Mt Messenger Bypass SUBMISSION
by Emily Bailey, New Plymouth 9/08/2018

Ngā mihi

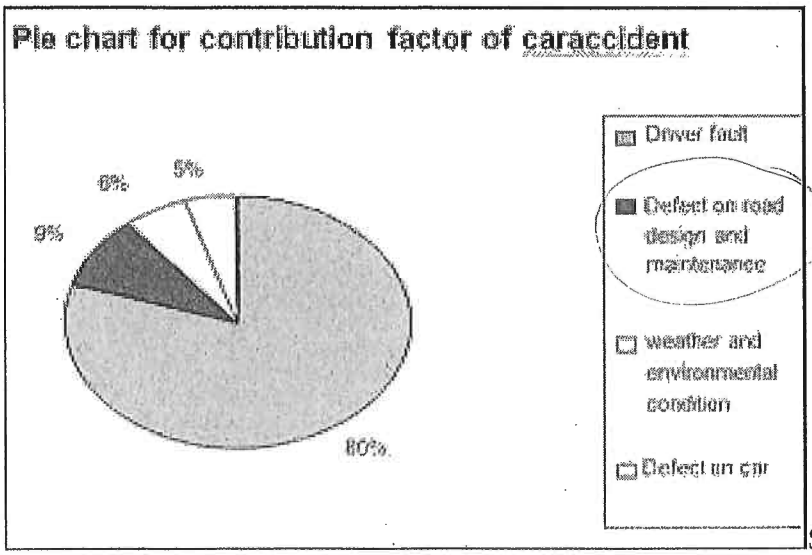
- I am a mother of 2, our Ngāti Mutunga tūpuna arrived at least 17 generations ago on the Tokomaru waka. I live in coastal Taranaki
- I have a BSc with a double-major in ecology and physical geography and have been a community educator for 20+ yrs, focussing now on fresh water and ecological monitoring for hapū and kura (MfE, Wai Maori funded)
- I am an iwi rep on TRC's policy and planning committee
- I write this submission voluntarily in my own time and have not had time to read all reports and submissions.

Main points:

1. Straightening, diverting road increases speed = increased accidents, death rate. New road at risk of black ice and fog.
2. Wai – Mimitangiātua, Mangapēpeke – wai for transport, inu, plants, kai, rongoā, washing, energy
3. Ecology – bats, archey's frog, kiwi... - pest introduction, deforestation, wetland destruction...
4. Future – small EV recreational tourism and local sustainable economy, not truck/bus transport economy

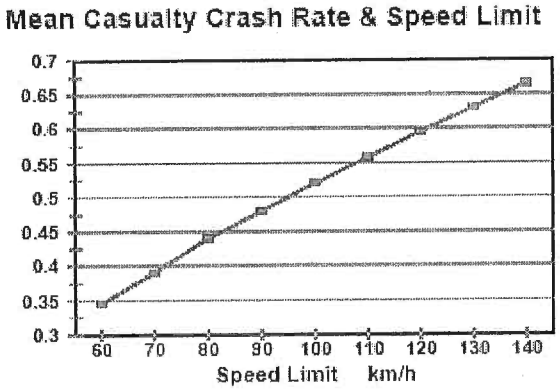
1. Speed

After a few quick searches on the net it is clear that speed is the single most contributing factor to fatal accidents on roads (see examples below). Speeding up traffic is the main reason this bypass has been proposed since if it was safety then this makes no sense as a faster road will only increase fatal accidents (see quotes from expert article below). Given the high chance of black ice and fog on the proposed road this raises the risk even higher. If we speed up our roads at the cost of lives then we really need to question where this society is heading. People are more important than profit.



