

Proactive Release

This document is proactively released by Te Manatū Waka the Ministry of Transport.

Some information has been withheld on the basis that it would not, if requested under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), be released. Where that is the case, the relevant section of the OIA has been noted and no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Listed below are the most commonly used grounds from the OIA.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Description of ground</u>
6(a)	as release would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government
6(b)	as release would be likely to prejudice the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government; or (ii) any international organisation
6(c)	prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial
9(2)(a)	to protect the privacy of natural persons
9(2)(b)(ii)	to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information
9(2)(ba)(i)	to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public
9(2)(ba)(ii)	to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest
9(2)(f)(ii)	to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect collective and individual ministerial responsibility
9(2)(f)(iv)	to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials
9(2)(g)(i)	to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty
9(2)(h)	to maintain legal professional privilege
9(2)(i)	to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities
9(2)(j)	to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations)



11 February 2026

OC260008

Hon Chris Bishop

Action required by:

Minister of Transport

Monday, 16 February 2026

APPROVAL TO CONSULT ON PHASE 2 OF SIMPLIFYING THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR HEAVY VEHICLES

Purpose

This briefing seeks your approval for the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) to begin public consultation on a second phase of reforms to simplify the Land Transport Rules for heavy vehicles.

Key points

- On 19 June 2025, you announced a new programme of work to reform the Land Transport Rules (the Rules Reform programme). This included a workstream to improve heavy vehicle productivity.
- From October to December 2025, NZTA consulted on a first phase of reforms to improve heavy vehicle productivity.
- We are now seeking your agreement for NZTA to begin public consultation on the second phase of reforms. These proposals focus on efficiency improvements by addressing a range of issues raised by industry. You have delegated authority from Cabinet to approve this [ECO-25-MIN-0083 refers].
- If you approve, NZTA will release a discussion document (Annex 1), alongside an interim Regulatory Impact Statement prepared by the Ministry of Transport (Annex 2). Consultation will run for four weeks from 18 February to 18 March 2025 to align with the consultation on lane use. Officials are working with your office to prepare a joint announcement for the two consultations.
- Further analysis is needed on proposals relating to over-dimension and over-weight vehicles. In addition, during targeted consultation and in communications to you, industry have pressed for more ambitious reforms. The review of the Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2016 (VDAM review) that is underway will deliver these significant productivity improvements.

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- 1 agree to NZTA running a four-week public consultation (from 18 February to 18 March 2026) on the second phase of Rules reforms for heavy vehicles, Yes / No
- 2 agree to the release of the discussion document and interim RIS (attached as Annexes 1 and 2) for this consultation, subject to any minor editorial changes, Yes / No
- 3 note that following consultation on phase two of reforms, proposals from phase one and two of heavy vehicle productivity will be combined into one workstream,
- 4 agree to proactively release this briefing on the Ministry of Transport website, Yes / No
- 5 refer this briefing to Hon James Meager, Associate Minister of Transport, Yes / No



Katrina Quickenden
 Acting Director, Sector Strategy
 11 / 02 / 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
 Minister of Transport
 / /

- Minister's office to complete:
- Approved Declined
 - Seen by Minister Not seen by Minister
 - Overtaken by events

Comments

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Laura Bender, Acting Manager - Regulatory Reform	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Amber Fraser-Mackenzie, Adviser - Safety		

Proposals for consultation

Following targeted consultation and analysis, we recommend five proposals for public consultation

- 1 The changes proposed in this consultation are summarised in figure 1 below. These proposals were either part of your June announcement or signalled in previous advice to you [OC250875 refers].

Figure 1 - Proposals included in consultation on phase 2 of heavy vehicle productivity

1. Review permitting approach to enable rental stock to be delivered spontaneously



High Productivity Motor Vehicle (HPMV) truck and trailer combinations are commonly available for hire. These vehicles require an HPMV permit to be delivered.

