



TARANAKI SPEED LIMIT REVIEW

Summary of community engagement

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is identifying roads where safer speed limits can make a big difference in saving lives, and where communities are calling for change.

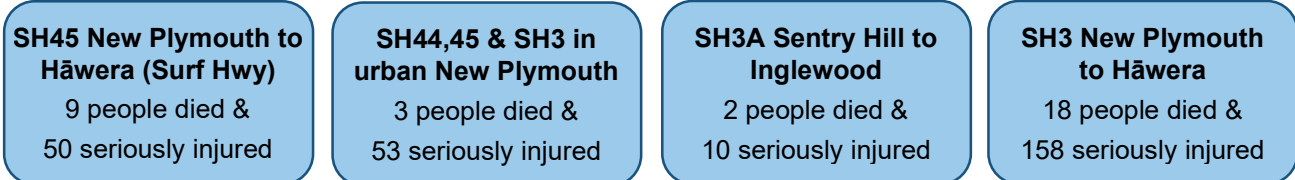
New Zealand's road safety strategy, Road to Zero, has a vision of an Aotearoa where no one is killed or seriously injured on our roads – Vision Zero.

One of the ways in which we support this strategy is by setting safe speed limits and improving road infrastructure to make our roads and transport network safer.

Between November and December 2021, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency engaged with the local community, mana whenua, key stakeholders, councils and road user industry groups about the current speed limits on the following highways:

- SH45 New Plymouth to Hāwera (Surf highway)
- SH44, SH45 and SH3 in urban New Plymouth
- SH3A Sentry Hill to Inglewood
- SH3 New Plymouth to Hāwera

These four highway sections will collectively be referred to as 'SH3-3A-44-45' within this report. There have been a high number of crashes on these roads, and something needs to be done to turn this around. Over a 10-year period from 2010 to 2019 the following CAS data¹ was recorded:



The Taranaki region is situated in the central North Island. It is somewhat isolated with State Highway 3 providing the key transport link for freight and tourism in and out of the region. SH45 provides access to the coast and accommodates more tourist-based trips.

With a current population of around 123,000, the region has a strong export-based economy and is rapidly growing. With that in mind, Waka Kotahi's primary focus for the region is on improving access, and on ensuring the region's highway network is resilient, safe and enables reliable journey times. Taranaki also has a long history of roading crashes, particularly on SH3 between Bell Block and Waitara, and on SH3 between New Plymouth and Hāwera and further south.

There are a number of projects underway in the region. The Awakino Gorge to Mt Messenger safety and resilience improvements project, the SH3 Waitara to Bell Block safety improvements project and the sealing of the Tangarakau Gorge.

¹ CAS data for 2010 – 2019 indicates: 32 fatalities and 271 serious injuries across these highways

Figure 1 is a map showing the existing speeds currently found along SH3-3A-44-45. Figure 2 is a map showing the existing speeds currently found along SH3-44-45 in urban New Plymouth. Through engagement we have identified spatial areas where community interest for safer speeds was particularly pronounced. These are defined in Table 1 Taranaki Speed Management Priority Areas below.

Table 1 Taranaki Speed Management Priority Areas

# Area	Identified section
0	SH3-3A-44-45 in general
1	SH45 New Plymouth to Hāwera (Surf highway)
2	SH44, SH45 and SH3 in urban New Plymouth
3	SH3 New Plymouth to Hāwera
4	SH3A Sentry Hill to Inglewood

