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Tēnā koutou

SUBMISSION ON LAND TRANSPORT RULE SETTING OF SPEED LIMITS 2024 CONSULTATION

Introduction

Dunedin City Council (DCC) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the *Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2024* (the draft Rule).

The DCC notes that the draft Rule is a step in delivering the Government's commitment to reverse the previous Government's blanket speed limit reductions by replacing the *Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2022* (the 2022 Rule).

As a Road Controlling Authority (RCA) the draft Rule imposes requirements on DCC relating to speed limits, including the reversal of previous decisions to reduce speed limits.

Discussion

The draft Rule retains aspects of the framework established in the 2022 Rule. The aspects that have been retained are:

- a) RCAs may develop speed management plans, in line with the requirements of the draft Rule
- b) RCAs continue to submit speed management plans to the Director for certification, however the requirements for certification have been updated
- c) The definitions and process for determining school categories 1 and 2 remain unchanged

The draft consultation document includes seven proposals:

- 1. Requires cost benefit analysis for speed limit changes
- 2. Strengthens consultation requirements
- 3. Requires variable speed limits, instead of allowing discretion to have permanent or variable speed limits outside school gates
- 4. Introduces a Ministerial Speed Objective
- 5. Makes changes to speed limits classifications
- 6. Updates the Director's criteria for assessing speed management plans for certification
- 7. Reverses recent speed limit reductions

The Ministry is also seeking feedback on three other matters: the Speed Management Committee, regional speed management plans, and higher speed limits on certain roads.

The DCC notes that this consultation was opened on 13 June 2024 and is due to close on 11 July 2024. This is a short timeframe compared to previous setting of speed limit rule processes which allowed time to engage with the RCA sector directly through workshops and enabled RCAs and interested community groups to really understand the impact the changes would have on their community. The DCC would support a longer consultation timeframe.

The draft Rule has significant implications for the DCC in terms of existing speed limits implemented under the previous bylaw process and the interim Speed Management Plan (SMP), that has recently completed implementation. The requirement to reverse existing speed limits will incur significant costs to replace signage, and in many cases goes against community feedback. Infrastructure built to support speed limit changes will remain despite signage changing and may therefore create inconsistencies across the transport network.

The DCC has prepared a draft SMP which is significantly affected by changes proposed in the draft Rule. Consultation on the draft SMP in 2023 saw over 2000 submissions received, followed by three days of hearings. The draft plan has been on hold while the DCC awaited further guidance on the draft Rule. The proposed new Rule has implications on the draft SMP, which will require review and amendment before it can be progressed further. While some speed limits can be amended or removed, the draft SMP also includes speed limits that are necessary to complete projects and correct previous speed limit anomalies. Many changes requested by the community will not be able to be progressed under the proposed draft Rule. It is concerning that the draft Rule removes the ability to implement speed limits lower than 50km/h on residential and neighbourhood streets.

The DCC notes the Government's objective to reduce public spending appears to be misaligned with the cost of changes required under the draft Rule.

Proposal 1 – Requires cost benefit analysis for speed limit changes

The introduction of this requirement will increase the time, cost and complexity of preparing speed management plans for RCAs. DCC acknowledges that there are tools already available (simplified procedures) under the monetized costs and benefits framework.

Proposal 2 – Strengthens consultation requirements

The DCC supports this proposal to ensure consultation across RCAs is consistent – this was the process undertaken by the DCC through the consultation processes for the interim SMP and the current draft SMP.

Proposal 3 – Requires variable speed limits outside school gates

The DCC supports the introduction of defined school travel times proposed in the draft Rule. This will improve understanding of school speed zones and when they apply.

The DCC supports the proposed amendment to the *The Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices 2004* (TCD Rule) to allow the use of static variable signs on main roads to reduce the costs of implementing variable school speed limits.

The DCC does not support the strict definition for the length of road outside the school gates for the school speed zones. The DCC consulted and implemented school speed zones as part of an interim SMP (developed under the 2022 Rule). The extent of these zones was determined by a mix of school and community requests, and sign locations were selected to minimise implementation costs.

The DCC does not support making permanent all 30km/h school speed ones into variable zones. If these permanent 30km/h school zones were reversed and smaller variable speed zones implemented, this would not improve safety. The 30km/h zones were developed based on requests from schools

and the community in response to known safety issues, or where crashes involving children have occurred.

Additionally, in many areas there are school activities outside of the proposed school travel times and communities have expressed the desire to be able to have reduced speed limits outside of normal school hours. Within Dunedin there have been three crashes recorded involving young pedestrians near school gates outside of the defined school travel times. The DCC prioritised permanent speed reductions outside these schools, as well as other road safety infrastructure to slow vehicles down and provide safe crossing facilities.

The draft Rule proposes the variable school zones must be implemented on a road outside the school gate for a total length of 300m (for category 1 schools). This could result in some schools with multiple entrances/school gates having multiple speed changes. The DCC requests that the road lengths be revised and defined as minimum lengths, and included in Schedule 1 of the draft Rule. This will enable RCAs to implement school speed zones in a way that is cost effective and appropriate for the road environment specific to the school/area.