The processing time to obtain an HPMV permit for any new truck and trailer combination (up to 10 business days) makes it challenging for operators to plan driver availability, book ferry crossings, and plan vehicle swap scenarios that reduce the number of trips required.

We propose removing the requirement for a HPMV permit when delivering unladen combinations between depots and to customers. This would improve the timeliness of vehicle rental supply and ease logistical challenges for rental service operators and their customers.

2. Permanently enable Class 1 drivers to drive zero emission vehicles weighing up to 7,500kg



Batteries in zero emission versions of light commercial vehicles increase the gross laden weight of many of these vehicles above 6,000 kg, meaning they cannot be driven on a Class 1 licence. This means operators of these vehicles either need to reduce their payloads or incur the one-off and ongoing costs of a Class 2 licence.

Reviewing this regulatory barrier to uptake of electric vehicles has been included in New Zealand's second emissions reduction plan and requested by industry groups.

In 2023 and early 2025, the Director of Land Transport issued a class exemption for two years allowing battery electric vehicles up to 7,500kg that are similar to a diesel equivalent to be operated on a Class 1 licence. We propose to make this permanent in the Rule to support long term decarbonisation of light commercial vehicles and reduce compliance costs on industry with minimal safety risk.

3. Permanently enable drivers of electric public transport service buses (with more than two axles) and a gross laden weight of up to 22,000 kg to be driven on a class 2 or 2L driver licence



This proposal is also a current class exemption issued by the Director of Land Transport. Electric public transport service buses have the same safety and handling characteristics as buses with internal combustion engines, but drivers are subject to stricter licence requirements because of the extra weight added by the battery. We propose to make the existing allowance permanent in the Rule to give operators greater certainty to invest in electric buses, make it easier to recruit and train drivers, and reduce barriers to uptake of zero emission heavy vehicles. This aligns with one of the actions in New

Zealand's second emissions reduction plan.

4. Improve load pilot signage requirements



Load pilot vehicles are responsible for guiding oversize loads being transported on the road (for example, a house being moved) without causing danger or damage to other road users and property. The current sign options may not always be adequately descriptive to warn other road users about the nature of the oncoming oversize load. Industry have also noted visibility issues with current design requirements.

We propose several minor and/or technical amendments to improve load pilot signage requirements. These are to allow new pilot vehicle-mounted signs for use, 'OVERSIZE LOAD AHEAD', 'OVERSIZE LOAD FOLLOWS', and 'PREPARE TO STOP', enable all pilot vehicle-mounted signs to be 'reverse colour' for greater visibility during hours of darkness, and remove the requirement for a forward-facing load pilot warning sign for a rear pilot vehicle.

5. Allow overseas heavy vehicle licence holders to convert their licence by undertaking approved courses

Home · Driver licences · New residents and visitors · Converting to a New Zealand driver licence

Converting a truck licence

If you have a valid overseas truck licence you may be able to convert it to a New Zealand driver licence.

A valid overseas licence means that your licence:

- must be either current or expired within the last 12 months, and
- must not be suspended, disqualified or revoked in the country of issue.

Overseas heavy vehicle licence holders from non-exempt countries (or holders from exempt countries who have held their licence for less than two years) are required to sit both a theory and practical test to convert to New Zealand Class 2 – 5 licences. Alternatively, commercial vehicle operators can apply for an individual exemption from these tests for drivers who have undertaken an approved course (which currently costs \$100). This poses costs to operators and creates

administrative work for NZTA.

We propose allowing overseas heavy vehicle licence holders to convert their licence by either sitting tests or undertaking approved courses. This would remove the need for NZTA to administer the individual exemption process and reduce costs for operators by reducing the time taken to convert a licence and start working. We do not expect this change to pose safety risks, as approved courses are accepted by NZTA as being of an equivalent or better standard than the relevant practical test requirement.

- 2 NZTA have flagged a connection between Proposal 5, allowing overseas heavy vehicle licence holders to convert their licence, and its ongoing investigation of fraud in overseas heavy vehicle licence conversions, including by approved heavy vehicle course providers. They have signalled that the findings of these investigations could affect their view on whether to progress this proposal. Our advice to you following consultation will reflect these considerations as well as the results of consultation.

