

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Update on Driver Licensing Improvement Programme Regional Trials and Reduction in Practical Driver Testing Wait Times by Region
Date	9 November 2022
Briefing number	BRI-2626

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
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Action taken by Office of the Minister

- ☐ Noted
- ☐ Seen by Minister
- ☐ Agreed
- ☐ Feedback provided
- ☐ Forwarded to
- ☐ Needs change [please specify]
- ☐ Withdrawn
- ☐ Overtaken by events

9 November 2022

Hon Michael Wood – Minister of Transport

Update on Driver Licensing Improvement Programme Regional Trials and Reduction in Practical Driver Testing Wait Times by Region

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with an update on the Driver Licensing Improvement Programme (DLIP) regional trials, outlining the significant reduction in practical driver testing wait times by region, and controls to manage practical test wait times.
2. At the Road to Zero meeting held on the 19 October 2022, I discussed the progress of the DLIP and reduction in practical driver testing wait times.
3. I offered to provide an overview of the regional trials and driver testing wait times by region to inform you of the progress made to improve access to the driver licensing system and reduce practical test wait times.

Background

4. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and Te Manatū Waka - Ministry of Transport are working together to improve access to the driver licensing system.
5. On the 30 June 2022, Employment Education and Training (EET) Ministers endorsed the Director of Land Transport leading the development of a cross agency Driver Licensing Improvement Programme and a cross-agency steering group has since been established. This includes Waka Kotahi, MSD, Te Manatū Waka, NZ Police, Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). There is also support from Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Driving Change Network, and community organisations.
6. The System Design workstream has completed mapping of the complex driver licence ecosystem in collaboration with the many government agencies who are involved. These workshops have identified future state design opportunities that inform the draft DLIP Framework and Implementation Plan that will be presented to EET Ministers in December 2022.
7. Driver testing wait times were impacted significantly during COVID-19, creating a backlog of testing, and resulting in an increase in driver testing wait times.
8. Additional causes of high driver testing wait times include Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ) staff sickness/COVID-19 related illness, and the resignation of testing officers. This requires VTNZ to manage these vacancies by using existing testing officers from other site locations whilst recruitment is underway.

9. The DLIP established two community-based driver licence testing trials in Te Tai Tokerau and Tairāwhiti in mid-2022.

Regional trials overview

10. Since the community-based trials commenced in June 2022, in partnership with Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP), 183 tests have been completed across both trials in Te Tai Tokerau and Tairāwhiti.
11. Northern REAP have completed 76 practical tests over 9 days of testing and Tairāwhiti REAP, in partnership with McInnes Driver Training, have completed 107 practical tests over 18 days of testing.
12. The regional trials and partnership with REAP is enabling communities to progress through the driver licensing system and supporting applicants by reducing barriers and improving their experience to obtain a driver's licence.

Practical driver testing wait times by region

13. Current wait times for practical testing nationwide have significantly improved since their peak across all regions, with more notable wait time reductions in Northland and Auckland Northwest.
14. The Northland region has reduced wait times from their peak of 80 days down to 5 days for a Class 1 Full and 84 to 10 days for a Class 1 Restricted licence test. Similarly, the Auckland Northwest region has reduced wait times from 85 days down to 10 days for a Class 1 Full and 98 down to 17 days for a Class 1 Restricted licence test.
15. The grand average across all regions has seen a reduction in wait times from 61 to 8 days for a Class 1 Full and 65 to 13 days for a Class 1 Restricted licence test.
16. The table below provides an overview of practical test wait times by region, as they were at their peak to 7 October 2022:

Practical Test Wait Times by Region						
Region	Peak - FLT Average Number of Days	Current week ending 7 October 2022	Improvement Peak to Current	Peak - RLT Average Number of Days	Current week ending 7 October 2022	Improvement Peak to Current
Northland	80	5	75	84	10	74
Auckland North-West	85	10	75	98	17	81
Auckland Central-South	71	6	65	75	10	65
Waikato	80	12	68	83	18	65
Bay of Plenty	75	10	65	79	14	65

Region	Peak - FLT Average Number of Days	Current week ending 7 October 2022	Improvement Peak to Current	Peak - RLT Average Number of Days	Current week ending 7 October 2022	Improvement Peak to Current
Wellington	65	6	59	71	10	61
Canterbury	65	6	59	73	13	60
Otago Southland	67	9	58	70	14	56
Grand Average	61	8	53	65	13	52

17. The total pass rate across all regions (from 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2022) for a full licence is 67 percent and 54 percent for a restricted licence, averaging a total pass rate of 65 percent combined.

Controls to manage practical driver testing wait times

18. VTNZ has undertaken several training courses for the training of new driver testing officers and has increased driver testing officer capacity through recruitment of testing officers.
19. VTNZ is also utilising testing officers from locations that have current capacity to support other sites to address areas with high wait times and alleviate the wait times in those regions. This can include flying testing officers to alternative locations.
20. Establishment of new test routes for Waipukurau, Wairoa, Kaikohe and Dargaville is underway, with the DLIP leading a cross-functional working group that includes VTNZ. The test routes for the four locations have met standards and guidelines criteria and the work is progressing well.
21. In collaboration with several partners, including a local business, new test routes were launched for Matamata and Upper Hutt in October 2022.
22. For Upper Hutt testing, the Automobile Association (AA) has opened a new agency for driver and vehicle licensing requirements in Upper Hutt to support VTNZ's practical driver licence testing.
23. For Matamata testing, support from a local business enables the Carpet Court showrooms to be used as the base for VTNZ's driver testing officer to run practical tests each Monday.

Next steps

24. Waka Kotahi will continue to monitor the practical test wait times and work closely with VTNZ to increase driver testing capacity and availability.

It is recommended that you:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Note the update on the DLIP regional trials | Yes / No |
| 2. Note the significant reduction in practical test wait times by region | Yes / No |
| 3. Note the controls to manage practical test wait times | Yes / No |



Kane Patena

Director of Land Transport

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Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport

Date: 2022

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