



# Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway Safety Improvements

Communications and Engagement summary report – November 2021

24 January 2022  
FINAL

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Published 24 January 2022

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## Executive summary

The communications and engagement report summarises the communications and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Detailed Business Case (DBC) for the SH1 Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway safety improvements project.

This report aligns with the 2021 Communications and Engagement Strategy which was developed using the principles and core values of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) as well as the requirements of the Land Transport Act 2003, Local Government Act 2002 and best practice under the Resource Management Act 1991.

The objective of communications and engagement to inform the DBC was to introduce the re-scoped safety improvements project to communities, stakeholders and road users as well as raise awareness of the project to interested parties who may be new to the area, and receive their feedback.

Public engagement commenced on Monday 8 November 2021 and the community was asked to share their local knowledge regarding safety concerns on SH1 between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway.

This feedback, alongside safety-related feedback received during consultation on the Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway four-laning project is being used to develop the project further.

## Introduction

### Engagement history

#### 2016 – 2018

Public engagement on the future of the SH1 Whangārei to Te Hana corridor commenced in 2016 where, through the development of the Auckland to Whangārei Programme Business Case, over 1000 submissions were received online.

Consultation on the Single Stage Business Case (SSBC) followed in mid-2017, where four short-listed route options were presented for the section of SH1 between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway (SH15). Feedback received at public open days, stakeholder workshops and via online forums and written submission identified high public support for upgrading the current highway to four lanes.

Residents in proximity to an expressway west of SH1 were strongly opposed to this option, evidenced through individual feedback and a petition signed by 425 people.

While communities potentially impacted (Otaika, Mangapai, Mata) preferred an online option, freight representatives and road user groups consulted in 2017 supported an offline option to reduce the traffic impacts on the region's economy during construction.

There was minimal public interest in the urban section of the corridor during 2017 engagement.

Engagement on the SSBC was placed on hold in late 2017 due to election period. The project then underwent an independent revaluation in 2018 to seek alignment with the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS2018). Holding messages, were in place throughout the re-evaluation process in 2018, with outcomes published in late-2018.

Many landowners west of SH1 remain concerned about blight on their properties as a result of publicly consulted short list options (options were not to scale and or showed identifiable locations) and continue to seek confirmation of the recommended option.

Further engagement with key stakeholders about the re-evaluation findings for a mainly online corridor direction took place in 2018/19.

#### 2020 – early-2021

In early 2020, the introduction of the New Zealand Upgrade programme, a \$6.8 billion investment to save lives, get our regions moving and boost productivity in key growth areas included the Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway project and set the expectations of cost (\$692 million), scope and timing (completion by 2028).

Due to the lack of public engagement since 2017 and the likelihood of new residents and stakeholders having an interest in the corridor, two refined shortlist options were consulted on with the public, key stakeholders, and Treaty Partners. The two options included upgrading the existing state highway to four-lanes and a 'hybrid' option which included upgrading the existing state highway to four-lanes with a section built offline to protect the marine environment at Oakleigh.

There was widespread support for upgrading the existing state highway to four-lanes, rather than any offline option and based on this feedback as well as funding constraints, the emerging preferred corridor was confirmed in November 2020.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, the team focused on delivering targeted engagement with potentially affected landowners within the emerging preferred corridor. Engagement with key stakeholders followed in early-2021, as well as community engagement at an 'Inform' level.

### **Mid-2021**

In June 2021, the Government announced changes to some projects within the New Zealand Upgrade Programme to meet climate change and housing objectives and manage debt responsibly following COVID-19. Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway was identified as one of these projects.

The Government instructed Waka Kotahi to implement a new option that focuses on safety improvements along the existing state highway, and the construction of a new rail line to Northport with an investment of around \$700million for both projects.

### **Communications and engagement approach**

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Despite having engaged with the public on this corridor in 2020 about four-laning, there were reputational and consenting risks involved in identifying and/or confirming a preferred option for safety improvements without first engaging with the public on the changed scope of the project.

While we do have safety-related feedback from engagement on the four-laning project (2020) and this is being considered, we needed to ensure those learnings were shared with the community and ensure anything else we may have missed during earlier consultation was captured. We also needed to give those new to the area or unfamiliar with the project an opportunity to share their feedback.