Proposal 4 – Introduce a Ministerial Speed Objective

The DCC is concerned about this proposal as RCAs are required to consider the *Government Policy Statement on Land Transport* (GPS) and the road safety strategy when developing speed management plans and proposing new speed limits. The addition of a Ministerial Speed Objective is unnecessary and brings with it a precedent that the Minister of Transport can impose specific objectives that may contradict expert advice.

Proposal 5 – Changes to speed limits classifications

The DCC understands the changes included in this proposal reflect the Government's objective to reverse the previous government's 'blanket speed reductions'. However, the DCC recommends that the draft Rule continue to allow and encourage RCAs to propose a speed limit that is safe and appropriate in terms of the function, safety and use of a road or corridor.

For consistency, the DCC recommends Schedule 4 categories align with the One Network Framework (ONF) categorisation, which classifies roads based on both their movement and place value. This will better align all transport systems across the country to provide clear and agreed definitions for what roads fit within each category and what speed RCAs are allowed to propose.

The DCC considers removing reference to safe and appropriate speed limits as a significant reversal of the progress made in recent years to improve road safety in Dunedin and across the country. Increasing speed limits on roads where the evidence shows lower speed limits should be implemented represents acceptance that deaths and serious injuries will happen on our roads. This is not in line with international best practice¹ and expert guidance².

The DCC recommends that the definitions of the road categories for the exceptions table should align with the ONF categories. The DCC would also recommend defining what is meant by 'significant levels of pedestrian and/or cycling activity' in Schedule 4 to be consistent with the rest of the draft Rule and the prescriptive requirements/criteria for speed limits.

The DCC notes concern regarding the two state highways that pass through the central city and contribute to many safety issues and near misses, particularly due to the high volume of trucks. The DCC would like to highlight this safety issue, and the lack of enforcement on speed and poor driving behaviour. In dense urban environments there are times when the DCC, as RCA, needs to be able to

¹ <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Speed-Fact-sheet.pdf>

² <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Green-Manual-Speed-revised-edition-16Oct23.pdf>

manage increased foot traffic, such as around events. Additionally, by prioritising increased efficiency through increasing speed limits on road corridors, we anticipate a greater need for enforcement to deter speeding over and above the higher speed limits. DCC have been in discussions with NZTA colleagues around the introduction of red light running cameras. These cameras are currently rolled out in Auckland but have not made it further south than Christchurch. The DCC would support these cameras being rolled out, specifically on the State Highways in Dunedin. This aligns with one of the strategic principles of the GPS – Safety, and will address poor road user choice by disincentivising people running through red lights.

Proposal 6 – Update the Director’s criteria for assessing speed management plans for certification

The DCC supports the Director’s criteria for assessing speed management plans for certification are updated to ensure the criteria are specific to the Rule.

Proposal 7 – Reverse recent speed limit reductions

The DCC is concerned by the proposal to retrospectively change four years’ worth of speed limit changes that have been put in place through the appropriate bylaw or speed setting processes and involving substantial community consultation.

The DCC is also concerned by the short time frames proposed to allow councils to make the required changes, and the financial implications if the draft Rule proceeds as drafted.

The DCC has already implemented the interim SMP, in accordance with the 2022 Rule. The DCC estimates that it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to reverse the 26 permanent 30km/h zones set under the interim SMP, and speed limits implemented under the previous bylaw process. The DCC recommends that RCAs be able to determine the extent of the zones that are reversed to reduce implementation costs. Allowing RCAs to maintain the same (or similar) speed zone boundaries for the new variable zones would reduce costs. This aligns with the DCCs suggestion to amend the definition of the length of road outside the school gate under Proposal 3.

The DCC notes the requirement to reverse speed limits on urban connector roads may have problematic consequences in areas with high levels of walking and cycling, such as Dundas Street in the Tertiary Precinct area which was completed under the interim SMP.

The DCC would like to highlight that in some cases it is not appropriate to raise speeds on urban connector roads where they coincide with existing, justified lower speed areas. A one size fits all approach does not give RCAs the ability to retain speed limits that work for their community and the use of their roads. The DCC recommends that the ability to retain lower speed limits introduced after 1 January 2020 with demonstration of public support is available to all RCAs, so that existing lower speed limits can remain in place where there is community support.

The DCC acknowledges that funding for transport projects/speed limit changes is available through the National Land Transport Fund, however the timing of this consultation and the implementation timeframes proposed under the draft Rule do not align with the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) deadlines. Therefore, RCAs are not able to incorporate the costs to reverse the speed limits, as required under Proposal 7, in their programme for NLTP inclusion. This will have a large negative impact as it will require reallocating resources from existing road safety improvements to reversing speed limit changes implemented through the interim SMP that were approved under the 2022 Rule.

Summary

The DCC supports the clarity provided by defining school travel times and strengthening the consultation requirements to improve consistency of process across all RCAs.

The DCC does not support proposals that will contribute to poor road safety outcomes and result in a financial burden on DCC that has not been planned for in the already constrained funding environment for road safety improvements.

Furthermore, the DCC does not support the proposal of a Ministerial Speed Objective as this is already accounted for as part of the *Government Policy Statement on Land Transport* (GPS).

The DCC (welcomes the opportunity to speak to this submission at any hearings.

Nāku noa nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Radich', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jules Radich
MAYOR OF DUNEDIN