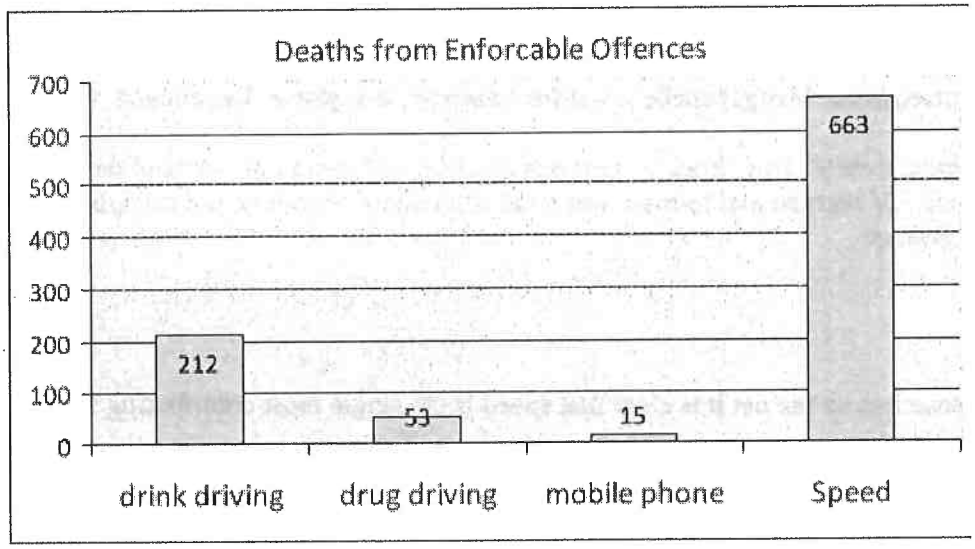
Source: http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/journal/149/1491055/image014.jpg

Figure A : Casualty Crashes per Million Vehicle Kilometres



Source:

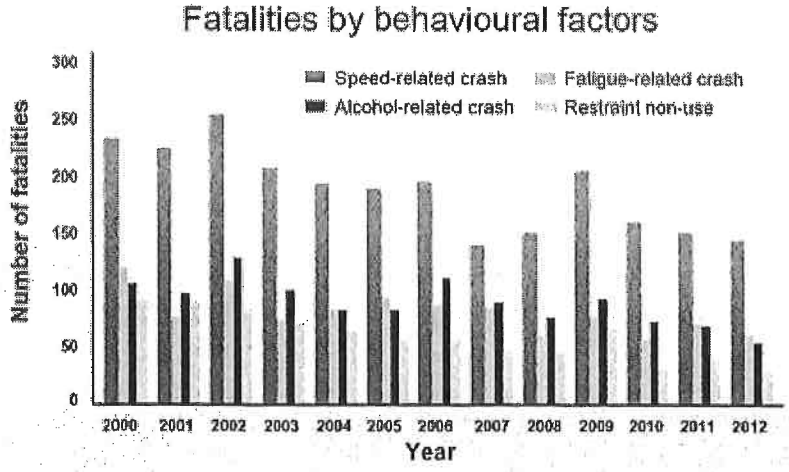
https://www.arrivealive.co.za/images/sf2.jpg



Note: DfT estimates 360 killed in drink drive crashes in 2009 (80% more than the police)

Source:

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-hD_gzck_uDY/Tlvn7jf2lhI/AAAAAAAAAJ8/0IqYxt2QBw4/s1600/DeathsRoadPeace.jpg



Source: http://awaretodayalivetomorrow.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/0/9/22095384/6052067_orig.gif

To reduce road fatalities, lower speeds have to be part of the solution
Guest Post | January 24, 2018

This is a guest post from Glen Koorey. He is a senior traffic engineer and transportation planner with ViaStrada Ltd in Christchurch. He specialises in road safety and sustainable transport, with a particular focus on speed management.

Last September, I was holidaying in Victoria, Australia, driving around the Great Ocean Road. This winding two-lane scenic highway is similar to many of New Zealand's rural roads. Interestingly though, most of it was signposted at 80km/h and a few of the trickier bits were even 60km/h. A similar approach was taken with many other rural side roads we encountered.

Sure, they also have a few 110km/h freeways but, with this kind of safety-first approach, it doesn't surprise me that Victoria has a road fatality rate per capita more than 30% less than New Zealand's. And for similar reasons, we need to take quite seriously the role of lower speeds in reducing our appalling road safety numbers.

