



Engagement Summary and Decisions Report

Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossing removal



November 2023

Overview

We have recently started work to remove some level crossings before the City Rail Link (CRL) opens to the public, including seven pedestrian-only level crossings across Auckland and one road level crossing at Church Street East, Penrose.

Removing our pedestrian level crossings is required to reduce the risk of serious injury or death, and therefore receive regulatory approval from Waka Kotahi, before we introduce more frequent trains after CRL opens.

Community engagement on Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossings has provided us with valuable feedback, including local concerns about the removal, the alternatives route, and how we could make this route easier to use.

Level Crossing Removal Programme

We are planning to introduce a rail network with new services and timetables after the CRL opens.

These new services and timetables will mean that train frequencies will increase by 100% in some areas. This will mean that the barrier arms and automatic safety gates at some level crossings will be closed more often, causing more people to take risks to avoid delays.

To improve safety at level crossings, and to support growth on our rail network, we have developed a Level Crossing Removal Programme (LXRP).

This programme takes into account all level crossings across the Auckland rail network, the potential options for their removal, and what is required to improve safety at level crossings before the CRL opens.

This is a long-term programme that will remove all level crossings in stages over the next 10 to 30 years.

We have worked in close partnership with KiwiRail and Waka Kotahi to develop this programme.

- **Waka Kotahi** is responsible for monitoring and setting the regulations for rail safety in New Zealand. These regulations are designed to manage the safety risks faced by all rail participants, including Auckland Transport and our rail operators.
- **KiwiRail** is planning for significant growth in freight across the Auckland region and will operate more regular freight trains to support this growth. The Level Crossing Removal Programme will support KiwiRail to operate more frequent freight trains.

We are continuing to investigate the possible solutions for removing our more complex rail level crossings, including road level crossings and level crossings connected to train stations. Possible solutions for these crossings may include grade separation or full closure.



Pedestrian Level Crossing Removal project

We are starting to remove 7 pedestrian-only level crossings across Auckland. Removing our pedestrian level crossings is required to reduce the risk of serious injury or death, and therefore receive regulatory approval from Waka Kotahi, before we introduce more frequent trains after CRL opens to the public.

We are removing 7 pedestrian level crossings at the following 6 locations:

- **O’Neills Road, Swanson**
- **Corban Estate, Henderson**
- **Tironui Station Road East, Takaanini**
- **Kingdon Street, Newmarket**
- **Lloyd Avenue, Mt Albert**
- **Homai Station** (There are 2 level crossings at Homai Station)

To ensure we comply with existing safety regulations, and to support our case for receiving regulatory approval from Waka Kotahi, we will also implement a range of safety upgrades at other road level crossings.

These pedestrian level crossing removals and upgrades are required to demonstrate to Waka Kotahi that we have reduced the risk of an incident, such as a near miss or collision, before the CRL opens.

Community engagement

We engaged with the Takaanini community regarding the removal of Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossing from 31 July to August 27, 2023.

Our community engagement has provided us with valuable feedback, including local concerns about the removal, the alternative route, and how we can make the alternative route easier and safer to use.

Community engagement did not focus on the removal itself because of the safety regulations which we must comply with. Our engagement was about how we can improve the alternative route.

We genuinely appreciate and thank our communities for taking the time to provide their feedback and suggestions.

Next Steps

We will remove the level crossing at Tironui Station Road East during the planned maintenance shutdown period in December 2023 / January 2024.

Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth Alliance is continuing to investigate the potential options for removing the Walters Road level crossing, including provision for a new overbridge with safer walking and cycling facilities.

In the meantime, as part of a recent Safety Assessment, we have identified some potential interim improvements that are needed at the Walters Road level crossing before it is removed. These improvements will require further investigation and include:

- Repair the tactile markings for pedestrians.
- Investigate relocating the emergency exit sign on the west side of the level crossing.
- Improve the level crossing surface by introducing a system called veloSTRAIL track panels. We have informed KiwiRail who will make further investigations.

Engagement Snapshot

Feedback focused on how we can improve the alternative routes for **3** pedestrian level crossings.