As well as introducing the re-scoped project and telling the integrated rail and road story, engagement was recommended prior to presenting to Ministers or identifying a preferred option to inform people of the project scope and to provide opportunities to input into project development/ design.

While many of our key stakeholders, landowners and communities have remained, clear separation needed to be made between the Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway Safety Improvements project and the Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway four-laning project.

### **Target audience**

The target audience for engagement in November 2021 included the following stakeholder groups:

- Residents who live alongside the corridor and within communities including, but not limited to, Raumanga, Otaika, Portland, Mangapai, Maungakarama, Oakleigh, Mata, Ruakaka.
- Northland community members who travel this section of SH1 regularly
- Key stakeholders – business, transport industry representatives, freight, regulatory authorities, Treaty partners, elected representatives.

## Consultation

### What we asked people

The purpose of this three-week long engagement period was a chance to introduce the re-scoped project, explain the safety improvements we're investigating, tell the holistic rail/road story and share what we already know about safety on this corridor based on previous feedback.

Based on crash statistics over the previous 10 years along the corridor as well as previous feedback, we shared some known safety concerns and asked the community to help us capture any further feedback we may have missed.

Some of these safety concerns included:

- Accessing the state highway from Raumanga Valley Road and Murdoch Crescent intersections
- Crossing the road to Otaika Shops
- Accessing the state highway from Southend Avenue and Tauraroa Street intersections
- Accessing the state highway from Mangapai Road intersection
- SH1 between Totara Road and Hewlett Road including poor visibility, passing lanes and state highway access in a high speed environment
- Unsafe overtaking and turning manoeuvres between Salmon Road and the SH1/SH15 intersection

Loop Road and Portland Road intersections were excluded from our consultation as they sit outside the scope of the project due to ongoing safety improvement work already in progress.

### Engagement activities

#### *Social media advertising*

A boosted Facebook post advertising the Social Pinpoint interactive digital map was posted at the beginning of the engagement period. It was targeted to Facebook users 18+ in the Northland region for two weeks.

Almost 30,000 people saw the post and it received almost 7000 engagements including over 1000 people clicking the link to visit the Social Pinpoint site directly as well as almost 500 comments. The post was also shared by Facebook users over 50 times.

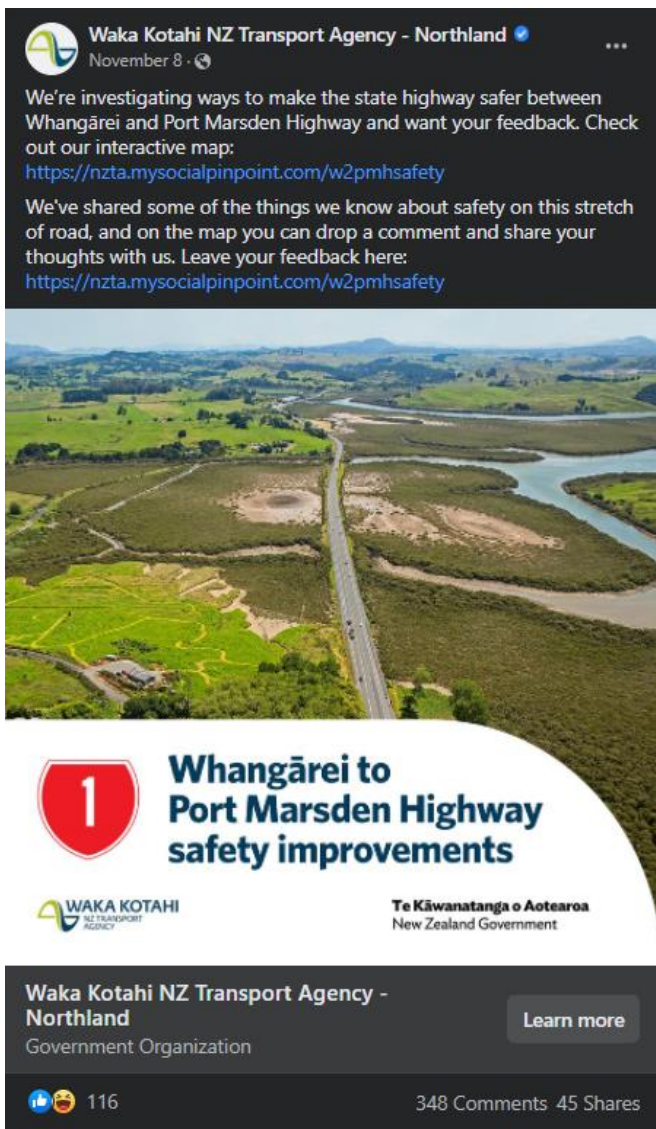


Figure 1: Copy of the social media post advertising consultation.