In the current public debate about our increasing road deaths, many people have been quick to suggest all kinds of "solutions". In particular, a lot of comments concentrate on improving either our road standards or the behaviour of our drivers. While both worthy aims, their primary focus is on reducing the number of crashes. However, **a "safe system" approach to road safety is more interested in reducing the numbers of deaths and serious injuries (which is a combination of both the likelihood and severity of crashes)**, and that requires focusing on different things.

For example, **straightening a winding road may reduce the number of crashes, but is often rather costly (and any remaining crashes may be more severe due to higher speeds).** Conversely, installing low-cost barriers in the median and edges may not reduce crashes but reduces the severity of them by preventing head-on and run-off road collisions.

The practical reality is that we are dealing with a system that involves imperfect human beings, and our transport improvements budget is always limited. Therefore, **there will always be some people who make a mistake or bad judgment, and there will always be roads of lesser quality. Improvements in these matters will not happen overnight either. That's where lower speeds can improve crash outcomes now, even when other parts of the system aren't perfect...**

...Will simply introducing a lower speed limit on its own change traffic speeds? Typically, for every 10 km/h posted speed limit reduction, mean speeds drop by 2-3 km/h. That might not seem much, but international research has found that a 1% reduction in speed generally results in a 2% reduction in injuries and 4% reduction in fatalities. So even a 5km/h drop in rural speeds (say, from reducing posted speeds from 100 to 80km/h) could mean 10% fewer injuries and 20% fewer fatalities there.

Lower speeds can make real improvements to both the likelihood and severity of traffic crashes in New Zealand. It's not a remedy for all problems but, at a time when our road safety record is worsening, it's a key tool that we haven't made good use of yet. It's time for all road controlling authorities to identify what parts of their network would greatly benefit from introducing lower speed limits.

Source: Greater Auckland (formerly TransportBlog) was established in 2015 to provide commentary and encourage intelligent debate about transport and urban form issues, with a particular focus on Auckland https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2018/01/24/51878/

2. Waiora

3. Ecology

I have focussed my reading about this project on the initial ecological studies and on the 3rd Wildlands report that came out in May this year which concluded with "As it currently stands, the Application provides little assurance that the project will adequately address the major potential adverse ecological effects of the proposed rerouting of SH3 at Mount Messenger." This says it all really and I don't feel the need to go over these points except to say that I fully support the Wildlands report as well as the submissions of DoC and Forest and Bird. It is stunning that crown, council and community time and money is wasted on a project that has been shot down so many times by ecological experts. I understand this is the law but sometimes the law is an ass, as they say.

I have had the unfortunate experience to go up against two previous large crown projects: Solid Energy's Cypress and Mt. Augusta Mines in Powelliphanta snail and Great Spotted Kiwi territory, and the so-called Wellington Inner-city Bypass that Transit tore through my community. The result from the mine that eventually went through after years of community resistance and a mountain occupation we held for over three years, was hundreds of hectares of pristine alpine wetland destroyed with some possibly thousand year old rare endemic trees shorter than myself, the upper Waimangaroa river was ripped open, several hundred of the last remaining endemic snails were taken, stored and subsequently killed in a fridge that accidentally lost power, and who knows how the kiwi now fare with the wetland and forest gone and the first ever pest invasions into the valley. The coal price fell out but the state-owned company mined the valley anyway at a huge loss of tax payer money and habitat destruction. As for the Bypass, the many community parks they promised to build along the road were never created, yet they tore ours down and the land is now being sold off. The relocated and renovated historic houses remain empty over 10 years later with one of the country's oldest left-wing radical, creative and pedestrian urban communities destroyed causing years of trauma and upheaval to the residents. The results: a huge waste of money and resources, the loss of an important sector of the creative community and no time savings for traffic since car numbers rose shortly afterwards along with accidents, pollution and environmental damage.

Is this what we want for the world's 2nd best regional tourist destination?

