

Council Briefing Agenda

Date: Tuesday, 17 March, 2020

Time: 1:00 pm

Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

Elected Members: Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
(Chairperson)
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Vince Cocurullo
Cr Nicholas Connop
Cr Ken Couper
Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Jayne Golightly
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

For any queries regarding this meeting please contact
the Whangarei District Council on (09) 430-4200.

1. Apologies

2. Reports

2.1 Speed Limit Bylaw 2019 Briefing

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3. Closure of Meeting

2.1 Speed Limits Bylaw 2019 Briefing

Meeting: Council Briefing
Date of meeting: 17 March 2020
Reporting officer: Shawn Baker (NTA Contractor)

1 Purpose

To brief Council on key matters relating to the review of the speed limits in the Waipu, Marsden Point and Vinegar Hill Road areas prior to receiving and listening to submissions.

2 Background

This briefing is intended to give an update on the programme and provide some additional background information that may be useful to Councillors when listening to submitters. This briefing does not seek to preview submissions or address specific issues raised by submitters.

3 Discussion

3.1 National Road Safety Strategy

The national “Safer Journey’s Strategy 2010-2020’ provided direction for Road Controlling Authorities (ie. Council) to review speed limits across the road network that they are responsible for. The Strategy set out a safe system approach to road safety with the principle objective of reducing serious harm and fatal crashes on our roads. Our current speed review processes and priorities are based on this Strategy.

In December 2019, the Government released an updated Road Safety Strategy for 2020-2030. This Strategy is called ‘Road to Zero: NZ Road Safety Strategy 2020-2030’. The new Strategy is similar in focus to its predecessor, but there are some differences. The new Strategy still focusses on reviewing speed limits with minor shifts in priorities. The new Strategy will over time, change the legal instruments (currently a Bylaw) that set speed limits. The overall processes are expected to remain the same, and there is no immediate impact on Council’s speed review processes and priorities.

3.2 Why review speed limits in Waipu, Marsden Point and Vinegar Hill first?

The Waipu - Marsden Point – Vinegar Hill Speed Limit Review Area was included in the first tranche of the review process because there are five roads within the catchment area that have been identified in the top 10% risk roads in Northland for speed related crashes.

The review area provided a series of smaller closed catchment areas where there was strong community support for slower speed limits. This, along with the high benefit roads provided an ideal and manageable first review area where Council processes and community response could be tested before moving onto larger more complex catchment areas.

3.3 Forward Programme

The Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) has a draft programme of reviews over the next 12 to 18 months. This programme is based on risk, and the requirement that speed limits in the top 10% risk roads are reviewed first. The draft programme has been published on Council's website in map format, and will continue to be updated as dated as confirmed, and further catchments added.

It should be noted that the published programme focusses on the highest priority areas and does not yet cover the entire district.

Current Progress

In 2019 Council made changes to the Speed Limits Bylaw to update it to reflect new legislation and to ensure consistency across Northland.

In July 2019, a review of speed limits of the Waipu-Marsden Point-Vinegar Hill area commenced (refer 3.2 above for why this area was reviewed first). The review included the mapping of roads in the review area, and the collection and analysis of data for each road. The public consultation phase was originally planned for August-September. However, due to the proximity of local body elections and the uncertain community response, Council decided to delay consultation until October 2019.

The review process is now reached the Hearings Stage.

Next reviews

The next major tranche of speed reviews will cover the Whangarei Heads Road and surrounding catchment. Initial consultation activities are scheduled to commence in mid-2020. This area has been selected because Whangarei Heads Road and parts of Parua Bay are identified as high-risk and a review will have a significant impact on lowering severe injury and fatal crashes.

The background work has started on this review area, including initial mapping and data collection. Given the size and complexity of the catchment it is expected that some community engagement will be undertaken prior to formally notifying proposed speed limit changes. The review of the Whangarei Heads catchment will be prioritised once the current review of Waipu, Marsden Point and Vinegar Hill has progressed sufficiently.

Cove Road from Waipu to Langs Beach, including beach areas will be reviewed at the same time as the Whangarei Heads. The notification of proposed changes to this area will be undertaken in co-ordination with the review of the Mangawhai – Kaiwaka West area in Kaipara District (which includes the Kaipara end of Cove Road).

It is planned that the Tutukaka Coast area, including Ngunguru Road north will follow the Whangarei Heads review.

