

## PROPOSALS FOR THE 2020 ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

We would like your views and ideas for a road safety strategy to take New Zealand through to 2020.

Please read through the following information on the proposed vision and approach for the strategy, and the proposed priorities based on our initial analysis. We have included some questions to get you thinking.

We welcome your views.

## BACKGROUND

Road safety is a whole of government effort. The Ministry of Transport is the lead agency in developing this strategy, but advice to the Government goes through a National Road Safety Committee, comprising the chief executives of several agencies.

The core members are:

Ministry of Transport (lead)  
NZ Transport Agency  
Police  
Accident Compensation Corporation  
Local Government NZ

Associate members are:

Ministry of Justice  
Ministry of Education  
Department of Labour  
Ministry of Health

Stakeholder engagement will occur over the next month. This stakeholder engagement will help inform the development of a draft discussion document that is due to be released for public consultation at the end of July 2009. There will be further opportunities to provide feedback after the discussion document is published. Further details will be provided at the time. The final strategy is due to be released by the Minister of Transport in December 2009.

## PROPOSED VISION

The current *Road Safety to 2010* strategy does not have a vision for road safety. Instead policy direction is provided through the headline targets of reducing road trauma to no more than 300 deaths and 4,500 hospitalisations by 2010.

The lack of a vision is a weak point, because:

- by themselves numerical targets for death and serious injury can create a perception that the government is comfortable with a given level of serious road trauma; and
- without a vision there is no clear statement of what New Zealand is ultimately aiming to achieve with road safety.

The vision proposed for the new road safety strategy is: *A safe road system that is increasingly free of road deaths and serious injuries*. This vision signals that the ultimate goal is to work towards eliminating death and serious injury from road crashes. It offers New Zealanders a progressively increasing level of road safety.

**What do you think of our proposed vision for road safety over the next 10 years?**

## PROPOSED POLICY APPROACH – THE SAFE SYSTEM

To advance the vision over the period 2010–2020 it is proposed that New Zealand use a systems approach. Such an approach would go beyond the traditional focus on “fixing the driver” and would focus action on all the components of the road environment that impact on safety.

A Safe System aims to prevent death and serious injury within the road environment by progressively achieving: safer roads and roadsides, safer speeds, safer vehicles, and safer road use.

A Safe System recognises that despite our best efforts, road crashes will still occur. Human error is inevitable and many crashes happen when ordinary people make mistakes. Our aim with a Safe System would be to achieve a system, where, if crashes do happen, the chances of death or serious injuries are minimised.

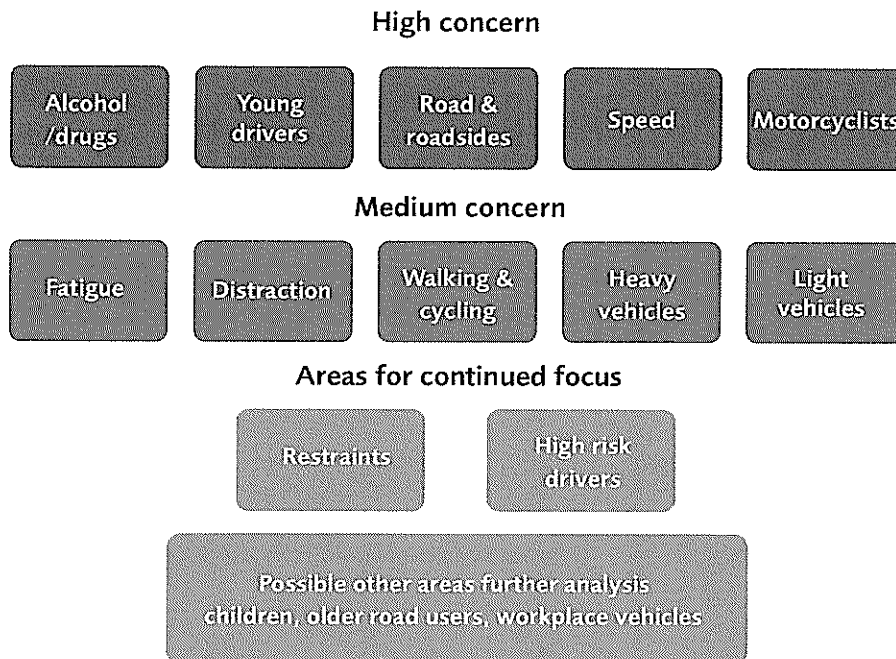
The second significant change in the Safe System approach is its message that everybody is responsible for improving road safety. However, within this shared responsibility a Safe System emphasises the need for clear roles and accountabilities for those involved in the design, provision and operation of the road transport system. For example, central and local government, road authorities and vehicle manufacturers and importers.