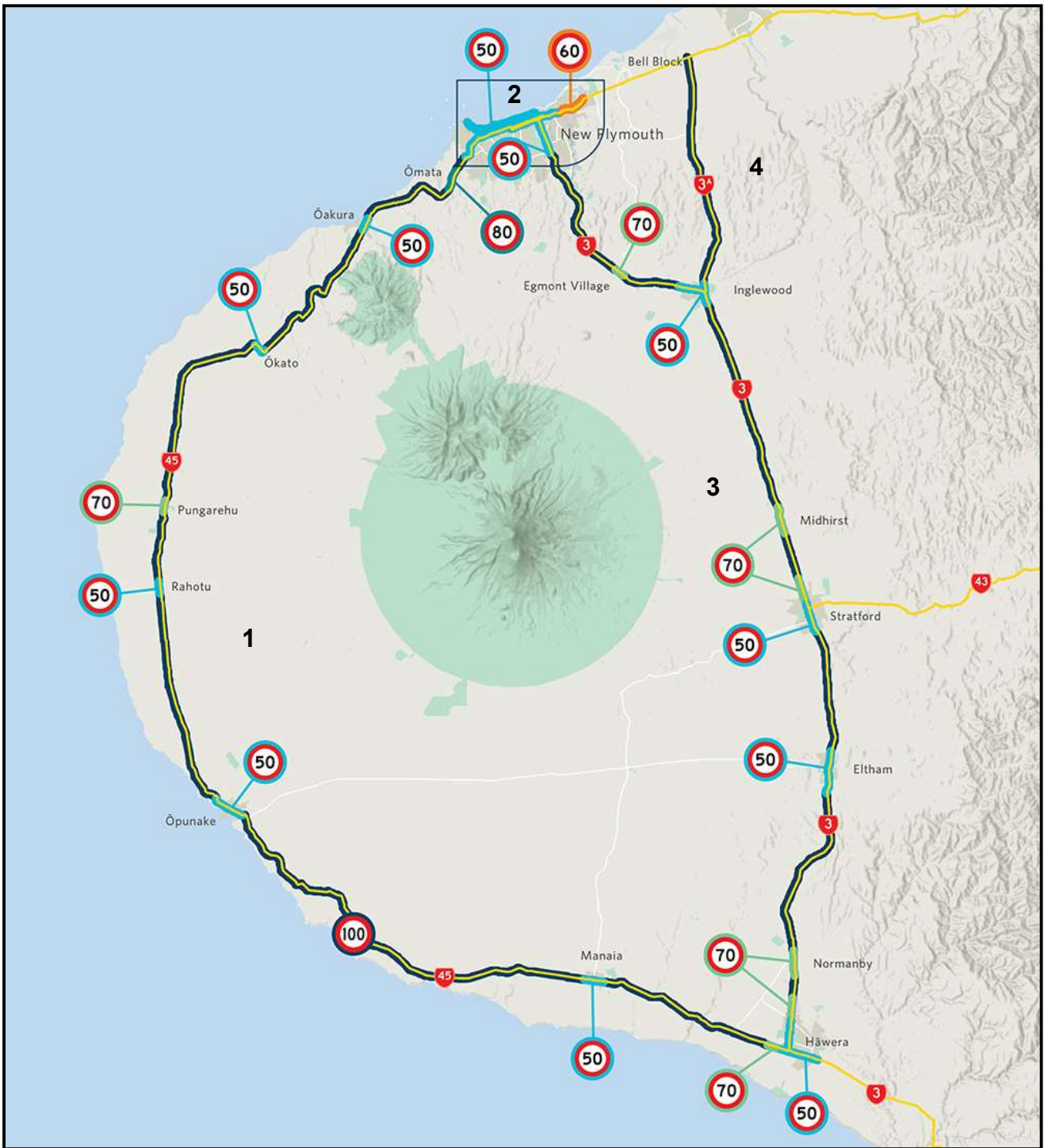


Figure 1 Project Map with existing speed limits

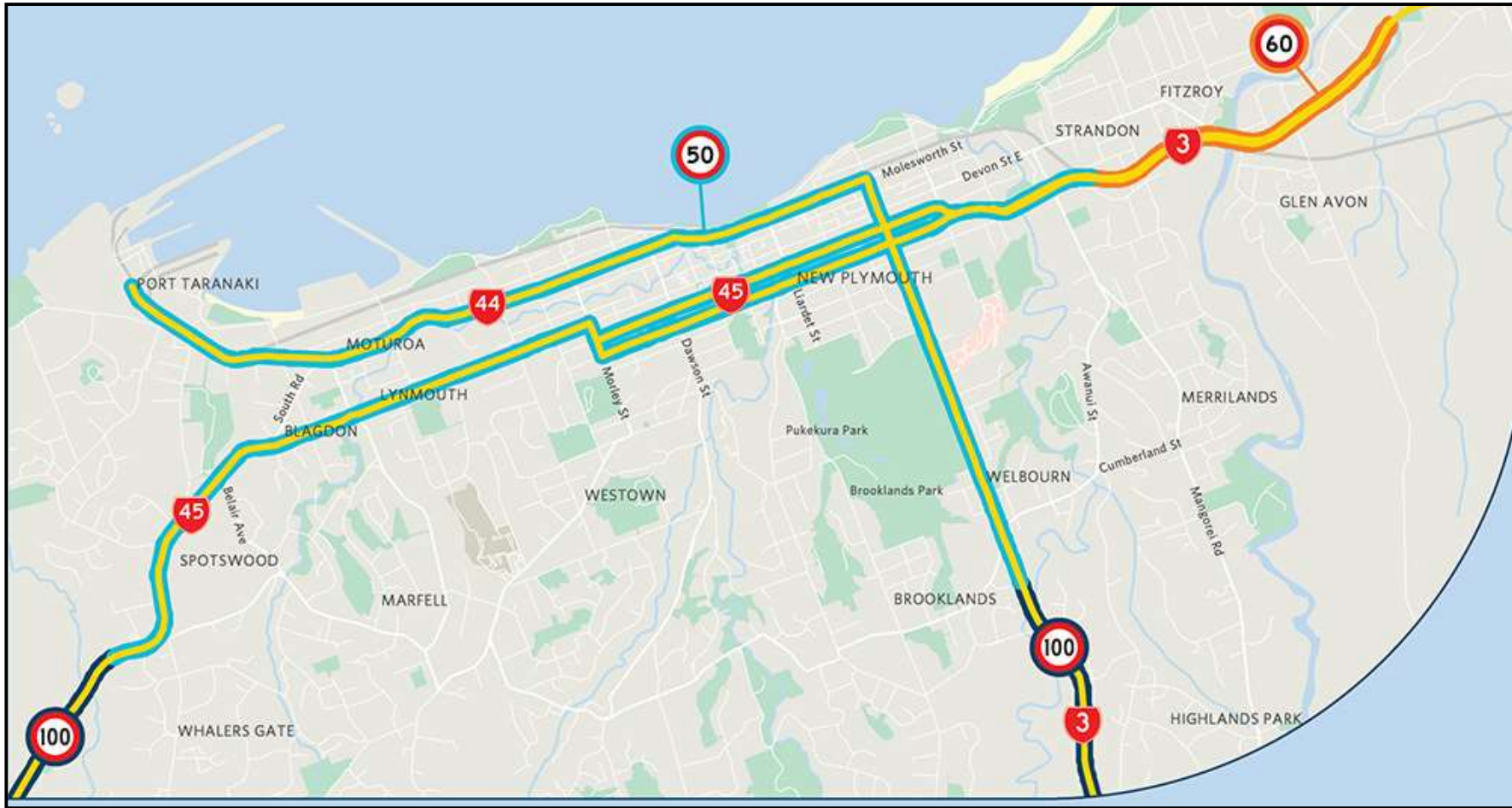


Figure 2 Project Map with existing speed limits - Section 2 Urban New Plymouth

1.2 SPEED LIMIT REVIEW TIMELINE

Prior to undertaking the engagement part of the speed limit review process, Waka Kotahi completed a speed management technical assessment for the sections of state highway. This identified various existing speed limits on the road that were found not to be safe and appropriate for the current road characteristics and roadside environments along SH3-3A-44-45.

The engagement process obtained over 770 pieces of feedback which contained valuable local knowledge on how people use these roads and their concerns. This will help determine if a speed limit change is the best approach to improve road safety; where new speed limits could begin or end; and if any other safety improvements might be required.

