

15. ROAD SAFETY TRENDS

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Bill Greenwood, DDI 371-1946
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The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information regarding road safety trends within Christchurch City. Crashes reported to the Police have been trending downwards over the last 10 years. This trend has also occurred throughout New Zealand. Of particular note is Christchurch's greater improvement compared with the other main centres in New Zealand. It is difficult to isolate the cause of this reduction. The commitment to "SAFER STREETS" the Christchurch Road Safety Strategy by the Council and other interested organisations in the city, has played a significant part in this achievement.

A review of "SAFE STREET" the Christchurch Road Safety Strategy will be undertaken early next year following the release of the National Road Safety Plan 2010. This review will consider, possible changes in focus, what actions we should continue to pursue and future innovations.

BACKGROUND

Each year the Land Transport Safety Authority produces a road safety report detailing and analysing the crashes reported to the Police within Christchurch city. Using these reports the Coordinating Committee for Traffic Safety has been the driver in ensuring that best road safety practices are developed and fostered to address the issues identified.

To give direction the committee developed "SAFE STREETS" the Christchurch Road Safety Strategy. This was adopted by the Council in September 1999. The challenge set by the document is *to reach a level of best road safety practice in the world by 2005*. Christchurch is a recognised leader in safety innovation. Rural speed thresholds, school speed zones, red light cameras, cycle infrastructure and living streets are examples of this innovative approach to road safety.

A significant reduction in road deaths has occurred in Christchurch in recent years. From an annual high in the July 1998 year of 26 deaths it has reduced to six in the year to July 2001. The current low number will make it very difficult to continue to achieve reductions. "Vision Zero" that is no fatal traffic crashes, is a target in some countries overseas. The desirability of this being our vision will be addressed in the review of the Road Safety Strategy. The review will also look at emerging issues such as the number of crashes involving utility poles.

"SAFE STREETS" identified eight areas to be targeted. Each target area has a list of goals and actioned designed to improve safety in the particular area.

The following trends have been noted in the eight areas targeted in the Strategy.

Intersections and Driveways

The percentage of crashes within Christchurch City at intersections has been continuing at around 60% throughout the 1990s. This has remained 10% higher than the other main New Zealand centres. The number of intersection crashes involving poor judgement, observation and failure to give way has been reducing. Crashes involving pedestrians, elderly and ill have trending upwards.

A significant driver in reducing the number of crashes has been the crash reduction studies programme undertaken to identify engineering improvements at problem intersections. There has been a 41% reduction in crashes at sites where crash reduction programmes have been implemented. This compares very well with a 30% achieved at crash reduction sites throughout the country.

Other interventions that have addressed the intersection safety issues are the red light camera programme operated in conjunction with the Police and intersection education campaigns.

Speed

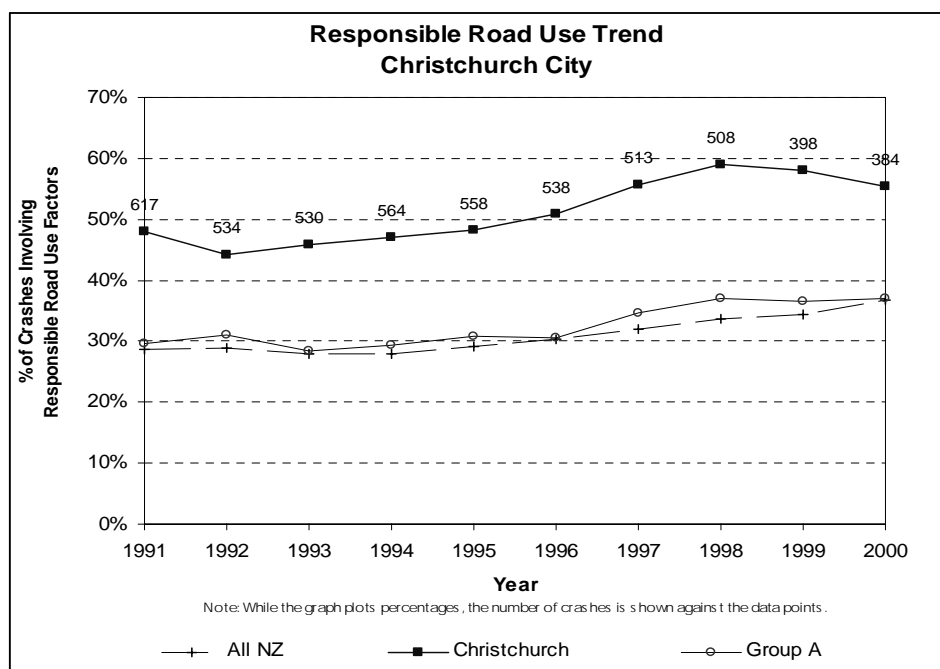
In the last three years the number of crashes involving excessive speed has considerably reduced. Surveys have identified that people within the urban areas of Christchurch are generally driving slower. This trend is not evident in the rural areas surrounding Christchurch.