**What do you think of this approach?**

**How do you think we can effectively integrate objectives for road safety with other transport objectives?**

## PROPOSED AREAS OF CONCERN

To make sufficient and sustained gains in road safety the new strategy needs to focus effort on the main problem areas. Our background research has identified five major areas of concern and five additional areas where we could do much better. In summary, here are the proposed priority areas:



### HIGH LEVEL PRIORITIES

The five main areas we need to focus on are:

#### Reducing the impact of alcohol/drug impaired driving

Alcohol/drug impaired driving is one of the largest causes of serious road trauma. In 2007, alcohol/drug impaired driving contributed to 30 percent of fatal crashes and 19 percent of serious injury crashes. These crashes resulted in 128 deaths and 569 serious injuries. For 2007 it is estimated that the total social cost of crashes involving alcohol/drugs was \$838 million. Sustained progress was made through the 1990s to reduce the impact of alcohol/drug impaired driving. However, since 2000 no further reduction has been achieved.

#### Increasing the safety of young drivers

Young drivers aged between 15 and 24 years comprise 16 percent of all licensed drivers, but in 2007 they were involved in 34 percent of fatal crashes and 38 percent of serious injury crashes. The crashes where young drivers were deemed at fault resulted in 125 deaths and 848 serious injuries. For 2007 the total social cost of crashes in which young drivers were at fault was approximately \$1.1 billion. No progress was made over the period 2000–2007 to improve the safety of young drivers. New Zealand currently lags behind other countries that have made a concerted effort to improve safety for young drivers.

### **Achieving safer speeds**

Speed contributes to the probability and severity of all crashes. Currently, speed too fast for the conditions contributes to 32 percent of fatal crashes and 20 percent of serious injury crashes. In 2007 the total social cost of crashes involving drivers speeding was about \$890 million. Annual speed surveys show we have not yet won the public's hearts and minds on safer speeds (eg almost half of drivers surveyed in 2008 exceeded the 50km/h urban speed limit). Compounding the problem is that on many roads the posted speed limits are too high for the nature of the road or the mix of users. For example, a four-lane State highway shares the same speed limit as a twisty rural open road. International evidence suggests that two effective strategies for solving these problems are: having more appropriate speeds that take into account the variety of uses (eg reducing speeds around schools) and better matching speed limits with the physical characteristics of the road.

### **Increasing the safety of motorcycling**

In 2007 motorcyclists accounted for 10 percent of all road deaths. For 2007 it is estimated that the total social cost of crashes involving motorcyclists was \$460 million. Motorcyclist casualties have increased significantly in the last couple of years, mirroring the rise in new registrations. Since 2001, almost 85 percent of ACC's rise in road claims is attributed to motorcyclists. As motorcyclists are already over-represented in the crash statistics, and given the projected increase in registrations through 2010–2020, action will be needed to increase their safety.

### **Achieving safer roads and roadsides**

Engineering treatments targeted at high risk areas (eg intersections and black spots) are a proven and cost-effective way of improving road safety. In the decade to 2005, road improvements were estimated to have reduced road deaths in New Zealand by about 15 percent. This equates to a social cost saving of \$523 million. Major benefits can also be realised cost-effectively by ensuring new roads have a high level of in-built safety to avoid the need for subsequent safety retrofits. We have made considerable progress in improving our roads, but again other countries are doing better.

