeit only a regular commuter since October).

Genuinely baffled. Could I have some data please other than 'holding language' of "wanting to makes roads safe" etc... I get that part - I'm not stupid. But this doesn't make sense. Same as 80kph on wide and good straight SH2 roads in the valley, yet 100kph on narrower windy roads. Makes no sense. Surely should be other way around? I set my cruise control to 80kph and constantly have drivers up close behind, waiting to whiz by at first passing chance. I mean, it's bonkers.

So yeah, would appreciate some info as to why?

Thanks so much

section 9(2)(g)

**8000158742, SH2 Rimutaka Hill, passing lane**

26.03.2024 12:09:53 out of scope

Full name: section 9(2)(a)

Email address: section 9(2)(a)

Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

Tell us your question or feedback: You people clearly don't know much about safety.

You have changed the passing lanes on the rimutuka hill , making them shorter and putting up signs for slow vehicle passing bay.

But what you overlook is noone believes they are a slow vehicle , and stay in the outside lane.

Result is frustrated drivers are passing on the inside and pulling out in front.

This is a sure way to have an accident.

You people have made what was previously working ok into something that is now dangerous!!!

Attached as word doc

**From:** section 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Monday, May 20, 2024 2:38 PM  
**To:** Mark Owen <Mark.Owen@nzta.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Rimutaka road passing Bay increased dangers

You don't often get email from section 9(2)(a) . [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Mark, I understand you are the person who is monitoring the feedback on the recent changes to this stretch of road. I travel this road daily and can report that as a result of the changes to the passing bays, I am witnessing near misses on almost every trip. Regular travellers have taken to just ignoring the white hatched areas at the beginning and end of the passing bays. They really don't make any sense and I recommend you take the road, especially when it is busy. If you follow the new markings, which infrequent users tend to do, it forces cars out across the yellow lines and near misses as vehicles swerve or break to miss cars confused by the unnatural road markings. You only have to drive the hill to see how crazy the recent changes are, they do not follow the natural curves and road trajectory and it makes one wonder who on earth commissioned this piece of work. It could only be desktop theory that obviously doesn't work in reality. If these changes are not reversed quickly, I can only see one result which will be a fatality which I presume is the opposite to why they were instigated. NZTA does some good work but this one along with the 80 kph Featherston to Masterton fiasco need reversing as soon as possible.

I look forward to your reply and even better the rectification of this mistake.

Regards

section 9(2)(a)

Attached as 2024 04 10 section 9(2)(a) Query.pdf

8000158821, SH2 Remutaka Hill safety concern

27.03.2024 10:28:35 out of scope

email contact form rec 22/03:

Assignment: CS Emails

What is your question or feedback about?: General feedback

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Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

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Would be grateful if you could explain the reasoning for the change from passing lanes to slow vehicle lanes, and also reducing the length.

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Genuinely baffled. Could I have some data please other than 'holding language' of "wanting to makes roads safe" etc... I get that part - I'm not stupid. But this doesn't make sense. Same as 80kph on wide and good straight SH2 roads in the valley, yet 100kph on narrower windy roads. Makes no sense. Surely should be other way around? I set my cruise control to 80kph and constantly have drivers up close behind, waiting to whiz by at first passing chance. I mean, it's bonkers.

So yeah, would appreciate some info as to why?

Thanks so much

section 9(2)(b)

**8000158742, SH2 Rimutaka Hill, passing lane**

26.03.2024 12:09:53 out of scope

Full name: section 9(2)(a)

Email address: section 9(2)(a)

Phone number: section 9(2)(a)

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