

26 June 2025

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-18360

[REDACTED]

### **Request made under the Official Information Act 1982**

Thank you for your emails of 11 May 2025 requesting the following information pertaining to the decision to not install centreline wire rope barriers on State Highway 16 from Brigham to Waimauku under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

### **Background regarding the decision to not proceed with barriers**

The decision not to install the median barriers at this time was taken following a recent review of the project to ensure it aligns with the direction of the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS), and the more recent guidance for the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) investment in safer roads contained in the New Zealand Road Safety Objectives (RSO) document (refer page 4 specifically): [https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/24-EX-087-Road-Safety-Objectives-document\\_v2.4.pdf](https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/24-EX-087-Road-Safety-Objectives-document_v2.4.pdf).

The GPS and accompanying RSO require NZTA to take a value for money approach and balance our investments in safety of roads with economic productivity and travel impacts, alongside community views.

NZTA considered the advice of both the Chief Engineers Advisory Group (who focus on providing technical advice for various options of safety interventions) alongside earlier community sentiment received from neighbours along the state highway during consultation. Here, concerns were raised that median barriers would negatively affect a high number of accessways onto the highway and impact travel times. Local residents have also more recently approached our site staff to indicate their continued concerns with the future installation of the median barrier.

The following two attachments contain the information considered in making the decision to not proceed with installing median barriers:

- Attachment 1 – Chief Engineers Advisory Group advice, 14 February 2025. This attachment contains technical advice on inclusion of median barriers on SH16.
- Attachment 2 - Community views, 20 February 2025. This attachment contains advice on community views on median barriers on SH16 which was provided for consideration alongside Attachment 1, as part of a review.

Some information has been withheld in Attachment 1 under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act. This section allows the withholding of information to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of such Ministers, members of organisations, officers, and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

Further information has been withheld in Attachment 2 under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act. This section allows for the withholding of information to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by, between, or to, Ministers, officers and employees of a Department or members of an organisation, in the course of their duty.

NZTA considered these documents and sought to balance cost efficiencies, economic and travel impacts with the safety benefits for all road users. Subsequently, NZTA decided on an approach that included not installing the median barriers at this time however, proceeding with other safety interventions outlined below that will still achieve significant safety benefits by creating greater separation between lanes and ongoing vehicles:

- Stage 1 will complete the widening of bridges, wider road shoulders, install turn around bays and install a flush median, creating greater separation between lanes and oncoming vehicles.
- The flush median provides an estimated 35% reduction in deaths and serious injuries.
- The wider road shoulder will provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists, with increased accessibility for emergency services in heavy traffic.
- Turnaround bays will be utilised by our state highways maintenance teams and are required for local residents and road users. They will be available as emergency stopping bays for emergency services and road users.
- NZTA will continue to monitor and assess safety and efficiency along the corridor, including whether safety improvements are required in the future.

This approach was determined by NZTA senior leaders as being appropriately balanced and aligned with the GPS, as agreed at a range of internal meetings over February and March 2025.

The upgrades that we are completing now will provide space for additional safety interventions if required in the future. In the meantime, NZTA will continue to monitor and assess safety and efficiency along the corridor.

With regard to the information you have specifically requested, I have addressed each part in turn below.

#### **1. Any safety reports and reviews**

Please refer to the Chief Engineers Advisory Group advice, enclosed in Attachment 1.

#### **2. Meetings, minutes and emails relating to the change, including from external contractors/consultants/Auckland Transport/ Auckland Council including local board and councillors, Ministry of transport, current and former ministers of Transport and their office (Simeon Brown and Chris Bishop)**

In addition to the information enclosed in Attachments 1 and 2, the remaining documents outlined in the Document Schedule appended to the bottom of this letter fall within the scope of this part of your request and are enclosed.

Please note that certain information within Attachments 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

Information has also been withheld in Attachment 8 under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act.

With respect to the information that has been withheld, I do not consider there are any other factors which would render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available. Further information outside the scope of your request has been marked as such within the documents provided.

Note regarding Attachment 6, the website update referenced on page 6 is available on the NZTA website here: [SH16 Brigham Creek to Waimauku](#).

### **3. Why there was no public consultation on this process**

Public consultation was not required. This was an internal NZTA decision using our standard approvals process, considering many factors including past and current community sentiment for guidance, as well as the original public consultation feedback.

### **4. Copy of all feedback from the “community” that caused this change (it is fine to remove names, address and other person details)**

This is provided in Attachment 2.

### **5. The cost impact this will have on the project and was the project on budget still**

While some initial estimated costs are noted in Attachments 1 and 9, the project team is still working through the detailed design for the change and does not have the final costs confirmed yet. The team is working through internal processes to seek direction on funding and scope in order to complete stage 2 of the project.

As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) as the document alleged to contain this information does not yet exist.

### **6. Why this decision, was made given how NZTA contested this case in Environment Court in 2020 against Weirong Chen.**

Please refer to the ‘Background regarding the decision to not proceed with barriers’ section of this response, which outlines why the decision was made to not proceed with median wire rope barriers at this time.

### **7. NZTA management, project or board sign off, decisions and communication around this**

This information is provided in my response to part 2 of your request.

### **8. Copy of the new design plan**

The new detailed design has not been finalised yet. We expect this to be completed by the end of July 2025, at which point you are welcome to submit a new request for this information under the Act.

As this document does not yet exist, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act.

Further, content throughout the attached documents which does not relate to your request has been marked as out of scope and redacted accordingly.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold this information and refuse parts of your request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact the Ministerial Services team by email to [official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SM', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

**Steve Mutton**

Director Regional Relationships

**OIA-18360 Document Schedule**

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
Attachment 1 – Chief Engineers Advisory Group advice.pdf	This attachment contains technical advice on inclusion of median barriers on SH16.
Attachment 2 - Community views.pdf	This attachment contains advice on community views on median barriers on SH16 which was provided for consideration alongside Attachment 1, as part of a review.
Attachment 3 - Median barrier update from NZTA to external parties.pdf	Notification to stakeholders advising the decision has been made to not progress with a median barrier for stage 1 of the project.
Attachment 4 - Meeting with Rodney Local Board – Minutes.pdf	Minutes for a meeting between NZTA and the Rodney Local Board regarding the change to median barriers in stage 1 of the SH16 Brigham Creek to Waimauku improvements project.
Attachment 5 – Minister of Transport Weekly Report excerpt and emails.pdf	Excerpt of the weekly report for the Minister of Transport advising of the decision to not proceed with median barriers for stage 1 of the SH16 Brigham Creek to Waimauku improvements project and associated emails.
Attachment 6 – Internal emails discussing announcement of decision about median barrier.pdf	Internal emails regarding announcing the decision to not proceed with median barriers.
Attachment 7 – Alternative safety treatments.pdf	Emails regarding alternative safety treatments in lieu of wire rope median barrier.
Attachment 8 – Decision email.pdf	Email stating final decision on the removal of median wire rope barriers from stage 1 of the project.
Attachment 9 – Emails regarding information needed to support decision-making.pdf	Various email chains relating to the decision to remove median wire rope barriers.
Attachment 10 – Board update excerpt.pdf	Update to the Board regarding median barriers on stage 1.