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Report 01.603

24 August 2001

File: TP/1/8/2

01.603.awb.doc

Report to the Regional Land Transport Committee
By Tony Brennand, Manager Transport Policy and
John Holmes, Section Leader, Policy Advice, Environment Division

Submission On Proposed Rule Changes For Heavy Vehicle Limits

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's endorsement of a draft submission on a proposal by Transit New Zealand to allow higher mass and dimension limits for vehicles on public roads in New Zealand.

2. Background

A series of reports have been produced by Transit New Zealand to support a change in the New Zealand Heavy Vehicle Limits. This project was overseen by a steering group with representatives from Transit New Zealand, Road Transport Forum, territorial authorities, LTSA, Bus and Coach Association NZ, Transfund NZ and MOT.

Transit New Zealand's investigation is based on an economic evaluation of spending over \$10 million per annum in increased pavement maintenance and rehabilitation, bridge replacements and improved road geometry. Economic benefits were evaluated for improvement in efficiencies in the road transport industry, safety and environmental impacts.

Two scenarios are examined. Scenario A considers allowing the vehicle fleet to operate on the whole of the New Zealand public road network at higher mass limits but no increase in vehicle dimensions. The investigation considers mass limits of 45.5, 47, 48.5 and 50 tonnes. Scenario B allows increases in both mass and dimension limits of vehicles but only for travel on selected routes.

Benefit-cost ratios for options within the scenarios are presented which range from 2.7 to 9.0. The presented benefit-cost ratios increase with increasing mass limit.

This study arose from four contentions that have been put forward by the Road Transport Forum. They are:

- the current minimum axle spacing requirement of 13.2 metres for a gross weight of 38 tonnes is too long;
- 20 metre B-trains should be operating at higher gross weight limits (perhaps up to 55 tonnes);
- 17 metre semi-trailers should be operating at higher gross weight limits (perhaps up to 42 tonnes);
- the gross weight limits for heavy vehicle combinations should be aligned with those of Australia – this would permit, for example, the operation of 6-8 axle heavy vehicle combinations with 19 metre wheelbase at 50 tonnes.

3. **Comment**

A presentation on the proposal from Transit New Zealand and the Road Transport Forum will be made at the meeting.

A draft submission for the consideration of the Committee is provided in Attachment 1. In summary, the draft submission questions the proposal to allow higher mass and dimension limits and suggests Transit New Zealand's analysis has been simplistic.

4. **Communication**

There are no relevant communication matters.

5. **Recommendation**

That the RLTC recommends the Regional Council adopts the attached draft submission as may be amended by the RLTC.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

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Attachments

1. **Draft Submission WRC on Transit New Zealand's Document, "Improving Heavy Vehicle Efficiency on New Zealand's Roads"**
2. **Report by Allan Kennaird Consulting Limited on Transit New Zealand Heavy Vehicle Limits Project**