Below are the five stages of the speed review process. We are currently at stage 2: *Engagement*.

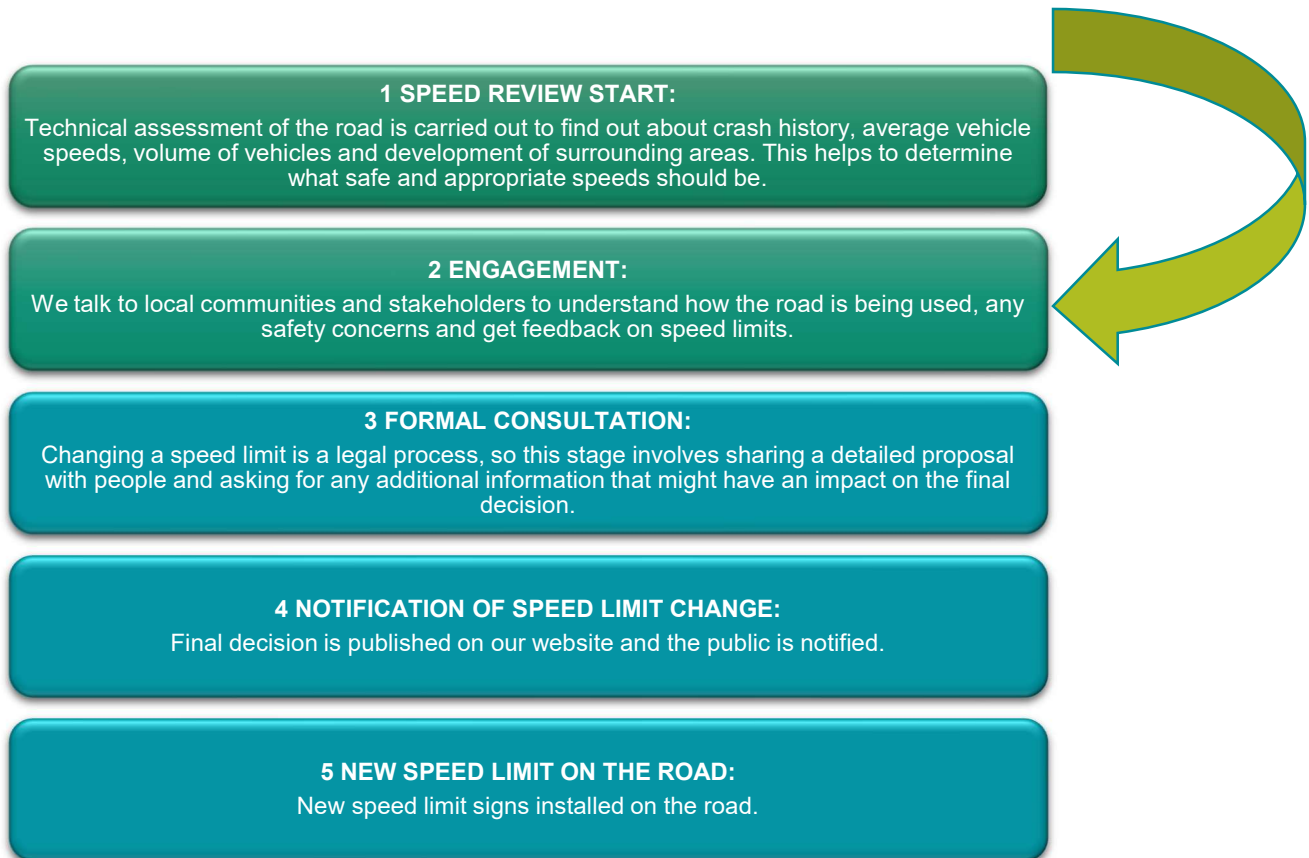


Figure 3 Speed review process

Community Engagement

On 15 November wider community engagement began for the Taranaki speed limit review project. This covered the following sections of state highway:

- SH3A Sentry Hill through to Inglewood
- SH3 New Plymouth to Hāwera
- SH44, 45 and 3 in Urban New Plymouth
- AH45 New Plymouth to Hāwera (Surf Highway)

A media release informing the community about the engagement phase was issued and resulted in online and print media coverage. Social Pinpoint was promoted as the primary channel for receiving feedback, as were a series of community events.

