

15. VEHICLE DIMENSIONS AND MASS RULE CHANGE PROPOSALS

Officer responsible Director of Policy	Author Stuart Woods, DDI 371-1615
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The purpose of this report is to bring to the Committee's attention the proposed changes relating to heavy vehicle rules, and to propose a means of producing a response to achieve the submission timeline.

The Land Transport Safety Authority is responsible for creating Land Transport Rules. It is currently working through a programme of converting a number of regulations and other secondary and tertiary transport legislation in Land Transport Rules. Within this process is a proposed rule relating to vehicle dimensions and mass, which consolidates existing requirements that are contained in Traffic Regulations 1976, Heavy Motor Vehicles Regulations 1974 and several New Zealand Gazette notices.

The proposed rule sets out new requirements related to both vehicle dimensions and mass, ie how big and heavy vehicles can be as of right on roads.

This is a key issue as vehicle dimension limits are set so that roads and particularly intersections and bends on roads can be uniformly designed. This is done so that, under typical operating conditions, vehicles can carry out turning manoeuvres and can safely clear features such as kerbs, traffic signs and other roadside furniture, as well as conflicting traffic streams. Axle limits and gross mass limits allow the road pavement and bridge decks and their support structures to be designed for heavy vehicles and their operating speeds. Compliance with mass limits protects these structures and assists in achieving the expected economic life of pavements and bridges.

The key issues for consideration with regard to the rule changes relate to two proposals:

- Existing vehicle and vehicle combinations be allowed to operate on the whole public road network at mass limits up to 14% higher (50 tonnes) than currently permitted, but subjected to the introduction of appropriate performance based standards, a specific compliance regime, and no increase in vehicle dimensions.
- Specific vehicle combinations be allowed to operate at an increased mass (maximum 62 tonnes) and dimensions (up to an overall length of 25 metres) on a selected network of upgraded heavy routes subject to certain measures.

The proposal is that the first proposal would have effect from 2002, whereas the second could be operational in some 8-15 years.

The reports and information have only come to staff relatively recently, and there has not been time to date to formulate views or a draft submission. The closing date for submissions is 3 September 2001. This closing date is not convenient for reporting a proposed submission back to the next Committee meeting. Therefore it is proposed that a subcommittee be nominated to provide input to the formulation of the submission and delegated power to approve it.

Recommendation: That the Land Transport Subcommittee assist with and approve a submission on the vehicle dimensions and mass rule to the Land Transport Safety Authority.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.