Interventions that have addressed speeding problems within the city in recent times include 60 km/h speed limits, school speed zones and extensive enforcement and education campaigns.

Responsible Road Users

This target issue was identified during community consultation on the “SAFE STREETS” strategy. Judgement and observation are factors associated with the responsible road users. It is pleasing to note that as factors their involvement in crashes has started reducing.

Interventions to improve judgement and observation are difficult. Experience is however being developed in ways of addressing this important road safety issue.



Alcohol

This is an area where big road safety gains have been made in Christchurch. During the early 1990's around 15 – 20% of crashes involved alcohol impaired drivers. This percentage was below 10% last year. This improvement is likely to be as a result of the ACC funded STOP BUS and education undertaken by CAAP and SADD.

Pedestrians

The increasing proportion of crashes involving pedestrians is of concern. From 1990 to 1997 around 7% of crashes involved pedestrians. Last year the percentage increased to 11%.

Pedestrian safety is an increasing focus of the Council with the emphasis being placed on crossability as part of the “living streets” programme. The “expect the unexpected” education program is intended to improve pedestrian safety.

Occupant Restraints

The inclusion of this issue in the “SAFE STREETS” strategy reflects the national focus on this issue. The front seat wearing rate is better than average in Christchurch. The rear seat wearing rate, like elsewhere in New Zealand, is poor. Many of the recent fatal vehicle crashes in Christchurch would have been less serious had drivers and their passengers been wearing seatbelts.

Advertising campaigns encouraging seatbelt use particularly for children will continue to be undertaken in the future.

Older Road Users

There is a greater involvement of older road users in car crashes in Christchurch compared with the other main centres. Although from 1995 to 1999 this difference had been reducing the number of older drivers in crashes return to the high levels again last year.

A subcommittee of the Coordinating Committee for Traffic Safety has been formed this year to focus on the provision of road safety information to older road users.

Cyclists and Motorcyclists

The percentage of cyclists involved in injury crashes reduced from 15% in 1991 to less than 10% from 1995 to 1997. There is a slight increasing trend since then but the problem remains well below the 1991 figure. The number of motorcyclists injured in crashes has continued a strong downward trend since 1995 when around 16% of crashes in the city involved motorcyclists. A major factor in the reduction of motor cycle crashes is the reduced number of users.

The Council has been involved in a significant number of cycle safety initiatives in recent years.

CONCLUSIONS

Road safety gains have been made in Christchurch in recent years. We no longer have the worst rate crashes for the number of kilometres driven for per head of population compared with the other main urban areas.

The commitment to road safety made by the Co-ordinating Committee for Road Safety has been a significant factor in the number of road crashes occurring in Christchurch. The funding allocated to crash reduction studies and the implementation of these engineering improvements have achieved significant crash reductions.

We cannot rest on our laurels. "SAFE STREETS" The Christchurch Road Safety Strategy has addressed in a coordinated way the road safety challenge off our city. "SAFE STREETS" will be reviewed by the Co-ordinating Committee following the adoption of the National Road Safety Plan 2010. As well as considering such options as "Vision Zero" the city needs to focus its attention on recently identified issues such as crashes involving power poles.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.