## **MEDIUM LEVEL PRIORITIES**

Alongside these five key areas of concern, five medium level priorities are proposed. These are:

### **Improving the safety of the light vehicle fleet**

Safety technologies have radically improved the safety of vehicles worldwide, including New Zealand. There has been about a four percent improvement in the crashworthiness of our fleet each year since 2000. However, this could be much better, for three reasons. Firstly there is the affordability of new vehicles. Secondly the average age of our fleet is high compared to the overall average age of vehicle fleets in the developed world<sup>1</sup>. Thirdly only 15 to 20 percent of the vehicles entering the fleet have at least a four star ANCAP safety rating. Addressing these challenges could unlock the gains other countries have experienced.

### **Reducing the impact of fatigue**

Over the period 2000–2007 fatigue contributed to 12 percent of New Zealand's fatal crashes and seven percent of serious injury crashes. However, these statistics will be significantly understating fatigue's contribution to serious road trauma. International research suggests that fatigue could be a contributing factor in up to a quarter of fatal crashes.

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<sup>1</sup> Older vehicles are generally less safe than newer models.

Until relatively recently efforts in this area have focused solely on reducing fatigue among commercial drivers. By widening the focus to all drivers we could make notable improvements in avoiding fatigue-related crashes.

### **Addressing distraction**

Over the period 2000–2007 road user distraction officially contributed to seven percent of New Zealand's fatal crashes and eight percent of serious injury crashes. Like fatigue, the real contribution distraction makes to serious road trauma is also probably much greater than the crash statistics indicate. Nevertheless, as a road safety issue distraction has received little focus and public awareness and understanding of it is low. However, as an increasing number of distracting technologies are being built into vehicles (eg DVD players) it will be important to tackle distraction over the next decade.

### **Safer walking and cycling**

Pedestrians and cyclists account for 12 percent of all road deaths, but 30 percent in urban areas. Speed has a particularly severe impact in crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists, so there are strong links between improving their safety and reducing speeds in urban areas. Recent data suggests that an increased number of people are walking and cycling more often. If this trend continues, as we expect it to, and given the lack of progress to date, then it will become increasingly important to ensure we make it as safe as possible for these active modes.

### **Improving the safety of heavy vehicles**

Heavy vehicles are over-represented in crash statistics, primarily because the consequences of crashes tend to be much more severe. Deaths from crashes involving heavy vehicles make up around 21 percent of the total road toll. In 2007, there were 74 deaths from these crashes. It is also worth noting that in collisions involving a heavy vehicle, over 80 percent of the deaths are not truck occupants, but other road users. We have made some progress, but the trend in growth in heavy vehicle activity swamps the safety gains we are making. In addition, there are still further gains to be made in the overall safety of the heavy vehicle fleet (new vehicles tend to be designed to be less 'aggressive' in a collision) and in managing driver issues, such as fatigue and restraints, so heavy vehicles should still be a priority.

## **AREAS FOR CONTINUED FOCUS**

We also have safety issues where efforts should remain focused on them so we do not lose the gains we have made. We propose two areas for continued focus.

### **The first is seat belts and restraints**

New Zealand has made good progress in our use of restraints. In planning for the next ten years, we need to think about how we can build on this progress. For example, by continuing to increase the number of child restraints that are fitted correctly.

### **The second issue is reducing the impact of high risk drivers**

These are the disqualified drivers, unlicensed drivers and drivers involved in illegal street racing. High risk drivers are over represented in crash statistics. These people pose a risk to everyone's safety. Some progress has been made in reducing this risk, but we need to take it further.



Officials are also examining whether older road users, children and road safety in the workplace merit priority status in the 2020 strategy.

**Do you think we identified the right priority areas? If not, what have we left out?**

**Which of the proposed priority areas do you think we should focus on the most?**

**What sort of initiatives would you like to see introduced to improve road safety outcomes in these priority areas?**