

**PROJECT** TAKATIMU NORTH LINK STAGE 2 FAST TRACK  
**SUBJECT** WAIPAPA STREAM BRIDGE  
**TO** MARY HILL, PANEL CHAIR  
**FROM** PHIL HARRISON, TRANSPORT ADVISOR  
**DATE** 28 JANUARY 2026

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I have reviewed the NZTA response to the information request (RFI2) dated 16 January 2026 and the two accompanying attachments.

- i. The response states that the safety of SH2 north of the project had been considered at various stages of the project development, and that the SH2 Waihi to Ōmokoroa (W2Ō) Safety Improvements Project is addressing the safety issues on this section of SH2.
- ii. The response also states that a 2021 road safety audit identified concerns about the northern tie-in to SH2, which led to some design changes, including moving the 2-1 land narrowing of the northbound Takatimu Link about 1,000m southwards, further away from the Waipapa Stream Bridge.
- iii. The Safety Audit was particularly concerned about the Waipapa Stream Bridge, stating
  - i. *Irrespective of the existing or proposed treatment at this northern interface, there will be a significant change in the highway environment from a four-lane median divided highway to a two-lane undivided (physically) highway immediately south of the Waipapa River bridge. The SAT is concerned about the ability of a northbound driver to adjust their behaviour and understand the changed road environment in response to the reduced standard of highway and increased risk of both crashes and severity of crashes. The concern is exacerbated by a number of factors:*
    1. *Northbound drivers will have experienced many kilometres of high standard median divided road with grade separated interchanges and no side accesses from Tauranga to Omokoroa Road.*
    2. *The change in road standard and in particular the median barrier which terminates on the north side of a vertical curve, limiting the advance warning to a driver of the changing environment.*
    3. *The narrow bridge has concrete balustrades with w-section approach rails, but the concrete ends remain a hazard to vehicles if directly impacted.*
    4. *There are a number of property accesses and a narrow bridge immediately beyond the project end at the bottom of a steep grade. The steep gradient is currently*

*observed to encourage higher traffic speeds in the existing environment which is likely to be exacerbated by the four laning.*

5. *A northbound cyclist will enter the SH2 from the northbound on-ramp and forced to "claim the lane" on the bridge in the presence to the high-speed traffic with the multiple drivers demands as described above.*
- ii. *The SAT notes that several recommendations of the Concept Stage audit appear to have been adopted including the extension of the median barrier, to just south of the bridge (but not over the bridge) and the extension of the wide shoulder widths and barriers through the transition zone again as far as the bridge (at least appears about right at the scale of drawing provided).*
  - iii. *However, the SAT remains concerned that the northern end of the project features a narrow bridge with concrete barriers located about 250 m north of the end of the 2 lanes to 1 lane taper. It would be desirable to continue the four lanes further to the north to a location where a safe transition can be formed. In this respect it is noted that it is proposed to construct a roundabout at the intersection of SH2 and Pahoia Road / Esdaile Road to the north which would form a better location for signalling a change in environment providing a threshold to lower speeds.*
  - iv. *If the project is not extended as described above then, as a minimum, additional safety measures are recommended to provide a safe transition from the expressway to existing highway. Such measures could include but not limited to:*
    1. *The use of prominent and repeated signage will be necessary to warn drivers that the expressway standard of road is ending e.g., using gated signs including posted speed signs (the existing highway has a lower posted speed than the expressway – at least currently).*
    2. *A high standard of marking and delineation particularly of the first geometric elements following the project end.*
    3. *Widen the Waipapa Stream bridge to provide safe shoulders for both vehicles and pedestrians with appropriate barriers.*
    4. *Provide a good standard of lighting through all merge areas and the transition to existing road (see item of lighting).*
  - v. *Recommendation(s)*
    1. *Extend the project four-laning further to the north such as through to the proposed roundabout at the intersection of SH2 and Pahoia / Esdaile Roads.*
    2. *If the project is not extended to Pahoia Road then as a minimum, provide additional safety measures to provide a safe transition from expressway to existing SH2 including appropriate shoulder widths, safe roadside barriers, median barriers and*

*signs and markings to address the above described concerns over the first one to two kilometres of the existing road (including the bridge).*

- iv. The combination of the W2O and TNL2 projects, would be 2 sections of widened and barriered highway, with a short section of narrow highway without barriers or shoulders (on the bridge) in between.
- v. In my opinion a safe system solution would need to widen the bridge and its approaches to enable the provision of a median barrier, and safe shoulders suitable for walking and cycling with roadside barriers on each approach.
- vi. I conclude that the widening of the Waipapa Steam Bridge is required to ensure a Safe System Approach to the TNL2 project. This is reinforced by the 2021 Road Safety Audit, where the client response to the recommendation of the Audit (item 2.6) states that *“Most of the items are existing concerns regardless of new projects, however the expressway will exacerbate the issues. This has been an ongoing debate for several years. Bridges were specifically excluded from the W2O project in 2017 Board Decision, this has been re-pitched several times but declined, therefore the W2O widening work will terminate approx. 150m north of the bridge. This will be revisited once again during implementation of the W2O median barrier over the next 3yrs or as funding provisions become available. Extra road width and barriers will be included under the W2O project between the bridge and Pahoia/Esdaile. All other items to be included at Takitimu Detailed Design stage, including a request for scope extension to replace/widen the bridge.”*
- vii. The Waipapa Stream Bridge lies outside of the designation sought for TNL2, however the bridge sits within the existing State Highway designation D203 State Highway 2. The existing designation appears to be at least 30 m wide in the area of the Waipapa Stream, suggesting that there is sufficient width to enable the widening of the bridge within the existing designation.
- viii. The bridge is part of State Highway 2 and therefore ownership and responsibility for operating the bridge lies with the New Zealand Transport Agency on behalf of the Crown.
- ix. On this basis, I recommend that a condition be imposed so that the TNL2 project must include the widening of the Waipapa Stream Bridge and its approaches to provide sufficient width to enable the introduction of a median barrier and appropriate shoulder width suitable to accommodate walking and cycling with roadside barriers on each approach.

Reference: P:\epax\005 Takatimu Northern Link Stage 2\4.0 Reporting\TN1A260128 Takatimu North Link Stage 2 Safety s67 Request.docx - Phil Harrison