*E-news*

An [email](#) was issued on Monday 8 November to almost 600 people on our project email database, with a link to the project's webpages and Social Pinpoint site to find out more information and share feedback.

Of the 577 people who received the email, 81% opened and read it and nearly 40% clicked through to the project webpage to find out more information and share feedback.

A second [email](#) was sent reminding people to share their feedback on Wednesday 24 November. This was opened and read by 63% of those who received it and 14% clicked through to the project webpages.



*Click the image above to visit the Social Pinpoint site.*

## Find out more about the project and share your thoughts

**[Share your thoughts with us today.](#) Feedback will be open until Sunday 28 November 2021.**

State Highway 1 between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway is a critical route for Northland. Between 13,000 and 25,000 vehicles use the road each day.

The route has high traffic volumes and in places it's windy, steep and difficult to safely turn into driveways and local roads.

In the past 10 years, 22 people have lost their lives and 73 people have been seriously injured in crashes along this stretch of highway.

Most of the crashes have been caused either by head-on collisions or by people turning onto or off the highway. While people can make mistakes while driving, we believe no one should have to pay with their life.

The Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway Safety Improvements project aims to make the road safer and more forgiving of human error to help prevent further crashes or reduce the impact of crashes and ensure people get to their destination safely.

We've put together an interactive digital map that details some of the safety concerns along the highway based on crash statistics and community feedback.

Local knowledge provides us with valuable insights into high risk areas where non-reported crashes, including regular 'near-miss' events and other safety issues have occurred.

**[Visit the digital map and share your feedback.](#)**

*Figure 2: Copy of the newsletter sent to the project email database*

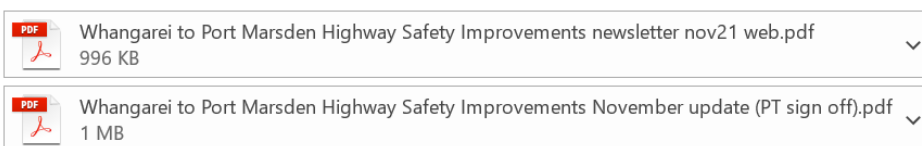
### **Key stakeholders**

An email was sent to the following stakeholders with details about how they could provide feedback, a project overview, which safety improvements were being investigated and an opportunity to set up virtual meetings to discuss in further detail if required:

- Northland Regional Council
- Whangārei District Council
- Kaipara District Council
- Far North District Council
- Northland Inc
- Kainga Ora
- DOC
- Northland Conservation Board
- Heritage NZ
- Forest and Bird
- AA
- Northland Chamber of Commerce
- Raumanga Community Roopu
- Federated Farmers
- Bike Northland
- Walking Access Northland
- Foodstuffs
- Ravensdown
- Golden Bay/ Portland Cement



- Mata Hall
- Northland Freight Group
- National Road Carriers
- Heavy Haulage New Zealand
- Ritchies Buses
- Ruakaka Residents and Ratepayers
- Northland DHB
- Northland Transport Alliance
- Northland Road Safety Trust
- ACC
- Police
- Northport



Kia ora korua,

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency will this week engage with the community on safety considerations for the SH1 Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway safety improvements project. Although the government has decided not to proceed with four-laning at this point, we are investigating safety upgrades to help everyone get where they're going safely.

The engagement period will run from Monday 8 November to Sunday 28 November and will be a chance to introduce the project to the community, share what we already know about safety on this corridor (based on previous feedback from 2020) and ensure any further feedback is captured that may have been missed during earlier rounds of consultation.

Please find attached a more detailed update about the projects we'll be engaging with the community on, as well as an information brochure for the SH1 Whangārei to Port Marsden Highway Safety Improvements project. You can also visit our interactive digital map [here](#).

Please get in touch if you have any queries.

