National will get New Zealand moving by reversing Labour’s unnecessary speed limit reductions on many local roads and state highways and limiting the unnecessary use of road cones and temporary speed reductions where they are not justified. Improving road safety and speeding up traffic flow isn’t just about getting people where they want to go faster; it’s also about boosting productivity and economic activity, which is more important than ever as we work to rebuild the economy.

Under the guise of safety, Labour has exposed its anti-car ideology by slowing down New Zealanders going about their daily lives. New highways like Transmission Gully and the Kāpiti Expressway were designed for vehicles to travel at 110 km/h but Labour has mostly imposed a 100 km/h speed limit. Both roads will rise to 110 km/h under National.

All around the country, Labour has cut speeds on many highways from 100 km/h to 80 and local roads from 50 km/h to 30. National will reverse many of those reductions, except where it would be particularly unsafe. It makes no sense to have roads that can safely accommodate higher speed limits, only to require motorists to drive more slowly.

These reductions were part of Labour’s expensive ‘Road to Zero’ campaign, which has not worked. The road toll was 350 in 2019 when ‘Road to Zero’ was introduced, and it rose to 374 last year.¹ Road safety will always be a priority in New Zealand, alongside productivity, economic activity, and convenience. National will balance these priorities by restoring the previous speed limits wherever this makes sense.

National will invest in high-quality road infrastructure to ensure Kiwis can get where they want to go faster and safer. Roads like the Kāpiti Expressway, built by the previous National Government, which has seen a 70 per cent reduction in road fatalities in the region since it was completed.²

Alcohol and drugs are the number one contributing factor to fatal crashes in New Zealand. In 2022 alone, alcohol or drugs were a contributing factor in 199 fatal crashes, significantly more than any other contributing factor.³ National will encourage Police to increase breath testing and we will fix roadside drug testing legislation so Police can effectively test drivers for drugs.

We will also put away road cones and limit temporary speed restrictions where they are not justified. Temporary traffic management keeps roadside workers and motorists safe during construction or maintenance activities. However, motorists are rightly frustrated at the excessive use of road cones and temporary speed reductions, which are often left in place for days at a time even when there are no traffic hazards, and when no work is being carried out. This risks undermining drivers’ compliance with temporary restrictions that are vital for the protection of workers and motorists.

Rather than slowing New Zealand down, National will invest in high-quality road infrastructure to ensure Kiwis can get where they want to go faster and safer. New Zealand can have roads that are both fast and safe – a good example is the Kāpiti Expressway, a Road of National Significance built by the last National Government which has seen a 70 per cent reduction in road fatalities in Kāpiti since it was completed.⁴

**National’s Accelerate NZ plan:**

1. Increase speed limits to 110 km/h on three state highways where it is safe to do so and construct new Roads of National Significance to a 110 km/h standard.
2. Reverse Labour’s blanket speed limit reductions on many state highways and local roads, except approaching schools where there will be variable speed limits at appropriate times of the day.
3. Limit the unnecessary use of road cones and temporary speed limit reductions to keep traffic moving when there is minimal safety risk.

---

¹ Ministry of Transport – [link](#)
² NZ Herald – [link](#)
³ WP0 13010
⁴ NZ Herald – [link](#)
Accelerate NZ is part of National's plan to rebuild the economy to get it working for all New Zealanders. A strong economy means an end to the cost-of-living crisis, higher incomes, lower mortgage rates, and it means New Zealand can also afford the quality public services we all rely on.

This policy builds on Transport for the Future – National's plan to build 13 new Roads of National Significance, roads that unlock new housing, and high quality rapid public transport.
1. Safely increase speed limits on state highways

The last National Government delivered the Transmission Gully motorway, the Kāpiti Expressway and the Pūhoi to Warkworth motorway as part of its highly successful Roads of National Significance (RONS) programme.

Both Transmission Gully and the Kāpiti Expressway were designed to safely accommodate speed limits of up to 110 km/h, but motorists are currently restricted to travelling at a maximum speed of 100 km/h. The Pūhoi to Warkworth motorway is currently being reviewed to assess whether it is suitable for a 110 km/h speed limit.

It makes no sense to build roads to a standard that can safely accommodate higher speeds only to slow drivers down by not setting speed limits accordingly. National will ensure the speed limit for all three of these roads is set at the maximum safe level.

As part of our wider Transport for the Future plan, National has committed to building several new Roads of National Significance, including expressways from Warkworth to Wellsford, Cambridge to Piarere and Otaki to North of Levin. National will design these new roads to a 110 km/h speed limit standard where safe and set speed limits accordingly.

