

22 May 2024

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REF: OIA-15213

Dear ██████████

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 23 April 2024 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I will respond to each part of your request in turn as follows:

Could I please request a copy of the advice that NZTA received on changes to the passing lanes on the Remutaka Hill Road.

The following documents, part of the SH2 Remutaka Speed and Infrastructure Programme (SIP) Design report, fall within the scope of this part of your request and are enclosed. Attachment 2 outlines the design process for the courtesy bays:

- Attachment 1 – SH2 Remutaka Hills Courtesy Bay Assessment Memo FINAL
- Attachment 2 – SH2 Remutaka SIP Design including Courtesy Bays.

Certain information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

With respect to the information that has been withheld, I do not consider there are any other factors which would render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

Following feedback from the public on these Slow Vehicle Bays and our own safety review, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) is now considering whether further changes are needed.

NZTA based our decision to change the passing lanes to slow vehicle bays on the need to encourage people to drive safely and courteously when travelling over State Highway 2 (SH2) Remutaka Hill. Courtesy Bay signs became signed as Slow Vehicle Bays as, while the project's intent was to install the former, advice from our signage experts was that we should install the latter. This is because testing showed that Slow Vehicle Bays signage was more easily understood by motorists and to provide consistency of signage.

Please note that "courtesy bays" was a name that we considered for the new road layout before we reverted to "slow vehicle bays".

A number of the passing lanes were also too short and had merges located on curves which can encourage merging at high speed and unsafe driving behaviour as drivers rush to complete an overtaking manoeuvre. For the 10-year period between 2014 and 2023, there have been 382 crashes on Remutaka Hill with 34 people losing their lives or sustaining serious injuries. Crashes on the hill have regularly resulted in SH2 being closed to traffic, which has caused significant disruption to road users. Slow vehicle bays not only enable slower vehicles to pull over and let others pass, but they are more appropriate for challenging road environments such as the Remutaka Hill.

The review and approval process for the slow vehicle bays project on the Remutaka Hill included a Project Manager as well as local and regional safety management governance. The designer for the project was Abley Consultants and, prior to installation the design went to our Wellington & Top of South Regional Leadership Team, which confirmed the changes.

Any change to the layout on a state highway involves multiple reviews and approval across the key stages of design, including the final design.

The slow vehicle bay work is still in progress and has not yet been fully completed. Most of the outstanding work, including any changes that may be required, will be considered and implemented during the next full maintenance closure of the Remutaka Hill, which is scheduled to occur in late May 2024.

I would also like to know how much this advice cost and from whom the advice was received.

The total cost, to 30 April 2024, for design services and the feasibility study for Courtesy Bays is \$52,000. This includes:

- the original design and assessments of courtesy bays and pull over areas
- advice on sightlines for courtesy bays and pull over areas
- design drawings for change of passing lanes to slow vehicle bays.

Abley Consultants provided design services and GHD provided the original feasibility study.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold part of this information. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact us by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Emma Speight

Director Regional Relationships, Lower North Island and Top of South