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## Consideration of Emergency Speed Limits in response to Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2

For decision:

For noting:

Ngā tūhunga / Recommendations

That the Auckland Transport Board (board):

- a) Considers the need to set emergency speed limits to provide safe transport choices under Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2.
- b) Approves Options 21. b) and c) in the Discussion and Analysis section below

### Te whakarāpopototanga matua / Executive summary

1. The purpose of this paper is to outline safety considerations and potential solutions to expected transport safety risks related to a move to Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2.
2. During Alert Level 4, a 75-85% reduction in traffic volumes have reduced transport safety risks and there have been zero road fatalities in Auckland to date. The change to Alert Level 3 is expected to expose a number of significant safety risks related to Covid-19 affecting the use of the road network.
3. During Alert Level 4, there has been widespread observation (including via Google Maps) of higher rates of active mode use. NZ Police and AT GPS data show a concerning 53% increase in average vehicle speeds on urban arterial roads.
4. A change to Alert Level 3 is expected to increase traffic volumes from Level 4 with the potential for high vehicle speeds to continue. Auckland's active mode users will still be required to maintain Covid-19 physical distancing, something difficult to manage when passing on footpaths and berms, given population densities in urban and suburban Auckland. To maintain physical distance, they are likely to continue to mingle with vehicle traffic on the road. This is expected to expose significant numbers of new and existing users of active modes to the danger of un-survivable vehicle speeds.

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5. The Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2017 (the Speed Limits Rule) covers the duty of road controlling authorities to consider setting emergency speed limits if there is a risk of danger to any person due to an emergency (including epidemics) that affects the use of any road. This paper provides the Board with information to consider relating to emergency speed limits setting at this time.

## Ngā tuhinga ō mua / Previous deliberations

Date	Report Title	Key Outcomes
September 2019	Vision Zero Strategy & Action Plan	Board approved the Vision Zero for Tamaki Makaurau Transport Safety Strategy and Action Plan to 2030.
October 2019	Speed Limits Bylaw	Board approved Speed Limits Bylaw

## Te horopaki me te tīaroaro rautaki / Context and strategic alignment

6. This paper covers consideration of setting safe speed limits - which is consistent with both *Vision Zero for Tāmaki Makaurau*, our partnership-based approach to transport safety in Auckland, and the national *Road to Zero* road safety strategy. Vision Zero is based on a systems response to risk reduction with ultimate responsibility for outcomes being taken by those who control and influence the transport system. Setting safe speeds is also consistent with the AT Speed Management Bylaw passed in 2019 and would contribute learnings that could be applied to implementation of the AT speed management plan.
7. Providing safe walking and cycling use strongly aligns with NZ Government, WHO, ITF/OECD Covid-19 Transport Advice, as well as UN Sustainable Development Goals, and NZ Government climate change and environmental strategic priorities.
8. Providing safe transport outcomes strongly aligns with contributing to road death and serious injury targets in the Auckland Transport Alignment Project and Statement of Intent and the 2050 Vision Zero goal in the Auckland Plan.
9. This paper only covers emergency speed limit setting under Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2. Management will seek Board approval for any decisions at lower Covid-19 Alert Levels.

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## Ngā matapakinga me ngā tātaritanga / Discussion and analysis

### Consideration of Emergency Speed Limit Setting for Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2

10. The NZ Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2017 (Rule 54001/2017), Section 7: Emergency Speed Limits outlines what Road Controlling Authorities must consider regarding speed limit setting in the event of an emergency.
11. Section 7.1 (1) says an emergency is defined as a situation that:
  - a) *is the result of any happening, ...including ...epidemic...and*
  - b) *causes or may cause loss of life or injury or illness or distress or in any way endangers the safety of the public in any part of New Zealand.*
12. Section 7.1(2) Emergency Speed Limits states: A road controlling authority—
  - (a) *must consider the need to set an emergency speed limit if, in the opinion of the road controlling authority, there is a risk of danger to any person or a risk of damage to a road due to an emergency that affects the use of any road; and*
  - (b) *may set an emergency speed limit if the road controlling authority considers that there is a risk of danger to any person or a risk of damage to a road due to an emergency that affects the use of any road.*
13. Consideration of Section 7.1(2): During the Covid-19 Level 4 lockdown we have evidence of a significant reduction in motorised traffic volumes of 75-85% on Auckland arterial roads and have seen significant increases of walking and cycling (including via Google Maps) and use of the road berm and road carriageway to maintain physical distancing. We have evidence for an increase in the percentage of motorists exceeding the speed limit and high-end speeding on both urban and rural roads.
14. As we move from Level 4 to Levels 3 and 2, we expect to see motorised traffic volumes to gradually but steadily increase, whilst we expect the numbers of active road users to remain well above pre Covid-19 days and continue to use the road carriageway and berms. As such, there will be increased conflicts between the various road user groups with vulnerable road users at an increased risk of severe injury at existing 50km/h operating speeds, and even greater risk if the speeding issue continues. International research has shown vulnerable road users to be at significantly increased risk of death and serious injury when vehicle speeds are above 30km/h. A Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2 Transport Safety Risk Assessment is attached in Appendix One.
15. Section 7.2 covers how the emergency speed limit is set, applies and is removed.
 

*The RCA able to set an emergency speed limit and is required to notify the Agency and Commissioner as soon as possible with relevant details of the change and install different speed limit signs.*
16. Section 7.2(9) covers considerations in setting emergency speed limits:
 

*7.2(9) An emergency speed limit that is set in accordance with 7.2(1) must be safe and appropriate in the circumstances of the emergency for—*

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Consideration of 7.2(9) a: Historically road space has been designed for and primarily used by motor vehicles whose numbers dominated in most cases. During this emergency, this road space is now being shared by a smaller number of motorists and larger number of other road users. International best practice recommends 30km/h speed limits in urban areas and/or where vulnerable road users interact with motorised traffic. A 30km/h speed limit is therefore considered to be both “safe” in the context of Vision Zero and “appropriate” given the changed transport environment, demands and need for greater shared road use.