*Figure 3: Copy of the email sent to key stakeholders*

Local businesses were also visited for one-on-one conversations and to share information factsheets for distribution in the community. The businesses visited included:

- Whangārei Library
- The Information Centre
- Otaika Post Shop
- Otaika Dairy
- Otaika Four Square
- Raumanga Medical Centre

For our Treaty Partners in Te Parawhau and Patuharakeke, ongoing consultation and engagement was carried out as part of regular hui with the project team.

#### *Project website*

The project webpages on the Waka Kotahi website attracted 148 page views over the engagement period, with the average visitor spending 2.26 minutes on the site.

The project webpages include

- The project landing page
- Project information

- A link to the online engagement platform Social Pinpoint

Web traffic peaked on Monday 8 November, which corresponds with all external communications including our e-newsletter, digital advertising, and the Facebook post. A summary of web traffic is provided in the following graphic:

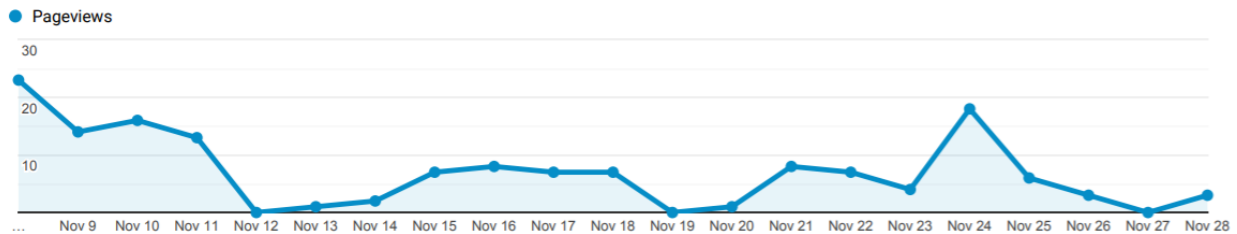


Figure 4: Copy of website statistics showing webpage visits over the feedback period

#### Online engagement platform

An interactive mapping tool, Social Pinpoint, was created for the project to form our key digital feedback platform. The site went live on Monday 8 November and closed on Sunday 28 November. People still had access to view the comments beyond the closing date.

Over the three-week engagement period, the information was accessed on the digital map 4116 times by 1630 unique users with the peak amount of traffic in the first three days (2585 visits). This peak aligned with the release of most communications' collateral.

In total, 177 pieces of feedback from 96 different stakeholders was received via this platform.

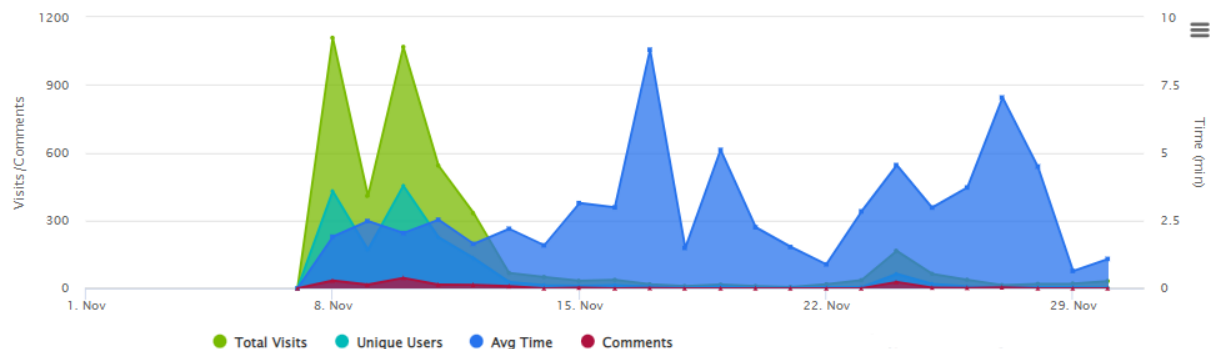


Figure 4: Copy of data showing visits to the interactive digital map

#### Project factsheet

A six-page project factsheet was uploaded to the website on Monday 8 November and 300 copies were delivered to local businesses, community hubs and stakeholders within the project area. Some of these venues included the Whangārei Library, Ruakaka Library, Whangārei District Council buildings and Otaika Shopping Centre.

