

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 (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)



15 October 2025

OC250875

Hon Chris Bishop

Action required by:

Minister of Transport

Monday, 27 October 2025

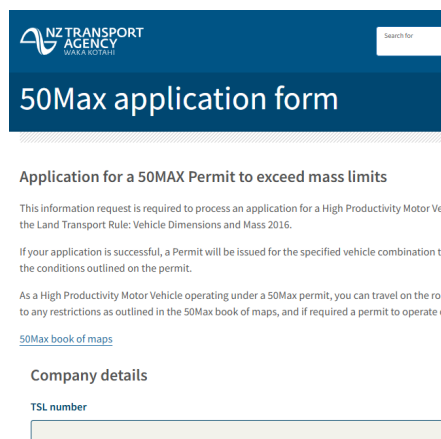
APPROVAL TO CONSULT ON SIMPLIFYING THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR HEAVY VEHICLES

Purpose

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

Advice

- On 19 June 2025, you announced a new programme of work to reform the Land Transport Rules (Rules) [OC250164 refers]. This included a commitment to consult in October 2025 and February 2026 on two sets of reforms intended to reduce regulatory burdens and improve productivity in the road freight sector.
- We are now seeking your approval for NZTA to begin public consultation on the first phase of reforms, summarised in Figure 1 below. This will involve the release of a consultation document (Annexes 1 and 2), interim Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) (Annex 3), a draft Rule amendment (Annex 4), and communications material (Annex 5).
- You have delegated authority from Cabinet to approve the release of this consultation [ECO-25-MIN-0083 refers]. If you approve, NZTA will run this consultation for seven weeks from 29 October to 17 December 2025.
- As part of the wider Rules reform programme, we are seeking Minister Meager's approval to consult simultaneously on updating Warrant of Fitness and Certificate of Fitness requirements, and on requiring vehicles entering New Zealand to be fitted with additional safety features. The Associate Minister of Transport has delegated authority to begin public consultation on these topics [ECO-25-MIN-0083 refers]. We are coordinating with your and Minister Meager's offices on a single media release and communications strategy for all three consultations.

Figure 1. We seek your agreement to begin public consultation on a first set of reforms


NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
WAIKATO

50Max application form

Application for a 50MAX Permit to exceed mass limits

This information request is required to process an application for a High Productivity Motor Vehicle under the Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2016.

If your application is successful, a Permit will be issued for the specified vehicle combination to the conditions outlined on the permit.

As a High Productivity Motor Vehicle operating under a 50Max permit, you can travel on the road to any restrictions as outlined in the 50Max book of maps, and if required a permit to operate on the 50Max book of maps.

Company details

TSL number

1. Removing the requirement to apply for 50MAX permits.

Since 2013, operators have needed to apply for permits to operate 50MAX trucks on pre-approved 50MAX routes. 50MAX trucks enable operators to carry heavier loads than normal trucks. They have not caused the wear and tear that was feared in 2013, and NZTA now issues tens of thousands of 50MAX permits every year, with very few declined.

We propose amending the Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2016 (the VDM Rule) to allow 50MAX vehicles to operate on the approved 50MAX network without a permit.

50MAX vehicles would need to meet design specifications and safety requirements outlined in proformas that would be made available on the NZTA website. An approved 50MAX network map and additional proformas (as required) would require approval by the Director of Land Transport (the Director).

**2. Removing the requirement to display H plates.**

Trucks heavier than 44 tonnes or longer than 19 metres are required to display 'H-plates'. These plates (often signs or stickers) were originally intended to help the Police identify vehicles operating under permits for targeted enforcement checks.

Over the last decade, these trucks have become far more common. Many trucks display H plates at all times, even when operating below the 44 tonne/19 metre threshold. The rules around H plates are not well understood and most violations are withdrawn or waived. H plates no longer appear to play a useful role in enforcement. We propose amending the VDM Rule to remove this requirement.

**3. Simplifying the process for updating the Log Bolster Attachment Code (the Code).**

For decades, key engineering requirements for log bolster attachments have been set out in the Code. The Code is issued by the Log Transport Safety Council, an association of logging industry businesses and government agencies including NZTA. The Code is written into the Land Transport Rule: Heavy Vehicles 2004 (the HV Rule).

We propose amending the HV Rule to remove full Code text and incorporate it by reference instead. This would enable the Code to be updated without requiring a formal Rule change every time. To retain oversight of any changes, we propose that future Code updates would require approval by the Director.

Low volume vehicle means a make and model listed in Table A: Vehicle classes, other than Class 1, that is:

- (a) manufactured, assembled or scrapped within the last one year, and where the construction is:

4. Removing an unused definition from the HV Rule

The HV Rule includes a definition of a "low volume vehicle". This term is not used anywhere else in the HV Rule. We propose to remove this unnecessary provision.

