

In Victoria, 45 per cent of councils provide transport services for people who are transport disadvantaged. A report prepared by the Victorian Council of Social Service in 2008 examined six community transport services and found that they provided more than 78 000 passenger trips, travelled over 778 000 kilometres and utilised over 13 800 volunteer hours each year. This is the largely hidden, but rapidly emerging, public transportation of the future, and it is being run out of local government.

RoadWise

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) has developed road safety programs on a State-wide basis to actively engage and involve local government and the community in implementing specific initiatives of Towards zero, the Western Australian road safety strategy [3].

RoadWise Road Safety Committees are the formal structures and extend across 11 regions encompassing metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Western Australia. This network of committees offers an ongoing mechanism for engaging and involving communities in the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge.

The committees provide a regular forum where road safety is considered and strategies are developed and tailored to address road safety issues at the community level. They represent local partnerships that enable collaboration and coordination with lead agencies.

More than half of the councils in WA have a formal local road safety committee. Action plans have also been developed by most committees to focus on and monitor local safety activity in their area.

One element of the WALGA RoadWise program has been to establish a network of Type 1 Child Car Restraint Fitters to help parents install child car seats correctly.

Conclusion

The deaths on our roads of more than 1,500 people annually is a major economic cost, but of far more pressing concern is the immeasurable personal anguish for the families and friends of those killed.

More can and should be done to improve our roads, vehicles and also our attitudes to road safety. Local government, as owner and manager of more than 80 per cent of the total road system, has a critical role to play in road safety at the local level

Local government must ensure that its roads are built and maintained to a safe standard by working with the community to identify black spots, by providing transport alternatives for the transport disadvantaged and vulnerable where possible, and by playing a part in changing the attitudes of communities to road safety.

Safety on our roads is something that all three levels of government have a direct interest and a serious stake in.

References

1. Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. Cost of road crashes in Australia 2006 - Report 118. BITRE, 2010.
2. Petroulias, T. Community attitudes to road safety: 2009 survey report. Canberra: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, 2009. Available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2010/community_att_09.aspx
3. Western Australia Office of Road Safety. Towards Zero: Getting there together, Road Safety Strategy 2008-2020. Perth: Office of Road Safety, 2009.

New Zealand's new road safety strategy

By David Eyre, Policy Project Manager, New Zealand Ministry of Transport - Te Manatu Waka

In March this year, Transport Minister Steven Joyce launched a new strategy for reducing the impact of road crashes over the next decade. *Safer journeys: New Zealand's road safety strategy 2010-2020* (available at www.transport.govt.nz/saferjourneys/Pages/default.aspx) proposes significant changes to help improve New Zealand's road safety. These include raising the driving age from 15 to 16, introducing a zero drink drive limit for under 20s, changing the give way rules for turning traffic and reconsidering the adult drink drive limit.

The initiatives in *Safer journeys* are underpinned by a Safe System approach to road safety, which focuses on actions across the entire road system: roads and roadsides, speeds, vehicles and road use. The strategy also aims to address a number of road safety priorities, such as the safety of young drivers and the impact of drugs and alcohol on road safety.

The strategy was developed by the National Road Safety Committee (NRSC). The NRSC is led by the Ministry of Transport and includes the New Zealand Police, the NZ Transport Agency, the Accident Compensation Corporation and Local Government New Zealand.

From the start, public consultation has been a key part of the strategy. We have aimed to strike a balance between feedback received, resources available to implement change, and the evidence and research. This recognises the importance of both research and public support for road safety actions.

Development of Safer journeys

Although New Zealand has made significant road safety progress in the last 30 years, since 2002 this progress has slowed and our number of annual road deaths has fluctuated

between a high of 461 and a low of 366. The challenge for *Safer journeys* was to ensure New Zealand continues to improve in road safety, and that the rates of deaths and injuries on our roads reduce.

In the early stages of developing the strategy, we looked to identify the key road safety issues and the existing measures used to address them. We also looked to research and experience in other countries to find new initiatives that could make a difference in New Zealand.

The development of *Safer journeys* involved two stages of consultation. We held an initial round with key road safety stakeholders and partners to discuss road safety issues and possible actions for addressing them. The feedback we gathered was used in the development of a *Safe journeys* discussion document.

The discussion document presented road safety priorities (e.g., improving the safety of younger drivers, reducing the impact of alcohol/drug impaired driving) and potential actions, as well as a summary of the Safe System approach, information on New Zealand's road safety progress and a proposed vision for road safety. The discussion document and a summary version were released for public consultation on 18 August 2009 and consultation ran until 2 October.

During this time, New Zealanders had the opportunity to rank their preferred actions in the discussion document as well as make submissions. A discussion forum on the *Safer Journeys* website gave people the opportunity to discuss their views with others before making a submission. In addition, we worked with the Ministry of Youth Development to ensure young people had their say. A youth version of the *Safer journeys* discussion document was developed and youth focus groups were held.

We know road safety actions are much more effective when they have 'buy in' from road users, and so giving the public the chance to have their say has been an important part of the strategy. While evidence and research were essential in selecting the initiatives in the strategy, we also carefully considered public feedback. More than 1500 submissions were received on the discussion document and more than 1200 New Zealanders ranked their preferred submissions. These views were taken into account in the development of the final strategy.

Safer journeys goals

Safer journeys sets a vision for 'a safe road system increasingly free of death and serious injury', and the Safe System approach supports this vision. As outlined earlier, a Safe System means working across all elements of the road system to help achieve the strategy's aims for safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds, safe vehicles and safe road use. This is a world best practice approach, but a first for New Zealand's road safety.

