

FEEDBACK ON THE SAFER SPEED PROGRAMME PRESENTATION

9 MAY 2014

Attention: Helen Climo, NZTA

BACKGROUND

Thank you for presenting with Chris Foley to the Trafinz Executive on the work of the National Speed Management Working Group and the draft safer speed programme.

TRAFINZ strongly supports this work, noting that it is one of the four Strategic Actions in the Safer Journeys 2013-15 Action Plan. As such we see it as a vital project which needs to be implemented quickly so that the expected safety benefits can be realised as soon as possible.

TRAFINZ (The New Zealand Traffic Institute Inc) represents a wide grouping of NZ local authorities, covering the majority of the New Zealand population. Its membership includes regional councils, the major metropolitan cities and smaller provincial authorities as well as private sector and non-local government members.

TRAFINZ's Executive is comprised of elected councillors and officers, drawn from a cross section of the membership, together with senior personnel representing its key government partners and supported by a number of senior technical staff from transport consultancies that volunteer their services pro bono.

The Institute's primary focus is on sustainable transportation planning, traffic management and road safety. It provides specialist advice to member authorities on traffic and safety issues by drawing from the depth of expertise available through its members. It also acts as a conduit for local authorities to respond to the NZ Government on new transport policies and legislation.

TRAFINZ is pleased to provide feedback on this important project and has used the five questions posed at Regional Safer Speed Workshops as a basis for our comments.

Question 1. Do you think the proposed speed ranges will improve safety, alignment and consistency?

The proposed speed ranges are a step in the right direction but need to be complemented by an indication of the specific speed that will generally be appropriate for each grouping of roads (defined by road hierarchy and environments) – ie ‘stakes in the ground’. We see these “stakes in the ground” as essential national guidance for RCAs with variation from them within a speed range being considered in terms of the national speed management guide and the One Network Road Classification.

We support the idea that speeds on the safest roads in the hierarchy (KIWRAP4) could be over the current open road speed limit, as a consequence of investment in appropriate design and construction. We note that higher speeds (in the 100-110 kph range) produce proportionately more greenhouse gases than lower speeds and so are likely to increase transport related emissions. There needs to be a balance with safety and economic goals and TRAFINZ advocates for sustainable transport planning across the whole network.

We support lower speed ranges for other road groupings, such as unsealed roads and those where there are high numbers of vulnerable road users. We have an increasing number of older or mobility impaired people in our communities and lower speeds on the streets where they are moving through to essential services such as passenger transport are key to ensuring that they can be active members of the community and fully contribute to society.

Promulgation of the ranges as a basis for speed management policy will certainly help improve **safety** on the roading network. Use of the proposed one network road classification (ONRC) in the definition of ranges will give good policy **alignment**. As discussed above, we also see that national **consistency** of speed management (posted speed limits) will be improved so long as strong national guidance is provided.

Question 2. Will a national conversation around all roads not being equal create the right climate to manage speeds better?

Yes, such a conversation is essential and as indicated in the Action Plan 2013-15 will increase ‘the system designer and road user understanding of what travelling at a safe speed means and will build a groundswell of support for a changed approach to speed management’. We all need to be better communicators about speed, not just better managers.

At this stage it is not clear that that the communications would also target system designers – which we would suggest needs to include local body politicians and roading staff. These will be essential ‘target audiences’ for successful implementation of the Speed Management Plan.

Question 3. How would improved enforcement work for you?

Enforcement reinforces the consequences of an individual's actions; that speeding is a serious matter. The consequences (fines, demerits) should be consistent, regardless of the type of technology used to identify the offence.

It is recognised that there is additional value in the conversation at the side of the road and automatic enforcement action can be seen by some as just another bill.

The matter of the "speed tolerance" that may be applied at the discretion of the Police can be overemphasised in the media. We suggest it not be a part of the plan. People will respond in their driving to posted speed limits and need to be told clearly that these limits are the **maximum safe speed**. It is then a matter for the Police to decide on their enforcement strategy bearing in mind the **risk circumstances** of different locations, at various times of the day and different weather conditions etc.

Question 4. What would you want to see in a national speed management guide?

At the start, clarity about the "stakes in the ground".

National guidance for groupings of road types/ environments is useful – but without guidance on actual speed limits it will be difficult for staff to justify recommendations for specific posted speed limits.

Essentially the guide should be focussed on how to use the Rule to help achieve the desired safety outcomes in a way that recognises national guidance and, where appropriate, local community needs. The Guide should help with the "art" of speed limit setting in a way which promotes consistency of treatments of similar roads and is linked to the ONRC.

We suggest that explanatory material be produced illustrating each grouping of roads with the proposed speed range and expected speed limit. This should specifically include illustrations of an unsealed road and environments where vulnerable users are likely to be, such as in shopping areas and near schools.

We would expect the Guide to include the results of case studies and give example of how to manage speed, including how to make roads more self-explaining. References should be made to other useful material such as safe school guides and design guides including NZS 4404.

Question 5. How can we improve the Rule to support safer speeds?

The Rule should not be discarded, but does need to be improved.

It should recognise the harm minimisation approach and allow the rating of road geometry as at least equal to that for frontage development. In our view the current Rule does not adequately reflect the road geometric effects on safety when setting posted speeds.

The Rule should set the “stakes in the ground” and set out a process for dealing with situations which call for departure from these. Departures should be allowed for good reasons, following appropriate levels of consultation.

Councils should be encouraged to place speed limits in a Register linked to a Bylaw, so that it is not necessary to go through the lengthy Special Consultative Procedure under the Local Government Act when changes are being considered.

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