- The first two proposals (50MAX and H plates) were included in your June announcement.

- The third proposal (on simplifying the Code) was not signalled in your announcement, or in our previous advice to you. However, we recommend including it in this package because it is a minor administrative change that will remove a legislative barrier for the logging sector. We expect this proposal to be uncontroversial, and the Ministry for Regulation confirms it is exempt from regulatory impact analysis requirements.
- The fourth proposal (on removing an unused definition) is also new. We discovered this unused definition while we were drafting the Rule changes for proposals 1-3. We propose to simplify the Rule by removing this unnecessary provision. This change would have no policy implications and would not affect any other Rules.

This consultation is the start of our work to simplify regulations for heavy vehicles

- We have also started work on the second phase of heavy vehicles Rules reforms set out in your June announcement (Annex 6 provides a full list). Discussion with heavy vehicle industry representatives led to many of the proposals across both phases. To continue this momentum, we seek your agreement to begin targeted consultation with the sector on the second phase of proposals while public consultation on the first phase is underway.
- The second phase of this work also includes several proposals to simplify driver licencing for heavy vehicles which were subject to public consultation in 2019 [OC250164 refers]. These proposals were widely supported at the time, and we do not expect to gain any further insights from publicly consulting on them again. We think it would be more useful to focus the second phase of public consultation on the new proposals you announced in June 2025. We can sense-check the 2019 proposals through targeted engagement with industry instead.
- However, the ordinary Rule-making process requires you to consult on Rule changes. To avoid any legal risk from not publicly re-consulting on the 2019 proposals, we seek your agreement to use an Order in Council instead of an ordinary Rule for the second phase of reforms. We will provide you with more detailed policy advice on the second phase of reforms next year.
- In mid-2026, we will also brief you on the emerging findings from our wider review of the VDAM Rule. This review is considering whether current VDAM parameters relating to vehicle maximum size and weight can be increased. Part of this review involves research (and likely real-world testing) to assess the costs and benefits of allowing heavier and larger vehicles onto our roads [OC250164 refers].

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | agree to NZTA running a seven week public consultation (from 29 October to 17 December 2026) on the first phase of Rules reforms for heavy vehicles; | Yes / No |
| 2 | agree to the release of the consultation document, interim RIS, and draft rule for Land Transport Rule: Heavy Vehicle Productivity Reform Amendment 2025 (attached as Annexes 1, 2, and 3) subject to any minor editorial changes; | Yes / No |

- 3 **agree** to the communications plan for this consultation (attached as Annex 4); **Yes / No**
- 4 **agree** to progress the 2019 proposals to reform heavy vehicle driver licencing through an Order in Council next year, instead of re-consulting on them, given that there was widespread support in the earlier consultation; **Yes / No**
- 5 **agree** to officials starting targeted consultation with stakeholders on the second phase of reforms, alongside public consultation on the first phase. **Yes / No**
- 6 **agree** to proactively release this briefing on the Ministry of Transport website. **Yes / No**



Katrina Quickenden

Manager, Regulatory Reform

14 / 10 / 2025

Hon Chris Bishop

Minister of Transport

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Minister's office to complete:
☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Seen by Minister

☐ Not seen by Minister

☐ Overtaken by events

Comments
Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Katrina Quickenden, Manager, Regulatory Reform	 s9(2)(a)	✓
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ANNEX 1: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

ANNEX 2: SUMMARY CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

ANNEX 3: INTERIM REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

ANNEX 4: DRAFT RULE

ANNEX 5: COMMUNICATIONS MATERIAL

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MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT TE MANATŪ WAKA

ANNEX 6: FULL LIST OF HEAVY VEHICLE REGULATORY REFORMS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1 proposals

- Remove 50MAX permit requirements
- Remove H-plate requirements
- Simplify future updates to the Log Bolster Attachment Code

Phase 2 proposals (TBC - policy work in progress)

New proposals for 2025 consultation

- Allow over-dimension vehicles on toll roads / Auckland motorways
- Allow over-dimension loads on HPMV permits
- Enable 'just in time' permitting for rental stock
- Simplify HPMV proforma permit requirements for tow truck drivers
- Update load pilot vehicle licences, signage and lighting
- Adjust the weight thresholds for Class 1 and 2 driver licences
- Improve the heavy vehicle driver licencing pathway for immigrants

Proposals that were consulted on in 2019 but not yet implemented

- Simplify progression from Class 2-5 driver licences
- Remove the ineffective Accelerated Licence Process
- Remove requirements for special-type vehicle endorsements
- Standardise speed thresholds for tractors and special-type vehicles
- Simplify rules for driving tractors on Class 1 licence
- Automatic general licence renewal for some endorsement holders

VDAM review

- Full review of maximum vehicle weight and size limits, combinations, access restrictions, permit requirements, etc