We need to listen to the experts and locals and not put fanciful claims of increased economic profits and safety before the protection of threatened endemic species (protected under international laws), and precious environmental habitats. Taranaki is already down to roughly 6% of wetlands remaining. We cannot afford to lose any more. These habitats are crucial for stream health, water purification, ground water replenishment, flood and drought control as well as bird, reptile, insect and fish repopulating and nurtures crucial wetland plants that were used by our people for many generations for food, medicine, housing, boats, tools, shoes and clothing alongside the birds and fish that were eaten.

New roads bring new pests and weeds, anyone can see that. Roads change water flows, wind flows, increase noise and air pollution, compact soils, move soils and basically damage the wairua of any environment. Every now and then my family does a clean up of rubbish along SH45 near our house. The vast majority of the waste we see is drink containers, takeaway food packaging, farm waste and broken vehicle parts. Rubbish is ugly and uninviting and promotes the dumping of more rubbish. Unless picked up and taken to landfill or recycled this waste washes into waterways, gets stuck in trees or is buried randomly in soil. This is inevitable for this proposed new and busy inter-city road but there are less people around who may remove the waste.

The same goes for weeds and animal pests. Need we be reminded of the countless news stories of escaped pet dogs that ripped through kiwi in a single night? A road means a pest route forever so who will maintain the pest control? As much as people like to go on about pest control, deforestation remains the largest single factor contributing to the loss of species so this road is obviously more of a problem than any pests already existing or to be introduced via the road. New research into 1080 is also starting to look at other effects previously not considered such as longterm effects from consumption and on further species not previously tested. If 1080 is ever banned can we seriously maintain pest control by hand in this large valley we are proposing to further open up?

4. The Future

I spent a night in the Pouakai Hut a couple of months ago. There were about 31 people happily crammed in the 16 bed hut. At least 6 others left to try and reach the next hut before dark, which was perhaps already full too. We were locals, New Zealanders from other towns and foreign travellers. All of us were prepared to walk 3-5 hours uphill in the wind and rain just to experience the beauty and wildness of our incredible Taranaki natural environment. There is huge potential to increase the rapidly growing tourist and recreation economy in Taranaki and let's not forget this is now this country's largest economic contributor. The area around Mt Messenger is an obvious area to promote with stunning scenery and already established tracks and huts. Since there is only one inter-city bus a day most travellers come by plane and or travel by small vehicles, increasingly turning towards electric bicycles, EVs and hybrids which have far less impact on roads and the environment than heavy diesel-chugging trucks and buses.

The localised, small-market farming economy in Taranaki is also seeing a return with on-site milk vending shops hosting food products and crafts from neighbouring producers alongside crop shares, farmers markets and market gardening. The rising awareness of going Zero Waste and moving away

from costly fossil-fuels is helping many people realise that they need to buy local, grow their own, go fishing and ditch their petrol or diesel vehicles.

Our future is not in long-haul ocean, air or road transportation of heavily packaged goods controlled by massive corporations but in fresh, healthy, local produce created within environmentally, socially and economically sustainable means. I empathise for the truck and van drivers who are pushed to deliver more and more goods at faster and cheaper rates but this is not a problem that should be taken out on the natural environment and community of Mt Messenger. This is an economic problem of an unsustainable global market that no matter what, is going to have to face the rising price and scarcity of fossil fuels. So holding on to methods that endlessly increase those problems by constantly pushing for more of the same, quantity not quality, is no solution at all. Change is coming whether we like it or not. We can fight it and make it worse for everyone or jump on the waka and sail.

I know there are restrictions on what can and cannot be considered under the RMA but looking ecologically we cannot ignore the effects and connections between activities. Our forests are not single trees in a barren landscape but communities of interconnected plants, animals, fungi and soils. Just as our communities who are threatened do not stand alone. The importance and security of national infrastructure cannot only be measured in economic terms but must be measured also in social terms. To put it simply, faster roads = more deaths and a fossil-fuelled transport economy has no future. We should not sacrifice the long term for a ridiculous, short term capitalist model of take and break that has already caused more harm on this planet in just a few generations than any other event in history. This road ~~is~~ supports this model, not crucial infrastructure for a sustainable and just society.

I request the Bypass application is denied and the repair of the existing road is chosen.