This consultation is part of broader work to simplify regulations overall, including for heavy vehicles

- 3 Our previous advice on phase 2 included several proposals to simplify heavy vehicle driver licensing which were generally supported through public consultation in 2019 [OC250164 refers].¹ In late 2025, we engaged with industry on these proposals and we are satisfied that the feedback on them has not changed significantly, and so further consultation is not required. These will be progressed through an Order in Council process this year, as you agreed to on 22 October 2025 [OC250164 refers].

¹ Simplifying the progression from Class 2 – 5 licences, removing the Accelerated Licensing Process, removing the requirements for special-type vehicle endorsements, standardising speed thresholds for tractors and special-type vehicles, simplifying the rules for tractors that can be driven on a Class 1 licence, and allowing automatic renewal of general licences for all endorsement holders.

- 4 We are also seeking your approval to begin public consultation on proposals to improve lane use at the same time [OC260011 refers].

Industry has expressed a desire for more ambitious reforms

- 5 la Ara Transporting New Zealand (la Ara) wrote to you calling for the Rules Reform programme to be more ambitious and delivered on a faster timeline [TCB25-2757 refers]. It also suggested a range of new proposals to be included.
- 6 The proposals being progressed in phases one and two were based largely on proposals submitted by the heavy vehicle industry prior to your announcement of the programme, and we have engaged with these groups on the proposals prior to consultation.
- 7 We are also carrying out a wider review of VDAM to gather data on the possible effects of increasing the maximum weight and size limits for heavy vehicles on our roads. NZTA has contracted WSP to undertake the research that will support this review. We expect to brief you on the emerging findings of this research mid-year.

We recommend keeping to a tight scope to deliver Rule changes to schedule

- 8 While we understand the desire for bolder and faster reform, we do not have capacity to take forward additional phases of work in 2026 unless existing work is deprioritised. We provided a draft response to your office on 15 January advising la Ara that the VDAM review is underway, and any new suggested proposals have been passed to officials to be considered for future phases of work.
- 9 Following targeted engagement with industry, road controlling authorities, and internal NZTA subject matter experts, we recommend not including some proposals we advised you we would explore for phase 2 [OC250875 refers] in this consultation. These are more complicated than originally expected and require more significant consideration than is possible in current timeframes. These proposals are to:
 - allow over-dimension vehicles on Auckland motorways and toll roads
 - simplify HPMV proforma permit requirements for tow trucks
 - update load pilot vehicle licences.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)



- 13 There is a risk that not progressing the proposals to allow over-dimension vehicles on Auckland motorways and toll roads through this consultation will be seen by industry as not delivering on

the commitments in your mid-2025 announcement.² However, this allows us to prioritise next steps for phases one and two and the VDAM review which is expected to deliver significant benefits for industry.

Next steps

- 14 Some of the proposals require Cabinet agreement to authorise the issuing of drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to amend the Land Transport (Driver Licensing) Rule 1999. We will provide you with a draft Cabinet paper to enable this process on 18 February 2026. This paper will also include decisions needed for other workstreams including lane use and light vehicle inspection requirements.
- 15 Following consultation on phase two of reforms, we will combine the proposals from both phases into one workstream to minimise the number of papers going to you and Cabinet. This approach will follow the previously signalled timeline for phase two with a Rule change in June [OC250875 refers]. This will slightly delay the phase one proposals from the originally planned Rule change in May, s 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
- 16 Officials maintain a register of regulatory reform proposals (including additional ideas suggested by industry) that could not be progressed through this consultation. We are considering options for a next tranche of Rules reform (after your existing commitments have been delivered) and will advise you later this year.

PROACTIVELY RELEASED BY
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT TE MANATOU WAKA

² These proposals correspond to your commitment to review restrictions on overweight and over-dimension vehicle movements.