National will:

- Increase the speed limit on the Transmission Gully motorway to 110 km/h and make the entire Kāpiti Expressway 110 km/h.
- Increase the speed limit on the Pūhoi to Warkworth motorway from 100 km/h to 110 km/h provided the existing review finds it is suitable and safe to do so.
- Build the Warkworth to Wellsford, Cambridge to Piarere, and Otaki to North of Levin expressways to a design standard suitable for 110 km/h speed limits and set speed limits accordingly.

ACCELERATE NEW ZEALAND

1WP0s 12139; 12141
2WP0 19268
2. Reverse blanket speed limit reductions

In 2022, the Government introduced new rules requiring councils to implement speed management plans that align with its Road to Zero strategy, which includes lower speed limits on a significant proportion of the road network.7

This has led to a centralised, one-size-fits-all approach to setting speed limits with no requirement to take the economic impact of slowing drivers down into consideration. It has also reduced the requirement for thorough community and stakeholder consultation, leading to the concerns of local road users often being ignored.

The implementation of this rule has ushered in a wave of blanket speed limit reductions in cities and towns across the country, reducing speed limits to 30 km/h in many areas. Likewise, a number of state highways and major arterial roads have seen their speed limits reduced to 80 km/h.

This inflexible approach to blanket speed limit reductions is unnecessarily slowing New Zealanders down and harming economic activity by increasing travel times.

National will undo Labour’s rule change and take a more targeted approach to ensure speed limits are safe and consistent without being unnecessarily restrictive, with a requirement for councils and NZTA to take into account economic impacts and place more weight on the views of road users and the local community.

National will:

• Remove the requirement for blanket speed limit reductions on local roads and state highways by repealing the Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2022.
• Introduce a new Land Transport Rule requiring road controlling authorities to set speed limits taking into account not only safety impacts, but also travel time impacts, and the views of road users and the community.
• Simplify and standardise speed limits to provide predictability for different road types, with 100 km/h for rural highways, 50 km/h for local roads, and variations in between for different standards of arterial roads, unless it is unsafe to do so.
• Implement variable speed limits on roads approaching schools during pick up and drop off times to keep young New Zealanders safe when they are arriving at or leaving school.

Councils and NZTA will be required to evaluate speed limits to ensure they align with the requirement to consider economic factors and the views of road users and the community, in addition to safety.

This will mean many of the state highways that have had their speed limit reduced to 80 km/h will be restored to 100, and many of the local roads that have been reduced to 30 km/h will be restored to 50.

Funding will be provided to progress these changes, with priority given to roads where roads where previous consultation has already indicated a high level of opposition to reduced speed limits – for example State Highway 2 connecting the Rimutakas with Masterton.

7 NZTA – link.
3. Limit unnecessary use of road cones and temporary speed limit reductions

National will take a pragmatic approach to traffic management around roadworks to ensure drivers are not being needlessly slowed down for no improvement in safety.

Temporary traffic management operations are important for keeping roadside workers and motorists safe during construction or maintenance activities. But the rules and regulations governing these operations have become overly prescriptive, often requiring road workers to undertake unnecessary measures that slow people down without improving safety.

The excessive use of road cones and unnecessary speed limit reductions not only frustrates motorists but also hinders economic productivity and imposes significant costs on taxpayers. Overly rigid traffic management plans have led to situations where speed limits remain reduced at road maintenance sites even when frontline workers are absent, and road conditions are safe for regular speeds.

Local government entities including Wellington Water have reported weekly expenditures of up to $31,000 on individual projects related to temporary traffic management, with Auckland Council alone estimating that it spends at least $145 million annually on temporary traffic management. In many cases, the costs of temporary traffic management form a substantial part of the overall costs for maintenance work that affects roads.

Maintenance work is essential, and some level of traffic disruption is unavoidable. But the current approach to temporary traffic management has gone too far, resulting in unnecessary road congestion and delays. National will strike a more reasonable balance, ensuring smoother traffic flow while maintaining safety standards.

National will:

- Require contractors to minimise the use of temporary speed limit reductions at road maintenance sites at times when frontline workers are off-site and risk to motorists is mitigate. If temporary speed reductions are necessary for a period after resealing, this should be communicated to motorists with signage).
- Require NZTA to investigate a financial incentive framework to reduce reliance on road cones and temporary traffic management.
- Require NZTA and other government agencies to report their expenditure on temporary traffic management services on a quarterly basis.
- Monitor temporary traffic management rules to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose.

Funding

National will ring-fence an initial $30 million over three years from the local road and state highway improvement and maintenance activity classes in the National Land Transport Fund to begin reversing Labour's speed limit reductions.

Funding will be made available to local councils and NZTA to help cover the cost of lifting speed limits, including the purchase and installation of new signage and the removal of road markings indicating lower-than-standard speed limits.

Funding will be prioritised for roads where previous consultation has already indicated a high level of opposition to reduced speed limits.

---

6 Stuff - link, Auckland Council - link.
9 RNZ - link.