Feedback from over **1,500** local residents and businesses in total

Feedback from **436** responses via our online survey

Feedback from **21** people across six community drop-in events

Feedback from **20** responses via freepost feedback forms

Ambassadors interacted with over **800** people at the level crossings, across two days during peak hours

1,100 letters delivered to local residents and businesses

More than **4,589** unique visits to the project webpage



Our Engagement Approach

What did we engage about?

We worked with the Takaanini community to understand how people currently use the Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossing, how the removal will impact them, and how we can make the alternative route easier and safer to use.

Community engagement did not focus on the removal itself because of the safety regulations which we must comply with. Our engagement was about how we can improve the alternative route.

How did we engage?

We engaged with a variety of community groups, accessibility groups, local businesses, and residents.

Our community engagement involved:

- **Community drop-in events** – AT hosted two drop-in events to talk directly with affected communities. These events were hosted at **Takaanini library and Community Hub**:
 - 4:00pm – 6:00pm, Wednesday 16 August 2023
 - 11:00am – 1:00pm, Saturday 19 August 2023
- **An online survey** – We provided an online survey accessible via the AT website. People were encouraged to submit feedback via AT Ambassadors, posters at the level crossing, and flyers distributed at the level crossing.
- **Letters to residents and businesses** – We delivered letters to residents and businesses near the level crossings. This letter contained information about the removals, a link to the online survey, and a freepost feedback form to return written feedback to AT.

When did we engage?

Community feedback was open from Monday 31 July to Sunday 27 August.

Why did we engage?

We acknowledge that the pedestrian level crossings are useful connections for some people walking or cycling, and we acknowledge that the removal of these crossings will cause some inconvenience.

To understand this impact, we engaged with local communities to understand how or why they use the existing level crossings, and their concerns relating to the alternative routes. We value community feedback as the best source of information regarding these concerns and the potential solutions.

We will use this feedback to help inform decisions about improving the alternative routes, and will be assessed against other factors such as long-term plans, funding constraints, operational considerations, specialist advice, other related projects, international best practice, and our key stakeholders.



Tironui Station Road East Pedestrian Level Crossing Removal

What you shared with us

Summary of key feedback themes

Community feedback has provided us with a better understanding of how people currently use the Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossing, how its removal will impact them, and how we can improve the alternative route via Walters Road.

The five key themes from the feedback are:

1. Walters Road
2. Safety of the level crossing
3. Build a bridge
4. Support for the removal
5. Impacts of the removal

Theme 1: Walters Road

What you said:

40% of respondents (4 out of 10 responses) provided feedback relating to Walters Road.

2 responses told us that the Walters Road footpath is too narrow and does not provide enough room for people walking or cycling, especially when passing in opposite directions. The footpath also has a lot of barriers, uneven surfaces, and other hazards that impact access for people with mobility needs.

3 responses told us that Walters Road is inconvenient due to the added time and distance needed to walk around.

1 response told us that the Walters Road level crossing needs to be removed altogether to reduce congestion and delays caused by trains passing through. This level crossing is impacting traffic around the greater Takaanini area, including traffic flow at the Great South Road / Walters Road roundabout.

Our response:

Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth Alliance is continuing to investigate the potential options for removing the Walters Road level crossing, including provision for a new overbridge with safer walking and cycling facilities.

More information about the Walters Road level crossing removal is available on the Te Tupu Ngātahi website here:

<https://findoutmore-supportinggrowth.nz/level-crossings-in-takaanini>

In the meantime, as part of a recent Safety Assessment, we have identified some potential interim improvements that are needed at the Walters Road level crossing before it is removed. These improvements will require further investigation and include:

- Repair the tactile markings for pedestrians.
- Investigate relocating the emergency exit sign on the west side of the level crossing.
- Improve the level crossing surface by introducing a system called veloSTRAIL track panels. We have informed KiwiRail who will make further investigations.



Theme 2: Safety of the level crossing

What you said:

50% of respondents (5 out of 10 responses) provided feedback relating to the safety of the level crossing.

4 responses explained that the existing level crossing is the safest option for people walking and cycling because of the following reasons:

- There are automatic safety gates, safety bells, and good sightlines along the tracks.
- There has never been an incident at this level crossing.

2 of these responses also told us that removing the level crossing would increase safety risks as people would continue to cross the tracks in the same location after the level crossing is removed.