The engagement phase was open for four weeks (closing on 13 December) and was advertised:

- in local papers: Taranaki Daily News, South Taranaki Star, North Taranaki Midweek, Stratford Press and the Opunake & Coastal News
- on local radio stations
- on websites (Waka Kotahi and pop-up ads on well used sites in the Taranaki region)

Engagement materials provided background on the current road speed limits and guidance on what was sought from the community.

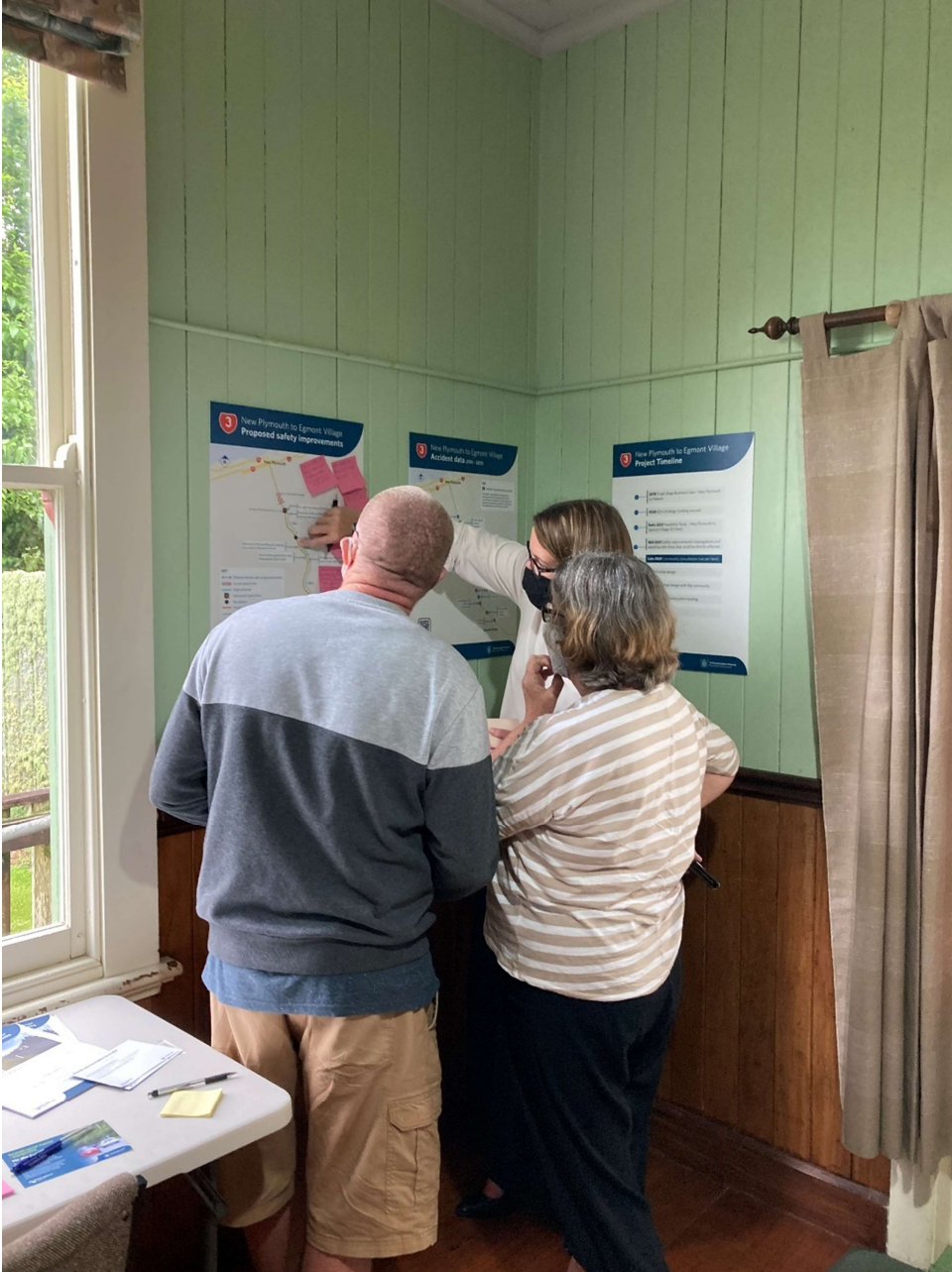


Figure 4 In-person drop-in sessions

Interested parties were invited to attend any or all of the five drop-in sessions (Stratford, Hāwera, Puke Ariki Library, Mangorei School, Egmont Village) and/or webinars (held on 29 November and 30 November 2021) to gain information about the project or to provide input into the process.



Figure 5 In-person drop-in sessions

People were also able to submit their views in writing via email or through the Social Pinpoint online mapping tool. Feedback drop boxes were situated at businesses, libraries etc. along the route.

2. HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY

We had many useful conversations and received more than 770 pieces of feedback with this speed review, including:

- 31 pieces of feedback from the drop in sessions
- 29 pieces of feedback via drop boxes situated at businesses, libraries, etc within the vicinity of the corridor
- 360 specific comments on Social Pinpoint with 337 follow up comments from 183 unique visitors
- 114 emails
- One phone call

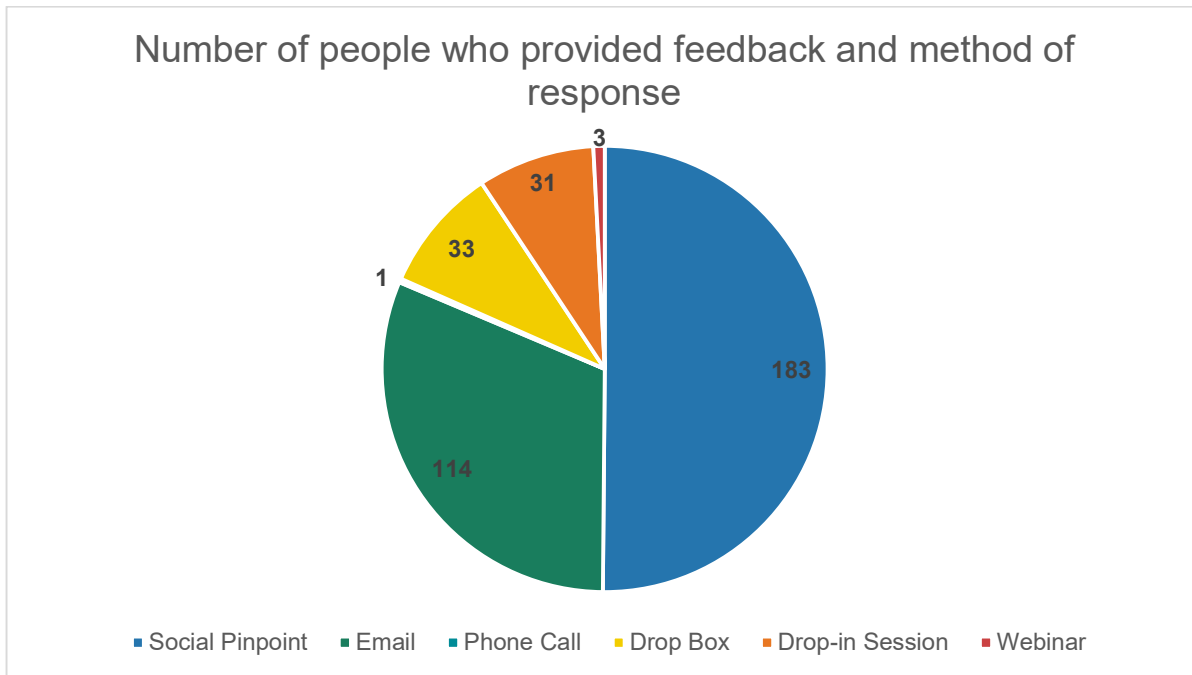


Figure 6 Method of responses received

As part of the engagement process specific areas along the project route were highlighted multiple times as being either unsafe because of speed or needing more attention in terms of better design, safety improvements or maintenance. Below are some responses received in regards to the project sections.

Section 0: SH3-3A-44-45 in general

"Too many Potholes, not enough passing lanes".

"Generally for all State Highways in Taranaki, leave the maximum speed limit at 100 km/r, with possible exception of some short 70km/hr buffer zones to slow traffic when transitioning to 50 km/hr in built up areas.

The speed limits are ok as they are set at present. It's all to do with the bloody idiots that don't drive to the conditions or speed of the road they drive on. The roads are fine, it's the driver holding the steering wheel is the problem. Simple as that.

Frankly I believe the current speed limits are safe. With 2 conditions.
1. When the roads are in good condition
2. When the people on the roads obey the rules.

Speed isn't the problem, stupid drivers are. As a truck driver myself and my colleagues see this all the time people passing in dangerous places too impatient to wait. Speed has nothing to do with it!! If you slow people down more then this problem will only be made worse.

I would NOT support a reduction in the speed limit as I travel extensively in the region and feel that 100kmph is appropriate on the major roads. A reduction would hugely impact my journey times.

Section 1: SH45 New Plymouth to Hāwera (Surf highway)

This bridge (SH45 at Kaupokonui) needs to be widened, it's dangerous when meeting large trucks/tankers and due to the slopes/gradient on either side and the visibility it can be difficult to slow down in time should a large vehicle be coming the other way.

I think the speed must remain as it is. I find most people cruise at about 80 to 90km/hr and lowering the limit will slow traffic even more to 60 to 70km/hr. This causes frustration and possibly more head on crashes. The slower average speed also increases the time cars spend on the road and therefore more chance of a crash. Most crashes are caused by inattention - using cell phones and not driving to the conditions. Poor road surface is a major factor also.

It's not the speed that needs fixing it's the road.

Living in this area (Omata) and coming out of the school road at school times is so dangerous with the corners. Cars do not stick to 80km/h. The 80km/h zone needs to be reduced to 50km/h due to the school. It is far too dangerous for our children.

The speed limit is far too fast through the whole Omata village. It's very dangerous. Needs to be lowered to 50km/hr (as cars will still travel 60 through this!). A footpath is needed for the kids to get safely to school. Maybe a shared bike/foot path.

The 100km sign just past Wairau Rd needs to be moved further south. The cars, trucks are doing more than 100ks. way before reaching this sign.

Section 2: SH44, SH45 and SH3 in urban New Plymouth

I would love to see the speed limit from Spotswood college to Spotswood primary slowed down to 40 or even 30.