Safer journeys also seeks to address a number of road safety priorities. Areas identified as being of high concern are:

- Reducing alcohol/drug impaired driving
- Increasing the safety of young drivers
- Safe roads and roadsides
- Safe speeds
- Increasing the safety of motorcycling

The strategy also sets areas of medium concern, including safe walking and cycling and addressing distraction, as well as areas of continued and emerging focus.

Implementing *Safer journeys*

We have set New Zealand's direction for road safety through *Safer journeys*, but its actions will still need to go through the parliamentary process before they can be introduced. This process will include further consultation and the approval of Parliament. Actions that require funding changes will need to satisfy the funding requirements of the National Land Transport Programme.

Over the life of the strategy we will be developing action plans that set out the actions that will be taken, as well as the timing and detail for implementing them. Action plans will also identify any emerging issues in road safety.

The first action plan will be released later this year. Before this, the Minister of Transport is taking packages of first initiatives aimed at young driver safety and drink driving to Cabinet to discuss and finalise any policy changes.

Safer roads

We know that New Zealand's roads are not as safe as those in other countries. Our road network is variable, and much of it was built when we had fewer vehicles, which were travelling at lower speeds. A low population base and challenging geography mean it is hard to get the same benefits as the best performing road safety nations. For these reasons, roads and roadsides are a high priority for *Safer journeys*. They are also an important element of its Safe System approach. The strategy sets the following actions for safer roads:

- Develop a classification system for the road network
- Focus safety improvement programmes on high risk rural roads
- Focus safety improvement programmes at high risk urban intersections
- Change the give way rules for turning traffic
- Implement targeted treatments on popular motorcycle routes
- Develop and support new approaches to safety on mixed-use urban arterials
- Strengthen techniques to integrate safety into land-use planning.

Safer journeys aims for a road system where roads have a set of self explaining features such as signage, lane width and road markings that make them predictable for drivers and encourage appropriate travel speeds. It also seeks to make our roads forgiving – to reduce the consequences of crashes that do occur.

Conclusion

Safer journeys sets a new direction for New Zealand's road safety with its vision and Safe System approach for reducing the number of deaths and injuries on our roads. Its approach to the safety of our roads, focusing on forgiving and predictable roads, is also a first for New Zealand. Research and evidence have

been crucial to the strategy. At the same time, consultation has been important to ensure actions are appropriate to New Zealand and acceptable to New Zealanders. We hope that giving road users the chance to have their say in the creation of *Safer journeys* encourages them to support its actions and share the responsibility for making our roads safer.

Loads off roads: Shifting freight to rail creates a shift in road safety

By Peter MacKenzie, Independent Transport and Road Safety Researcher, Westbury, Tasmania. Email petermac1984@hotmail.com

Australia is not meeting national road safety targets [1], national progress in reducing road trauma over recent years has been much slower than was originally projected [2], and we face a challenging future in which it will become increasingly more difficult to achieve reductions in road trauma without significant investment in the road network [3].

Trucks are over-represented in road fatalities [4], and destructive crashes involving trucks occur across Australia far too often to be considered acceptable in either road safety, public health or the on-road transport workplace systems that it represents.

Yet with political will, coupled to industry and community support and co-operation, we can choose to begin saving more lives quite quickly through compulsory shifting of more freight from road to rail, beginning with specifically targeted routes and freight type – particularly fuel products and other dangerous goods.

It is probable that many truck-related deaths and serious injuries would be prevented if the roads used by trucks were upgraded to meet the Safe System approach adopted by Australian jurisdictions. John Wikman, Executive Manager Traffic and Safety, Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ), quotes the Australian Transport Council as saying: 'Improving the safety of roads is the single most significant achievable factor in reducing road trauma.' [5]

However, while safety upgrades to roads (including roadsides) are considered a core component of the Safe System, the major impediment ahead of us is that many thousands of kilometres of highways and roads across the nation lack the safety features required for Safe System approaches; it will take decades and tens of billions of dollars to even part complete that work. Infrastructure Australia indicates that \$42 billion would be required to bring the National Highway to four star safety rating. The RACQ notes that '...nine years on from the original [2001-2010 National Road Safety Strategy] not enough has been done to improve the safety of roads and roadside environments themselves'. [6]

While the Australian Trucking Association echoes the need for safer road environments, they also place much emphasis on introducing longer and heavier vehicles to reduce exposure to risk of crashes, something repeated by the National Transport Commission. [7]

Thousands of larger, Higher Mass Limit or HML trucks have been introduced in an effort to gain efficiency savings for the road transport industry and to gain safety benefits from reduced exposure to risk during massive growth in the freight task. But much of this is on roads that are very inadequate in safety terms. Professor Ian Johnston, Deputy Chairman from the National Transport Commission (NTC), said in 2008: 'Yet 50% of the road network is more than 20 years old and designed for wheelbarrow sized trucks.' [8]

Professor Johnston also noted that these HML vehicles are supposed to be limited to 'better' (that is, safer) roads [9], but my investigations across several States show too many examples of heavier vehicles being approved access to roads that have numerous safety deficiencies that would not anywhere meet Safe System requirements, nor modern occupational health and safety (on-road) workplace practices. (This is not to say that access approvals do not always meet outdated processes and requirements). I suspect the problem is far more widespread, and warrants an urgent national safety audit, perhaps through a Senate enquiry.

This mismatch of unsafe road environments and introduction of heavier freight vehicles results in an outdated, one-dimensional approach to freight transport and road safety, not a Safe System.

While two reputedly safer B-Doubles can replace three semi-trailers, their numbers have increased from 700 in 1997 to more than 6000 across Australia. There are now more than 500,000 trucks overall, including numerous less-safe older semis, still operating. [10]

There are also serious concerns within the rail industry about the ability of increasingly HML trucks to derail trains in level crossing crashes. (Somewhat ironically, the greatest threat to rail safety is from road users at level crossings.)