



## **Submission on the speed reversals consultation – transitional changes in 2024-25**

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### **Introduction**

**Living Streets Aotearoa** is the New Zealand organisation for people on foot, promoting walking-friendly communities. We are a nationwide organisation with local branches and affiliates throughout New Zealand.

**We want more people walking** and enjoying public spaces be they young or old, fast or slow, whether walking, sitting, commuting, shopping, between appointments, or out on the streets for exercise, for leisure or for pleasure.

### **Living Streets Aotearoa supports the existing speed limit reductions, and opposes any raising of these speed limits**

Living Streets Aotearoa submits that none of these speed limits should be raised – in other words, that the existing speed limit should be retained in each case. All these speed limit reductions have been implemented according to scientifically sound safe system criteria. The specific reasons for retaining the speed limits based on these safe system criteria vary from location to location, and a number of relevant reasons are listed below.

However, regardless of the specific factors pertaining to each stretch of road, the physics of speed does not change: the faster vehicles go, the greater the impact when they crash. This affects everyone involved in a crash – the driver, any passengers, and those outside the vehicle when they are hit – but it is particularly dangerous to pedestrians.

Extensive research shows that reducing vehicle speeds saves lives and increasing vehicle speeds cost lives. For example, if the impact speed of a vehicle on a pedestrian increases from 30 to 50 km/h the risk of death to the pedestrian quadruples. That risk is even higher when it comes to children and elderly people. The higher speeds on rural highways have an even larger impact when pedestrians are hit by vehicles on these roads.

Pedestrians are likely to have to use at least some of the stretches of road for which speed limits are proposed to be increased. Some will be on the way to school or to catch the school bus, others may be moving stock, while others may be visiting neighbours across the road or doing other things that necessitate them to walk on the road, given the lack of pedestrian infrastructure in such places.

Factors that contribute to the risk of raising speed limits on these roads include, but are not limited to:

- no separation of traffic travelling in opposite directions
- limited or no roadside barriers
- road being too narrow for the proposed increased speed
- narrow bridges
- use of the road as a recreational or sports cyclist route
- busy intersections with poor safety history
- increasing residential developments
- roadside presence of children
- recent record of road fatalities

Living Streets Aotearoa stands with the concerned parents who have been taking action all around the country to oppose the planned speed increases that put their children in increased danger and have already had success in doing so. We stand with disabled and elderly people, a growing percentage of the population, whom these proposed changes put at especial risk. And we support all pedestrians and other vulnerable road users whose lives should not be put at increased risk on the basis of such an ill-founded policy.