This area (of Ōkato) is a popular walking area and needs to be 50km from the bridge through to the township. There needs to be a walkway over the bridge and a walking lane .round the inside of the corner to ensure safety of pedestrians.

Let's enforce the current limits to address the people that break the law before we start slowing down the law abiding citizens.

Should have a roundabout here due to the huge increase in traffic caused by Countdown (Spotswood) supermarket and traffic volume and speed from the south as well as schools in the area. It's virtually impossible to turn right out of here at busy times. During school hours.

80Kph sign (near Mangaone Stream) is used as a target, with drivers accelerating to 80Kph well in advance of this sign. Better policing and the use of speed cameras are warranted.

(Morley St and SH45) This should be a roundabout, not a stop junction. There is too much traffic turning right for this to remain as a stop junction.

Section 3: SH3 New Plymouth to Hāwera

Invest in the infrastructure and safety will follow.

"We need to reduce driver frustrations and congestion on the straights to improve flow and decrease lines of traffic in the towns".

Get rid of the passing lane heading up Burgess Hill. Make it 80 or 70km from the bottom of the hill up to the Mangorei Intersection. Install a round-about at the Mangorei Intersection and make it 70km all the way to the town edge.

50kmh (in Midhurst) is a good idea where there are pedestrians but through traffic needs an alternative route.

The current speed limit should remain the same. Invest in maintaining the road and educating drivers. Penalties could be stricter for those drivers blatantly not following the rules/limits as they are the ones causing majority of the problems.

Poor driving and dangerous junctions from side roads onto the 3 are the problem on this section from Waitara to bell block not speed. This is getting busier fast and therefore more frustrating and dangerous. Obvious and urgent need for roundabouts or lights at several junctions including on top of the flyover leading into bell block. At least one more route into here needs to be created as more development all the time including large retirement complex. Playing with speed limits will not help.

Section 4: SH3A Sentry Hill to Inglewood

Reinstate and improve turning lane (Richmond Road) so vehicles have time to slow down while not blocking visibility of cars needing to pull into traffic flow.

Leave speeds as they are. Bring the roads up to standard, that is why we pay our road taxes. Don't reduce the speed to compensate for poorly maintained roads. 100km is not an unreasonable speed to be travelling at in the cars we drive nowadays, and reducing it will result in people getting impatient and taking risks.

Driving South (on SH3) sometimes cars pull out into the middle of the road. There is no warning sign about this. I now know there is a lane there for them but people visiting the region for the first time don't know this. I pulled on the brakes the first time a car did it to me. So scary. Happens at several intersections on this stretch of road.

There is nothing wrong with the speed limit. Educate drivers better.

Widen the intersection and add in a turning bay when turning right into Manutahi Road (towards Bell Block). Definitely no need to reduce the speed limit for 3a but some passing lanes would be a plus!!

The speed limit needs to be lowered through this intersection (Manutahi Rd & SH3A). Max speed of 80km/h.

3. COMMENTS RECEIVED

3.1 SENTIMENT

Feedback was analysed from all the different sources received. Each piece of feedback was included in analysis. Some participants provided multiple pieces of feedback, across the different types, so the number feedback pieces does not equate to number of participants.

In general, there was support from some of the community for reducing speed limits on some sections of the SH3-3A-44-45. The key theme relating to speed reductions was to extend lower speed limits throughout school zones and townships.

People also thought speed limits needed to be reduced on narrow bridges and add or extend passing lanes through many sections of SH3 and SH3A, where speed creates safety risks.

Where there was opposition to reducing the speed limit, people felt changing the road layout at key high-risk intersections and upgrading road quality would be a better intervention to support behaviour changes and reduce harm than reducing the speed limits.

The following presents feedback received by key themes across all five key sections of SH3-3A-44-45 defined in Table 1 above.

- Speeding / too-high speed limits

Various concerns were expressed about the current speed limits at certain sections along SH3-3A-44-45. A number of locations were described as almost impossible to safely travel at the posted speed limit. This was based on the sentiment that drivers perceive a posted speed as a target rather than a limit; for example, when drivers see the 100km/h sign they increase their speed.

Some of the common themes about where and how speed needs to be reduced include:

- Schools - During school drop-off or pick-up times tamariki need safe connections, access or crossing points to get to school. School Variable Speed Zones were suggested. Especially at Egmont Village School, Ōmata School, and Highlands School so it is safer at school pick up and drop off times.
- Unsafe Intersections – Mangorei Rd/SH3 (Highlands Park), Egmont Rd/SH3 (New Plymouth) and intersection of SH3 and SH3A (Inglewood) are regarded as unsafe as speeds are too high
- Townships – current speed limits make it dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, especially in Ōmata and Ōkato and other townships outside of urban New Plymouth. Introducing a 70kmh zone ‘buffer’ before 50kmh townships was suggested.
- Bridges – Speeds need to be reduced on narrow bridges (specifically Stony River Bridge on SH45 and Rail Bridge north of Midhurst on SH3).
- Driver behaviour - People passing slower vehicles at the end of passing lanes (particularly in Ōmata) and over taking turning vehicles

- Speed limits fine as they are

Many people from the community (149 comments from 105 people) indicated that they did not want to see any speed limit changes on these roads and that they are highways for a reason. They’d rather see changes in road design and road maintenance than reducing speed limits. Here are some of the comments:

“(Coronation Ave and SH3) This should have a roundabout at it. It would slow traffic coming into town and prevent the current blockages at peak times. It is currently impossible to turn right at this junction during the day.”