1 response suggested that removing the level crossing is critical to prevent a death in the community and cited a previous death at another level crossing.

Our response:

Automatic safety gates can prevent unsafe behavior and crossing attempts. However, over time we have observed pedestrians pressing the emergency release button and crossing in front of oncoming trains, school children climbing over the safety gates while they are closed, or prams becoming stuck in the tracks as people cross. This release button is necessary to meet accessibility requirements related to wheelchair users. This option is therefore not 100% effective at preventing serious injury or death.

While a collision with a pedestrian has not occurred at this location, near misses and collisions with pedestrians have occurred, and continue to occur, across our rail network even if there are automatic safety gates.

We will not wait for a collision to occur at this location to justify removing the level crossing.

We will install fencing after removing the level crossing to prevent people crossing the tracks at the same location.

Theme 3: Build a bridge

What you said:

Approximately 20% of feedback (2 out of 10 responses) suggested we build a bridge to improve safety while retaining a connection at this location.

Our response:

We are currently experiencing significant funding constraints as we address a funding shortfall. All level crossings, including road level crossings, are assessed based on a range of factors including their safety risk, operational requirements, and their role in the wider transport network. Based on this assessment, and with the limited funding available, it is important to look at the relative priority of each level crossing.

Auckland Transport will continue to lobby for additional funding to minimise the impact on all communities as much as possible.

However, initial assessments completed during the Business Case stage indicated that low usage meant that, in the current financial circumstances, an overbridge or underpass is not financially viable at this location relative to other level crossings across the network.



Theme 4: Support for the removal

What you said:

Approximately 20% of feedback (2 out of 10 responses) expressed their support for removing Tironui Station Road East pedestrian level crossing.

The supportive feedback told us removing the level crossing is critical to prevent a serious injury or death within the Takaanini community. These respondents were aware of the increasing number of incidents at level crossings and, in general, agreed that removing the level crossing is the best option going forward.

Our response:

Thank you for your feedback. While engagement did not focus on the removal itself because of the safety regulations which we must comply with, we appreciate your awareness of the safety risks at level crossings and your support for the project.



Theme 5: Impacts of the removal

What you said:

Approximately 80% of feedback (8 out of 10 responses) was opposed to the removal or expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of the removal. There were two main impacts the community were concerned about:

- **Travel choice:**

Removing the crossing would result in less people walking and cycling, and more people driving, due to the inconvenient and unsafe nature of Walters Road (details on page 7). This is a key concern regarding access for school children to Papakura Normal School.

- **Access for people walking and cycling**

Removing the level crossing would reduce accessibility, connectivity, and walkability around the community. People need to access homes, shops, services, and jobs on both sides of the railway, and providing additional crossing points is important to support walking and cycling access around the community in this regard.

Access to Papakura Normal School and the local playground (next to the level crossing) were most important for the community.

Our response to the removal:

Removing our pedestrian level crossings is required to reduce the risk of serious injury or death, and therefore receive regulatory approval from Waka Kotahi, before we introduce more frequent trains after CRL opens to the public.

Community engagement did not focus on the removal itself because of the safety regulations which we must comply with. Our engagement was about how we can improve the alternative route.

More detail is provided on page 3.

Our response to the potential impacts:

- **Travel choice**

We acknowledge the concerns related to the inconvenience and safety of Walters Road.

Te Tupu Ngātahi Supporting Growth Alliance is investigating the possibilities for removing the Walters Road level crossing, including provision for a new overbridge with safer walking and cycling facilities.

In the meantime, as part of a recent Safety Assessment, we have identified some potential interim improvements that are needed at the Walters Road level crossing before it is removed. These improvements will require further investigation and include:

- Repair the tactile markings for pedestrians.
- Investigate relocating the emergency exit sign on the west side of the level crossing.
- Improve the level crossing surface by introducing a system called veloSTRAIL track panels. We have informed KiwiRail who will make further investigations.

- **Access for people walking and cycling**

We acknowledge the impact of the removal on accessibility around the community.

Auckland Transport will continue to lobby for additional funding to minimise the impact on communities as much as possible.

We encourage you to read more information about a bridge or underpass on page 10.