

REVIEW OF THE ROAD SAFETY TO 2010 STRATEGY - Recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations from the first review of the *Road Safety to 2010 Strategy*. This was carried out by Jeanne Breen, an international road safety expert based in the UK, in November 2004. The complete review is available on the Ministry of Transport's website at <http://www.transport.govt.nz/>.

Recommendation 1

It is estimated that with no further evidence-based road safety initiatives over and above those planned to date and taking into account increases in traffic, the shortfall in the Government's targeted social cost reduction to 2010 is around 23%.

A range of new interventions has been studied and discussed nationally, many of which are known to be effective and practicable. It is recommended that an ambitious third implementation package be introduced to address this challenging but probably still achievable target (Section 12.2).

Recommendation 2

The third implementation package should comprise a series of well developed evidence-based stand-alone policy packages covering the priority themes of the Road Safety to 2010 Strategy, which need to be rolled out as soon as possible. It is recommended that the contribution of each package to meeting the 2010 targets should be clearly identified (12.2).

Recommendation 3

Long-term targets, which are more ambitious than the 2004 goals for speed management, drink driving, restraint use, user group and regional outcomes, could now be formally set, as envisaged in Road Safety to 2010 Strategy, even though these are implicit in the target-setting analysis.

Recommendation 4

The potential impact on safety of all activities aimed at the other four strategic objectives in the New Zealand Transport Strategy will need to be considered formally. It is recommended that formal area-wide safety impact assessments of land-use planning, transport projects and decisions be introduced to provide a key tool, alongside existing impact assessment for efficiency and the environment in order to integrate road safety into the transport system (Section 6).

Recommendation 5

The establishment of a vision for road safety, which brings together the aspirations of the two government visions set out in the Transport and Injury Prevention strategies which, currently, might be perceived to be in conflict, has the potential to boost road safety work (Section 7.1).

Recommendation 6

Updating the Value of Statistical Life (VOSL) on the basis of latest survey in New Zealand (1998) to reflect current knowledge about 'willingness to pay' and 'willingness to accept' considerations instead of a basis in average wage rate would give a truer indication of the cost effectiveness of road safety measures. The resulting higher cost effectiveness should lead to increased allocation of resources to road safety, to the extent that resources are allocated among competing objectives on the basis of cost effectiveness. The current VOSL is \$2.8 million at June 2004 prices. Should the VOSL value be updated to take account of this survey data, the revised VOSL at June 2004 prices would be \$4.16 million (GST excl) (Section 7.4.2).

Recommendation 7

While national and regional responsibilities are set out in legislation – Transit has a clear duty to provide a safe and sustainable state highway network – territorial authorities are not subject to any general statutory road safety objectives, and their legal obligations for the safety of the roading network remain a mixture of contractual, voluntary and common law legal obligations. The responsibilities of local authorities for road safety should be set out clearly in legislation. Such legislation would establish a duty, but would leave local authorities free to decide how to best carry out that duty in their local circumstances (Section 7.2.4).

Recommendation 8

In view of the core responsibilities of the Ministries of Health and Justice, and the Department of Labour, for key areas of road safety delivery, these government stakeholders should be members of the National Road Safety Committee at chief executive level (Section 10.1).

Recommendation 9

Traffic growth and the administrative changes for recording hospital admissions need to be monitored closely in view of the uncertainties these create for the progress of the strategy (Section 8).

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that the projected spend \$5 billion for road engineering over the next 10 years takes full account of the high benefits to costs of further investment in road safety engineering, not least in the modestly funded road safety engineering schemes at single sites, which still generate extraordinarily high ratios of benefit to cost; cost-effective pro-active mass action on speed zoning, median barriers and roadside hazard treatment and area-wide urban safety management (Section 9.1).

Recommendation 11

The further development and application of a national functional road classification system where speed limits, road design and self-explaining layouts match road function, could provide a rational framework to take forward the current discussion about speed limits and road design. It is recommended that a lead agency be appointed by the Ministry of Transport with a target date for implementation to conduct this task with the full co-operation of all key stakeholders (Section 9.1).

Recommendation 12

In view of the good framework which the safety management system tool provides to encourage road safety engineering expertise to be applied widely and systematically and the encouraging take-up to date, it is recommended that Transfund considers requiring the use of SMS as a condition for receiving grants for road safety with an appropriate lead time (Section 9.1).