“If the roads are well maintained and sign posted there should be no need to change speed limit as is. Have clear right turning lanes.”

“Having stationary traffic over the brow of the hill (near Leith Rd and SH45) in the right-hand lane of a passing lane is very dangerous. Adjustments to the road lay out is required and increased signage warning to the right turn traffic at the end of the passing lane”

“The whole of SH45 should be widened and resealed. This is a SH not some back-country road. It sees a lot of heavy traffic.”

- Driver Behaviour

84 Comments mentioned that they thought a big safety issue on SH3-3A-44-45 is dangerous drivers. Behaviour that people are concerned about include:

- dangerous overtaking
- not observing/respecting the current speed limits (especially with speed changes through townships)
- not driving to the conditions
- slow drivers / trucks causing others to become frustrated and more likely to take risks to overtake
- the need for better policing (cameras) where people disregard road signs (introducing speed cameras were proposed)

- Non-speed-limit approaches / better design required

554 comments from 232 people told us that other methods should be implemented to make the roads safer (i.e., not just reducing the speed limit). Suggested methods include:

- Putting in bypasses for heavy vehicles and through traffic, especially in Hāwera, Inglewood and Stratford.
- Adding more lanes, slow vehicle bays, including turning bays, with many people suggesting SH3 and SH3A should be dual carriageway for most if not all of its length.
- Current speed signs located near schools to be moved further out to allow a reduced speed over a longer distance, and more time to slow down before reaching the school
- Proper signage measures are paramount for people to adhere to speed limits and road directions
- Widening intersections so that there are slip lanes, or wider middle sections for people to pass by or wait to turn more safely.
- Add more safety measures for roadside users with proper constructed footpaths, cycleways or road barriers especially areas where young children are traveling to and from school.
- Installation of roundabouts to slow traffic in congested areas and to allow accessibility of difficult intersections.

- Road condition and maintenance

87 comments added here expressed safety concerns about the condition of the road, specifically general wear and tear such as potholes and large bumps, suggesting that resealing needs to be addressed on a more regular basis.

3.2 SUPPORT, MIXED, OPPOSED TO THE REVIEW

As discussed, from all the responses received there was support from some of the community to reduce speed limits across certain sections of SH3-3A-44-45.

Those who opposed speed reductions cited driver behaviour, poor road quality and road layout as the main cause of accidents, not speed.

Table 2 below shows the speed of responses either supporting a speed reduction at a particular section on SH3-3A-44-45, or proposing other non-speed review changes across the five sections.

Sec	Location	Support Speed reduction	Other than speed / design changes	Oppose speed reduction	Mixed / Other
0	SH3-3A-44-45 in general	14	16	49	3
1	SH45 New Plymouth to Hāwera (Surf highway)	57	54	35	6
2	SH44, SH45 and SH3 in urban New Plymouth	13	64	5	-
3	SH3 New Plymouth to Hāwera	66	248	47	7
4	SH3A Sentry Hill to Inglewood	2	39	14	-
	Totals	152	421	150	16

Table 2 Support, oppose, mixed, or other than speed changes proposed during the speed review

Below is a graphical representation of the above table indicating areas where the most concerns were raised during engagement.