The newsletter gave a project overview and context, the safety improvements being investigated, highlighted known safety concerns based on crash statistics and how to share feedback to help us make informed decisions.

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/sh1-whangarei-to-port-marsden-highway-safety-improvements/docs/sh1-w2pmh-safety-improvements-project-update-nov-2021.pdf>

Figure 5: Copy of the project factsheet uploaded to the website and distributed throughout the project area

## What we asked people

This three-week engagement period provided a chance to introduce the project, explain the safety improvements we're investigating, tell the rail/road story and share what we already know about safety on this corridor.

Specific safety concerns were highlighted based on previous feedback from consultation on the four-laning project in 2020 as well as utilising crash statistics over the past 10 years.

The community was asked to provide any further feedback to ensure we captured anything else we may have missed during earlier rounds of consultation. We also wanted to hear from those who may be new to the area or who are unfamiliar with the project.

Trust is low within this community, so we needed to manage expectations while we don't have a full understanding of what we're able to deliver.

## Summary of feedback received

192 unique stakeholders gave feedback both online, via the interactive digital mapping tool as well as via email.

### Overall sentiment

The overall sentiment during this consultation was mixed. Most people support the need to improve safety on this stretch of State Highway 1, however many believe the best way to do so would be by upgrading the highway to four lanes and improving key intersections.

The feedback highlighted frustration within the community about the pausing of the upgraded four-lane highway, as well as slow progress on the Loop Road project. It also highlighted some concerns regarding possible speed reductions as well as driver behaviour on this route.

192 individual pieces of feedback were received over the three-week consultation period, with 172 of those online via the interactive digital map and a further 20 via email.

### Key feedback themes and comments

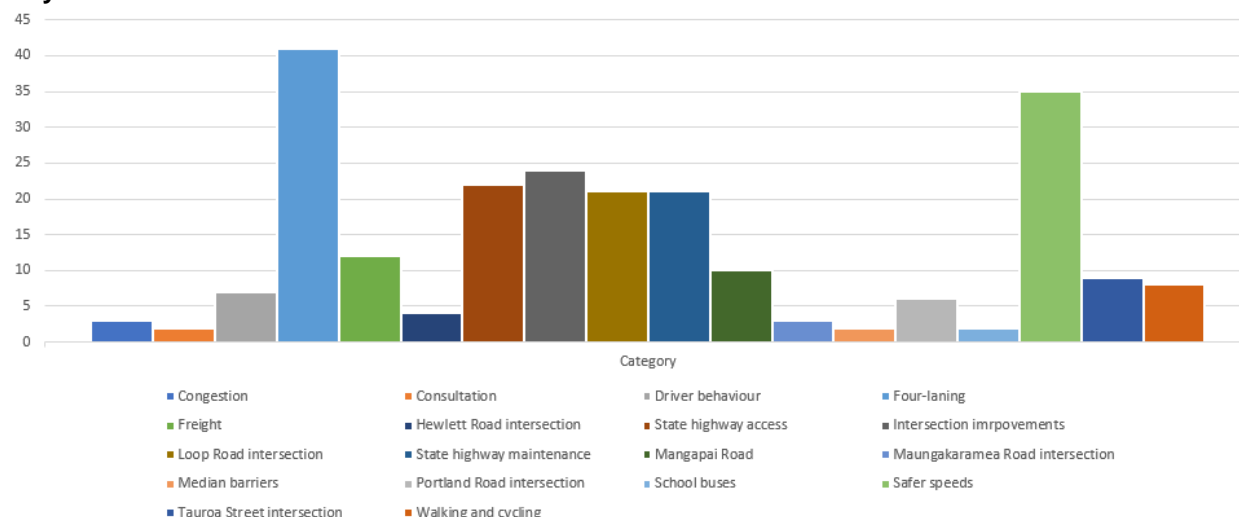


Figure 6: Graph showing the number of pieces of feedback related to key feedback themes

### Four-laning

It was evident through 42 pieces of online feedback received as well as 8 emails that the community is very keen to see the four-laning between Whangārei and Port Marsden Highway go ahead. Many comments highlighted that too many people are dying on this stretch of state highway and four-laning the corridor is the best way to improve safety. Other comments referred to the economic and capacity benefits

four-laning would provide for Northland and the improved journey experience and travel times a four-lane highway would provide.