**18. (b) the needs of a community affected by the emergency;**

Consideration of 7.2 (9)b: The public are being asked to stay at or near home, and exercise within their communities. They are also being asked to keep physical distancing. To achieve both the above, active road users are having to occupy the road berm and road carriageway space, sharing this with motorised traffic. With the easing to Level 3 and 2, greater numbers of people will travel for work, shopping and schools, but many people are expected to continue to use active transport modes, utilising the road carriageway as physical distancing requirements will remain.

**19. (c) the nature and level of risk to the public;**

Consideration of 7.2(9)c: The nature and level of risk to the public has been outlined under 7.1(2) above. Essentially it is increased conflicts between increased numbers of active road users with motor vehicles resulting from shared road use to maintain physical distancing, combined with increased vehicle speeding.

**20. (d) any other measures taken to reduce hazards and risks.**

Consideration of 7.2(9)d: Waka Kotahi, the NZ Transport Agency has very recently released a fund, ‘Innovating Streets for People’. This pilot fund incorporates Covid-19 responses, including temporary emergency speed limits combined with tactical urbanism. Tactical Urbanism includes temporary style physical devices such as road cones, bollards, kerbing, planter pots, etc., that help re-allocate road space and calm traffic speeds. The use of tactical urbanism in combination with lower speed limits will help create self-explaining roads and achieve safe operating speeds.

**Options****21. The following options are presented:**

- a) Do nothing
- b) Set 30km/hr emergency speed limits to be implemented alongside Covid-19 emergency tactical urbanism measures being implemented by Auckland Transport, Auckland Council and other Council Controlled Organisations

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- c) Set 30km/hr emergency speed limits supported by tactical urbanism measures for targeted urban locations identified through communication with Elected Member representatives

Options b and c are recommended. Option b may be implemented at pace and Option c allows AT to respond to community needs throughout Alert Levels 3 and 2.

## Ngā tūraru matua / Key risks and mitigations

Key risk	Mitigation
<p>a) <b>Public acceptance of speed limit changes</b></p> <p>Community understanding is essential in ensuring behaviour change occurs.</p>	<p>The communications team is working on a media plan to show how this is part of AT responding to health and safety needs related to Covid-19. This also aligns with the existing Vision Zero communications strategy.</p> <p>Engaging with Elected member representatives to respond to community identified locations.</p>
<p>b) <b>Compliance with lower speed limit</b></p> <p>The capacity of the NZ Police to support a successful implementation of any speed limit change is vital. At this time, their resources are stretched to respond to Covid-19 related enforcement.</p>	<p>A mitigation measure is to connect early with our Police partners and discuss ways we can work together find solutions that achieve our shared outcomes of the safety of our communities.</p> <p>Tactical urbanism, such as temporary road cones or paint can be used to make road environments more self-explaining to drivers and lower operating speeds.</p>
<p>c) <b>Implementation of signage changes and tactical urbanism</b></p> <p>The practicality of rapid implementation needs to be worked through.</p>	<p>The Crisis Management Team Covid-19 Road Network Operations team is developing emergency tactical urbanism measures. Aligning speed changes with this workstream increases efficiency and effectiveness.</p>

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## **Ngā ritenga-ā-pūtea me ngā rauemi / Financial and resource impacts**

22. The NZ Transport Agency Innovating Streets for People Fund: Covid Response Tranche has a Financial Assistance Rate of 90% which may be applied for as a funding source, provided lower speed limit areas are alongside tactical urbanism physical interventions to slow vehicle operating speeds and support social distancing.

## **Ngā whaiwhakaaro o te taiao me te panonitanga o te āhuarangi / Environment and climate change considerations**

23. This proposal is expected to have positive impacts on the environment and climate change outcomes. During Alert Level 4, many Aucklanders have tried lower carbon active modes and more often, and there is an opportunity to sustain and increase this trend.
24. There is also risk that customers shift from public transport to car trips during Alert Levels 3 and 2 while roads are less congested and public transport demand is impacted by health concerns. This proposal mitigates some of this risk by providing safe and attractive active mode choices.

## **Ngā reo o mana whenua rātou ko ngā mema pooti, ko ngā roopu kei raro i te maru o te Kaunihera, ko ngā hāpori katoa / Voice of mana whenua, elected members, Council Controlled Organisations, customer and community**

25. A number of Local Boards have requested tactical urbanism and safety responses related to enabling physical distancing.
26. This emergency speed limit proposal has not been consulted with mana whenua due to time constraints. It is consistent with Vision Zero for Tamaki Makaurau which has a treaty partnership-based approach to deliver Māori road safety outcomes.
27. Engagement with NZ Police and Tamaki Makaurau Road Safety Governance Group partners is intended to be progressed as soon as possible.

## **Ngā whaiwhakaaro haumaruru me ngā whaiwhakaaro hauora / Health, safety and wellbeing considerations**

28. The paper covers the need to protect transport users from transport harm due to transport changes related to Covid-19.

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## Ā muri ake nei / Next steps

29. The decision made by the Board will be implemented. Work to identify feasible timeframes for implementation is underway.

## Te whakapiringa / Attachment

Attachment number	Description
1	<b>Covid-19 Alert Levels 3 and 2 Transport Safety Risk Assessment</b>
2	<b>Supporting Data</b>

## Te pou whenua tuhinga / Document ownership

<b>Submitted by</b>	Ping Sim Safe System Lead	
<b>Recommended by</b>	Bryan Sherritt EGM Safety	