Recommendation 13

Upper speed limits on open roads and the range of speed limits operating in urban areas are much higher in New Zealand than in the best performing countries in road safety. Appropriate upper speed limits to match road function, in line with international best practice, could be reviewed in the context of establishing the new national road hierarchy or classification mentioned previously (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 14

Area-wide, traffic-calmed 30km/h zones are commonly implemented in Europe within an urban safety management approach and, if implemented in New Zealand, could make a significant improvement in the safety of vulnerable road users and car occupants (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 15

The progress to date provides opportunity for improvement to target to 2010 average mean speeds of 51 km/h in urban areas and 93 km/h in rural areas which will save many more lives over the remaining five years of the strategy (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 16

Well publicised area-wide speed camera operations are an efficient and cost-effective means of achieving reductions in speed-related crashes and injuries. Urgent consideration should be given to increasing the number of speed cameras and speed cameras hours in support of the 'anytime anywhere policy' aimed at a 3.9% reduction in social cost. Flexibility should be given to the Police to obtain an appropriate balance between overt and camouflaged operations at individual sites (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 17

It is recommended that further consideration be given to allocating speed demerit points in speed camera operations as they can be in other speed enforcement operations to achieve consistency in the speed penalty policy (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 18

The mandatory fitment of in-vehicle speed limiters on heavy goods vehicles would be in line with best international practice. If the current average mean speed of 93km/h could be reduced to 90km/h through an in-vehicle limiter, then it is roughly estimated that there would be a 6% reduction in HGV-related deaths or a 3% reduction for all casualties in HGV-involved crashes giving a social cost reduction of 0.6% (Section 9.2).

Recommendation 19

To date there have been insufficient new interventions to combat drinking and driving to allow the 2004 and 2010 targets to be reached. Reducing the blood alcohol level from 80 to 50mg/100ml in line with international good practice is the only drinking and driving countermeasure not yet implemented which could produce significant savings – in this case a 4.5% reduction in social cost by 2010 (a reduction of \$103 million annually) – and save 14 lives and 260 injuries annually (Section 9.3).

Recommendation 20

Reducing the BAC for young drivers from 30 to 10mg/100ml (effectively zero), as recommended in the Vulcan report) would save at least one life and prevent 26 injuries annually (Section 9.3).

Recommendation 21

Given that a high public perception of the risk of being detected above a blood alcohol limit is a key means of combating drinking and driving, continued highly visible CBT activity at the current rate, combined with publicity at the current level will be needed to reach the 2010 target. Evidential breath testing equipment at the roadside would improve the operational efficiency of enforcement (Section 9.3).

Recommendation 22

Experimentation with alcohol interlock devices in commercial and public transport operations may provide a more direct route than for repeat offenders (which requires enabling legislation for trialing and which should be put in place) to realising the casualty reduction potential of alcohol interlocks to 2010, but this potential needs to be assessed (Section 9.4).

Recommendation 23

Police enforcement and advertising efforts nationally and locally have been highly successful in securing incremental increases in seat belt use and current levels of support need to be maintained for these activities (Section 9.5).

Recommendation 24

The increasing fitment of seat belt reminders in vehicles (particularly in European vehicles) provides an important additional tool for encouraging higher levels of use and associated casualty reductions and their provision in new vehicle imports should be strongly encouraged (Section 9.5).

Recommendation 25

Health and environment strategies related to increased cycling, walking and reducing congestion should be integrated and made compatible with safety strategies. Implementation of activities should be coordinated to ensure safety is addressed in 'at risk' areas prior to the promotion of walking and cycling (Section 9.6).

Recommendation 26

The safety engineering (both road and vehicle) interventions in the pedestrian and cyclist strategy will need to be strong and foremost in the implementation plan to offset the increase in exposure to risk brought about by more cycling and walking. The importance of 30km/h as the threshold for severe pedestrian injury needs to be widely understood. The benefits of area-wide, traffic-calmed 30km/h zones in town/city centres and residential areas should be promoted via demonstration projects in the Safer Routes strategy. Cycle helmets reduce the risk of head and brain injuries by between 63% and 88% and continuing high wearing rates achieved in New Zealand should be maintained (Peden et al eds, 2004) (Section 9.6).

Recommendation 27

Despite the progress achieved in recent years, New Zealand is not yet maximising its opportunity to receive levels of vehicle crash protection in its fleet, which are being experienced abroad and could prevent many more deaths and serious injuries. With a unique opportunity to identify and adopt a mix of implementation strategies to bring world's best practice in crashworthiness and consequent reduction in likelihood of vehicle occupant injury nationally it is recommended that New Zealand employs the following mix of strategies: a strategy for regulating used imports, compelling consumer information programs, using outcomes of Used Car Rating and ANCAP including mandatory windscreen labeling, leading by example a high safety-rated government (and providers of services to government) passenger car fleet and limited regulation on new vehicles as set out in (Section 9.7).