- *"Bring back the purposed four lane highway from Whangarei to Port Marsden! It's well overdue and worth the investment to save lives and upgrade the roading for future development of Northland."*
- *"The decision to stop the four-lane highway from Whangarei to Marsden Point is utterly ridiculous. How many lives are we going to have to lose before they wake up and see that there is a serious issue, and that issue being our roads? WE NEED THE FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY!"*
- *"The road itself is not dangerous, it's the volume of traffic on it that is the problem, meaning is not fit for purpose. Four lanes are needed ASAP."*
- *"Four Lanes is needed and needed now. Enough of this stop-go talkfest please get on with building four new lanes. Northland roading has been underinvested for decades the time has come to make good."*

### *Safer speeds*

Feedback on potential speed changes through the corridor was mixed in sentiment.

35 comments highlighted the need for more appropriate speeds for the environment in sections along the corridor. Feedback noted vehicles often travel too fast through the area, overtake other vehicles in dangerous places and make risky decisions that put themselves and others at risk.

- *"As much as I hate it, reducing the speed limit works extremely well. Just look at Dome Valley. Frankly it would not change journey time all that much. At least that would be a good stop gap until the motorway goes in."*
- *"For the whole length of SH1 between Whangarei and Port Marsden Highway I support a median barrier (as proposed for stage 2 between Ruakaka and Brynderwyn) and a permanent speed limit reduction to 90km/h, like the "Safer Speed" section of SH2 between Auckland and Coromandel."*

On the contrary, some feedback noted that while safety is an issue, reducing speed is not the right answer and infrastructure improvements are required not only for safety, but from an economic and user journey perspective. Some respondents also questioned the authenticity of the Safer Speeds consultation process throughout Northland, including this corridor.

- *"Please improve the road and don't just lower the speed limit to save money. The Northland economy needs good infrastructure to thrive and give our Children some options to stay here."*
- *"Reducing speed limits will reduce productivity this is the last thing northland needs as its economy is struggling now."*
- *"Accident occurrence should be a trade off with economics and environmental effects. Why consult if the speed limit is just going to be dropped to 80km. The speed review programme should have its name changed to the speed reduction programme."*

Some feedback referred to the variable speed limit at the Mangapai Road intersection and that compliance with the variable speed in this area is low.

- *"The 60km/hr speed sign is pointless. Half the time no one listens to it or slows way too late etc. it's more dangerous as it is than if it was left at 100km/hr."*
- *"The variable speed signage is not effective and does not support a permanent behavioural change. The approach to this area is too short to permit easy deceleration without braking, the 60kmh limit flashes without warning confusing drivers and is simply ignored by many. Suggest a permanent change to a 70km speed limit with longer approaches to the area."*

### State highway access

22 pieces of feedback referred to challenging access to the state highway from driveways alongside the corridor as well as local roads. Feedback noted Tauroa Street, Mangapai Road, Maungakarama Road and Hewlett Road as the most challenging local roads for turning movements onto and off the state highway.

Suggestions included traffic lights (at Tauroa Road intersection), slip lanes, better turning facilities or roundabouts to improve safety and access at these locations.

- *"All the side roads on this project need slip lanes that's left in/left out only with safe U-turn areas 1km down the road to allow traffic that wish to go the other way the option."*
- *"I live off Salmon Road, getting out onto the main hi-way can be a real problem at times especially on holidays or with the early morning traffic. The whole road from Ruakaka to Whangarei needs to be turned into a 4 lane hi-way so the outside lane can cater for slower traffic making it easier and safer to join the flow of traffic."*

### SH1 Loop Road Safety Improvements

Of the feedback received, 21 people shared their feedback regarding slow progress on the Loop Road intersection improvements project. The community is keen to see this project completed as soon as possible and noted congestion at peak traffic times, unstable road surface and the narrow bridge for freight over the Otaika Stream as the key issues.