3.4 Bylaw is made under the Land Transport Act 1998

The Speed Limits Bylaw 2019 is made under Section 22AB(1)(d) of the Land Transport Act 1998. This differs from most of Council's Bylaws which are made under the Local Government Act 2002.

Council, as the Road Controlling Authority must set speed limits in accordance with the Setting of Speed Limits Rule 2017, and in a manner that is consistent with the Speed Management Guidance 2016. This ensures that safe and appropriate speed limits are set; that are nationally consistent.

It is important to note that, when setting speed limits, Council will be acting as the Road Controlling Authority and must take an evidence-based approach to setting speed limits.

3.5 Community feedback only one aspect that needs to be considered

The Setting of Speed Limits Rule 2017 requires the Road Controlling Authority (ie. Council) to consult any local communities that the Road Controlling Authority considers to be affected by the proposed speed limit(s). This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the Special Consultative Procedures set out in the Local Government Act 2002.

The Setting of Speed Limits Rule sets out the evidence-based matters that must be considered when setting a speed limit. One aspect that must be considered is feedback from the local community (which is gained from submissions and the current hearings).

It should be noted that, even if there is a strong community desire for a particular speed limit; if that speed limit is significantly inconsistent with the evidence, standards and guidance for that road, then additional engineering work may be required to match the road to the new speed limit.

3.6 Engineering up or down

Section 4.4(2) of the Setting of Speed Limits Rule requires Council to aim to achieve a mean operating speed less than 10% above the speed limit. The operating speed is the speed at which 85% of vehicles travel at or slower, and 15% travel faster.

If a decision is made to set a speed limit significantly below that recommended for the road environment, Council would have to consider physical changes to the road environment to reduce the 85th percentile operating speed. This is known as '*Engineering Down*', or Urbanization.

If a decision is made to set a speed limit that is significantly higher than that recommended for the road environment, Council would have to consider physical changes to the road environment to support this higher speed in a safe and appropriate manner. This is known as '*Engineering Up*', or high-speed rural arterial.

There are significant cost implications to engineering up or down. Depending on the amount of engineering up or down required, this could be implemented by reprioritizing our Low-Cost Low-Risk (Minor Safety Improvement) programs. Reprioritizing would result in deferring other safety projects to fund this outcome, within existing budgets. Reviewing and updating speed limits was not anticipated when the current LTP was adopted.

For higher cost options, we will need to develop a business case for funding from Council and the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). Depending on the scale we may trigger Council's Significance and Engagement Policy. For these exceptional circumstances we would look at options of staging the transformational change to the speed limit and associated built environment, to enable time to complete the business case and funding applications.

3.7 Other matters to be considered

The Setting of Speed Limits Rule requires a range of evidence-based matters to be considered when setting a speed limit. The evidence-based matters are set out and assessed in the Technical Report for the Waipu-Marsden Point-Vinegar Hill Speed Limit Review areas. These Reports have been published on Council's website alongside the Statement of Proposal and other information relating to the review and will form part of the Recommendations Report that addresses submissions.

3.8 Out of Scope Submissions

There are a number of submissions that are out of the scope of the current review. Generally, these submissions fall into the following categories:

- Submissions on areas outside the review area – These submissions will be recorded and utilised, both in the prioritisation of the future speed review programme, as well as informing speed reviews when they are undertaken in that area.
- Submissions relating to State Highways – State Highways are managed by NZTA and are outside the jurisdiction of WDC. These submissions will be collated and forwarded to the NZTA Speed Review Team for further consideration.
- Submissions relating to other matters, or maintenance issues – These submissions will be collated and passed through to the appropriate staff member for further action if required.

3.9 Next Stage

Hearing submissions that are presented in person is part of the overall submissions process. No deliberations or decisions are expected as part of the Hearing process.

Once the Hearing has been completed, all submissions, including matters raised at the Hearing will be collated on a road by road basis. NTA road safety staff will identify roads, or sections of roads where the community has raised issues or identified additional information. These areas will be further assessed in relation to the information provided by submitters. Assessment will include a site visit and any additional evidence that may be available.

A detailed Recommendations Report will be produced. The Report will provide a summary of the information that Council, as a Road Controlling Authority are required to consider, including community feedback, options, cost estimates and a recommended implementation programme.

Staff seek direction as to whether Council wishes to workshop the recommendations before a formal deliberations / decisions meeting. A workshop will enable Council to understand the engineering implications of setting new speed limits.