Recommendation 28

Early implementation of a New Zealand heavy goods vehicle safety strategy is recommended which should include: an effective inspection system for vehicle defects and penalties which improve performance; incentives for semi-trailer use rather than low tare multi-axle trailer; the mandatory fitment of in-vehicle speed limiters on heavy goods vehicles; the mandatory provision for fitment of frontal, rear and side under-run guards; mandatory seat belt use; legislative restrictions on working and driving time which better reflect needs identified by research to reduce cumulative fatigue and the use of tachographs for law enforcement; and the introduction of an operator safety rating system (which also reflects early voluntary take-up of these measures) (Section 9.9.4).

Recommendation 29

A phased raising of young driver age should be considered; for example, raising the age for access to 16 in 2006 and to 17 in 2008. Factors such as the remoteness of many rural settlements in New Zealand have influenced the adoption so far of the unusually low minimum age and it is recommended that an urgent independent review be undertaken of the non-safety advantages and disadvantages of the low minimum age in order to inform further consideration of the powerful road safety arguments for raising it (Section 9.9.1).

Recommendation 30

A strategy to ensure the safe mobility of older drivers should include support and funding to enable lifelong mobility; support for older people to continue driving safely; provision of suitable transport alternatives to the private car; involvement of older people in policy development; safer vehicles for older people; development of safer roads, safer pedestrian routes and lower speed limits in residential areas; appropriate land-use practices; and educational campaigns to ensure maximum mobility and safety for older people (Section 9.9.2).

Recommendation 31

The Vulcan review recommended a study in at least one of the five regional networks to ascertain if there are similar problems in the management of major road trauma, as found in a recent Victorian study, and the extent of potentially preventable deaths, which is supported (Section 9.9.3).

Recommendation 32

Motorcycling is a very high-risk activity, motorcycle registrations have increased recently in New Zealand and motorcycling is often promoted by the lobby as being an economical and environmentally clean form of transport. However, the cost of crashes shows that in fact it is a highly subsidised form of transport, with other road users providing that subsidy and this needs to be acknowledged in public policy (Section 9.9.5).3

Recommendation 33

The Accident Compensation Corporation should consider increasing motorcycle and moped premiums to more closely reflect their claims in order to recoup their costs; the minimum age for access to moped and motorcycle learner permits should be increased from 15 to 17 years in line with international best practice; the permitted engine size for novice drivers should be reduced from 250cc to 125cc; the fitment of twin dedicated daytime running lights using LED technology should be required on all new two-wheeled motor vehicles in line with international best practice; and best practice in road environment treatments needs to be identified, particularly at junctions. International experience shows that investment in educational approaches has shown little return (Section 9.9.5).

Recommendation 34

It is recommended that the chief executives of the Ministries of Health and Justice, and the Department of Labour join the National Road Safety Committee at chief executive level to assist in realising the Government's road safety objectives outlined in the Road Safety to 2010 Strategy (Section 10.2).

Recommendation 35

The new organisational arrangements for transport in Government seem to open up a timely opportunity to review other key institutional arrangements as far as road safety is concerned. An all-party Parliamentary approach to road safety formalised in an all-party road safety committee has delivered important improvements to road safety in Australia and Europe, and parliamentarians may wish to consider if this would be appropriate to road safety in New Zealand (Section 12.2.1).

Recommendation 36

Consideration should be given to the encouragement and development of a lead research organisation in New Zealand for road safety which could contribute impartial information to policy and public debate. The ACC might consider a supporting role in such activity (Section 12.2.1).

Recommendation 37

The appropriately ambitious nature of the Road Safety to 2010 Strategy means that road safety and health professionals and researchers in the non-governmental sector, together with non-governmental organisations with a strong interest in road safety, should come together formally and nationally to be an additional champion for road safety in order to overcome structural barriers to publicly acceptable, evidence-based road injury prevention measures. The ACC might consider pump-priming resource towards the establishment of a new non-governmental organisation (Section 12.2.1).

Recommendation 38

As a result of the information-gathering process of this Road Safety to 2010 Strategy and the current review by Statistics NZ of data systems, the following recommendations are made about New Zealand's crash reporting systems. It is recommended that:

There are the same data collection requirements for injury and non-injury crashes. A mandatory requirement is introduced to require that a claim to ACC is accompanied by a copy of the police report or reference number. The ACC database requires the police report number. Injuries be routinely coded, using descriptions of the injury and the Abbreviated Injury Scale.

Police crash records include a hospital admission number, and that hospital admission include a police crash report number. Ongoing in-depth crash studies are carried out in New Zealand (Section 12.2.2).