- *"The current bridge is highly narrow for trucks and it's not smooth which causes us truck drivers to try our best to keep within our lane with other traffic right there, especially when two trucks are side-by-side on the bridge. Please hurry up and get the job done."*
- *"This whole road has never been finished. Money has been spent on landscaping but not the road. It's still a "temporary" 50km speed zone with cones and unfinished roading and doesn't do anything to help traffic. Traffic is seriously backed up along here most of the day."*
- *"Maybe finish what you have started at Loop road - that job has done nothing for Waka Kotahi's reputation in the North."*

### Driver Behaviour

Many pieces of feedback referred to driver behaviour as a key issue contributing to high crash statistics and near misses on this stretch of state highway. Some people noted driver fatigue as an issue, others mentioned reckless driving.

- *"A big safety issue on this road is driver behaviour - the standard runs from outstanding to appalling. Fixed video cameras with follow up might help improve driver behaviour. We have people veering all over the road, driving ridiculously slowly, driving ridiculously fast, as well as a near infinite range of vehicles."*
- *"Traffic over last 5 years has increased, and people are travelling north/south earlier. This may indicate living longer distances from work so maybe fatigue is creeping in. I became aware of more risk taking and near misses."*
- *"The section of SH1 by Hewlett road needs attention to improve sightlines for vehicles passing through this area, and more critically for people turning into and out of Hewlett road and the layby opposite. This layby is used as a school bus stop as well. Additionally, for reasons unknown it seems to attract stupid behaviour, I routinely see southbound drivers overtaking and other generally unsafe driving. A counter intuitive solution might be to use the layby to tighten the corner and reduce vehicle speeds!"*

### State Highway Maintenance

21 pieces of feedback related to the current condition of the state highway including road condition, and maintenance of Safe Hit Posts in the area.

- *Very uneven road repaired multiple times with no long-lasting affect. Throws vehicles off course. Prone to surface flooding also.*
- *Road from Oakleigh to Marsden turnoff is potholed an uneven and seems to get worse after each "repair". Some vehicles look to avoid them and will have one wheel in the shoulder or will stick in the passing lane which seem to be in better condition.*
- *Road is seriously uneven and makes towing a boat over risky*
- *This bridge area needs widening and smoothing out. The bridge joins are terrible and bumpy. The road is poor quality chip seal.*

#### Other

#### Freight and agriculture vehicles

Further feedback highlighted the need to think about the types of vehicles that use this corridor. Freight and agricultural vehicles such as tractors and horse floats as well as vehicles towing trailers and boats who use the route to travel to holiday destinations. As many of these vehicles travel at slower speeds, feedback highlighted driver frustration often lead to poor decision making and dangerous overtaking.

- *"I travel from Ruakaka to Whangārei quite frequently and the worst spots on the road are where the double lanes narrow up and cars are racing to overtake. I have been almost pushed off the road. Another thing is when there is a tractor or bike rider on the road the car behind it thinks it's their right to overtake the vehicle without checking oncoming traffic nearly causing a front on accident."*
- *"I live up Oaks Road. I regularly tow a horse float with 3 horses in the back. It is a nightmare to try to turn right out of our road to go north because now the traffic is travelling at 80km again at certain times of the day there is not enough of a gap in traffic both ways to slowly pull across. if I try to move quickly, I will injure the horses.*

*I was told in the past to drive to the Maungakaramea turn off and turn around in the metal layby area but that only works if it is empty. Today there was a large cattle truck and trailer unit in it so I couldn't fit. When I have a float on the back I can't just turn around in someone's driveway."*

#### Rail link to Marsden Point

Further feedback supported the need for the Marsden Point rail link to move freight off the road, increase state highway capacity and help traffic to flow more freely.

- *"Get the railway running to get some of the trucks off the road. The trucks travel too fast and to close behind trying to make car go faster than they are happy going therefore causing much stress and mistakes from drivers."*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, engagement with partners, stakeholders and the community has provided valuable feedback for the project. The project team has developed a better understanding of road user behaviour on this important route, what is important to residents, including where there are safety concerns and where investment in the corridor can meet the needs of our customers.

This feedback, along with safety-related feedback from previous consultation on this corridor will be used to develop the safety improvements project further.

## Next steps

The next steps for the project are to continue developing the design and the detailed business case for further consideration by ministers.

This will include identifying a technically preferred option for safety improvements, while ensuring this is scalable dependent on available funding.

Waka Kotahi is working closely with KiwiRail to confirm the scope, cost, and timings of our respective projects and plan to have more information to share by mid-2022.