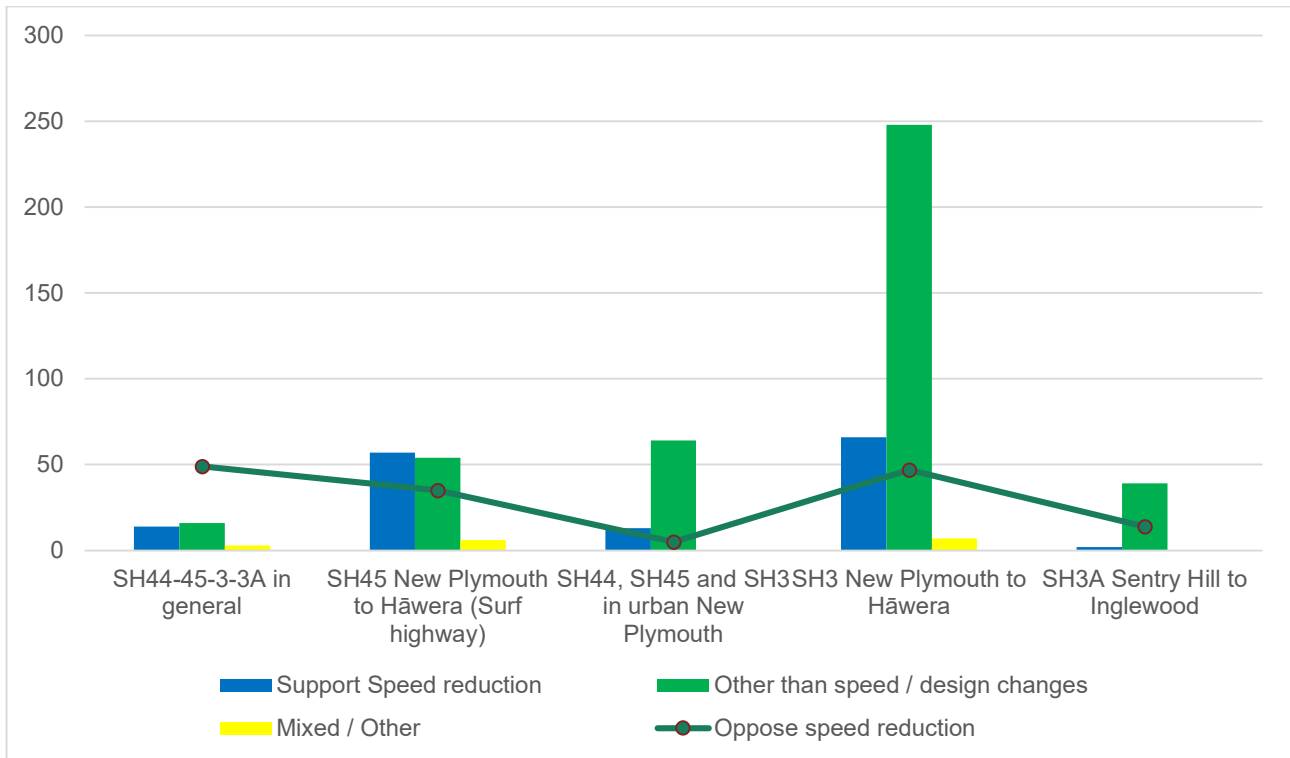


Figure 7 Support, oppose, mixed or other than speed changes proposed during the speed review in relation to the road sections

3.3 OTHER FACTORS PEOPLE WANTED TO BE CONSIDERED

The following other factors in Table 3 were mentioned during the feedback provided as other factors or considerations for Waka Kotahi:

Table 3 Other factors to considered

Relating Option	Other Comments
Section 0: SH3-3A-44-45 in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population increase – New residential subdivisions and industrial estates have increased traffic volumes and congestion areas (especially on SH3). It was suggested that this, along with future developments, need to be considered.
Section 2: Spotswood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High traffic volumes at Countdown causing right hand turn issues. Consider a roundabout.

3.4 REPONSES TO FEEDBACK

- **Highway infrastructure**

We know from other routes that infrastructure such as barriers, rumble strips and wide centrelines help to make the road safer and reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in crashes. Improved intersections with turning lanes and better warning signs are some of the solutions we use to make intersections safer. Signs and road markings warn people of risks further down the road like intersections, stop signs or tight corners.

We are currently designing infrastructure improvements for SH3 between New Plymouth and Egmont Village, including a roundabout at the intersection of Mangorei Road and SH3. We are also in the early stages of investigating infrastructure improvements between Egmont Village and Hawera.

You can find out more about these projects on our website www.nzta.govt.nz/np2h

Any changes to speed limits as a result of this speed review process will complement any future infrastructure changes, helping to make the road as safe as possible.

Feedback suggesting infrastructure changes have been passed onto the infrastructure project team.

- **Road condition and maintenance**

We have heard concerns about road maintenance, and we are committed to improving the condition of the Taranaki State Highway network. Waka Kotahi contractors have resealed 102 sites during the 2012/13 construction season, that's a total of 40.7km of state highway that's been resurfaced across Taranaki.

A significant maintenance programme is planned for next season.

- **Driver Behaviour**

Any proposal to reduce speed limits is being driven by one objective – reducing harm and saving lives. This isn't just about protecting drivers. The changes we are proposing are also about protecting passengers, the tamariki crossing the road, the residents waiting for a bus, the motorcyclists without the same protection as someone in a car, and the many people who walk, run, cycle or scoot on our roads and footpaths. The higher the speed, the less likely they are to survive a crash. This applies even if the driver isn't speeding.

On top of this, everyday pressures can influence how we drive. For example, running late for work, getting home, getting to an appointment or getting our kids to school on time. Even if we aren't bad drivers, everyone makes mistake. But these simple mistakes shouldn't cost lives. This is why we're working to improve every part of New Zealand's transport system. This means safe drivers, roads, vehicles and speeds. There isn't just one solution, we need to look at all of these areas.

- **Driver Education**

Encouraging people to make good choices is a key focus for Waka Kotahi under our Road to Zero road safety strategy.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency supports Roadsafes Taranaki to promote road safety to schools and the local community throughout the Taranaki region.

Together with NZ Police, ACC and the community, Waka Kotahi supports education and advertising campaigns targeting high risk groups as well as driver training. Our education programmes include DRIVE and BikeReady, and our motorcyclist safety campaign 'Respect every Ride'. Actions to improve people's skills and behaviour and to deter risk-taking behaviour - such as wearing seatbelts, not drinking and driving, and not being distracted while travelling at safe speeds - are critical to our success, but alone they will not fix the problem. Everyone has a role to play to keep ourselves and others safe.

You can learn more about our education initiatives here: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/what-waka-kotahi-is-doing/education-initiatives/>

4. NEXT STEPS

Changing speed limits is a legal process and there are steps to follow under the Speed Management Guide and the setting of Speed Limits Rule. You can learn more about the speed review process here: www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/driving-safely/speed/setting-safe-speed-limits/deciding-speed-limits

We are considering all the feedback we've received and reviewing our technical assessments. We will advise people of the next steps within the coming months.

You can find out more about this speed review at:

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/taranaki-speed-reviews-sh45-sh44-sh3-and-sh3a>