

New Zealand's Safer Journeys - Delivering the State Highway Safer Roads and Roadsides Programme

Andrew Scott and Bruce Corben

Safe Roads Alliance

Abstract

This paper describes work underway in New Zealand, commencing mid-2015, on implementing its “Safer Journeys - Delivering the State Highway Safer Roads and Roadsides” programme. The programme is a new, highly ambitious initiative of the national government, targeting the prevention of an aggregate 1400 deaths or serious injuries on New Zealand's rural State Highways in the first ten years of each project's life. This will entail investing \$745m in safer infrastructure along the country's highest-risk corridors and intersections. Wherever affordable and fit-for-purpose, having regard to the functional classification of each corridor, infrastructure aligned with Safe System principles will be delivered.

Background and Programme Aims

This paper provides the strategic context for New Zealand's “Safer Journeys - Delivering the State Highway Safer Roads and Roadsides” programme, as well as describing a new national delivery mechanism which has involved the formation of an alliance between government and private sectors. Due to the programme's unprecedented commitment to eliminating death and serious injury from New Zealand's rural highways, a number of our longest-standing conventional approaches to improving safety on state highways are being challenged. Three major crash types characterise the country's rural roads; head-on, run-off-road and intersection collisions. High-impact solutions to these three major sources of road trauma are being sought or developed by drawing upon successful practices from leading countries of the world, as well as adapting them to the conditions that uniquely define New Zealand's state highway system.

Delivering the savings in deaths and serious injuries

The recently formed Safe Roads Alliance has worked strenuously to establish a clear vision and a strong culture of leadership that strives for excellence, seeks affordable solutions to safety problems commonly encountered on rural roads, and is practical and delivery action-oriented. The Alliance aims to leave a lasting legacy of low-risk travel for future generations of New Zealanders.

Defining the path ahead

The principal elements of the Alliance's approach are being progressively documented in a 'Safety Toolkit' to assist project teams, designers and business-case writers to implement the programme, with speed and efficiency, across some 90 individual rural corridors. To support NZ's transition to a new safety paradigm, innovation in program development, project design and project delivery is essential. Accordingly, a range of new processes are being introduced wherever practical. More effective designs, which extend beyond many of the traditional standards, have begun to be introduced and will be closely monitored and evaluated as a means of assuring highly-effective investment and continuous improvement in the years and decades ahead.

The recently developed “Safety Toolkit” encompasses important aspects that impact directly on safety, such as commencing the journey towards Safe System performing roads, holistic route treatment philosophies, metrics and evidence-based methods for identifying and prioritising routes with a high risk of deaths and serious injuries, fit-for-purpose design principles for routes, including

intersections, investment prioritisation metrics and methods, and the monitoring and evaluation of programme and project performance. While the stated enhancements in corridor safety are keenly sought, a number of significant practical challenges must first be overcome; for example, the unintended impacts on route maintenance and operation, restrictions on property and emergency services access, route resilience in the event of crashes or vehicle breakdown, and provision for cyclists and motorcyclists along already narrow cross-sections. The Toolkit will be a 'living' document that attempts to implement the 'right designs' from the beginning. It will be continually updated as local and international experiences bring new insights.

Relevance

The programme and approaches described in this paper, and lessons learnt on the journey to these goals, are expected to be of interest to all road and road safety agencies and stakeholders wishing to achieve major savings in deaths and serious injuries on their roads.