

Taking a fresh look at roads

REDUCING the number of people killed on Waikato roads each year, is the aim of a speed management project being carried out throughout the region.

Last year, 69 people died on the region's roads, with many more injured in crashes caused by a range of factors including alcohol, bad weather, diverse roads and driving at the wrong speed for the road conditions.

The Waikato Regional Transport Committee (RTC), established the Waikato Speed Management Project to look at better ways to manage speed on the region's roads, and is working with local councils to test new ways to achieve this at a handful of possible demonstration sites. (*Waitomo News*, November 3, 2015)

FRESH LOOK

Waikato Speed Management Project governance group chairman and former District Road Policing Manager Inspector Leo Tooman, who spent 48 years policing Waikato roads, says far too many people are being killed or seriously injured.

"Many of our Waikato roads are unforgiving and just leave no room for error. With our wide range of roads and speed settings, we need to take a fresh look at how speed is managed so people drive at the right speed for the road and conditions.

"Not all roads are seen as equal and regardless of what causes the crash, the speed determines the impact of the crash and the severity of the injury," he says.

"This project is to look at all roads in the region to identify what the needs are and what can be done to reduce the impact of accidents, whether it is by way of speed reduction, better signage, modifying roadside hazards or education.

"We are working closely with district councils, and us-

ing a guide, selecting roads which suggest safety could be improved for people by managing speed differently in those locations," says Mr Tooman.

WAITOMO ROADS

Taking into account a range of road types and their uses, the RTC is working closely with Waipa, Waikato and Matamata-Piako district councils, and has now confirmed six demonstration sites for the project.

Three sections of road in the Waitomo district, SH37 between the Hangatiki roundabout on SH3 and Waitomo Caves Village, along with two sections of SH3 between the Hangatiki roundabout and Te Kuiti, and the Awakino Gorge section, have been identified.

The Waitomo District Council has yet to receive a formal application from the RTC to consider the trial sites, but informal talks indicate the council will be requested to support any consequential speed adjustments.

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says the council is supportive of the speed management plan.

"I have queried the interest in SH3 Hangatiki to Te Kuiti and have been assured that it's not just about speed limits for this road – it's the whole approach about shoulders, line of sight and other issues like side roads."

Mr Hanna says he can see the benefits of speed management on the main roads, but for councils it does create an issue for some local roads as they may not be engineered for the same speeds as the main highway.

A major part of the project is getting the views of people who live and travel on the roads, to help each local authority decide whether to progress changes at locations through a speed bylaw.

The WDC last reviewed its speed bylaw in 2015.



REDUCTION NEEDED: Reducing the outcome of road crashes by managing the speed limit is the goal of a multi-level taskforce led by former District Road Policing Manager Inspector Leo Tooman. PHOTO SUPPLIED



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