

Traffic Note 40

Date: December 03
From: Safer Roads
Authorisation: Peter Croft, Manager Safer Roads

Signature: 

No. of pages: 2

Revision of Guidelines for facilities for blind and vision-impaired pedestrians - Information

1. Purpose

Guidelines for facilities for blind and vision-impaired pedestrians (RTS 14), issued in 2003, is an extensive revision of the Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) document first published in 1997. RTS14 provides clear guidance on the location and layout of facilities for blind and vision-impaired people for most typical situations. It also outlines key design principles so appropriate designs can be developed for non-standard situations.

The purpose of this traffic note is to give some background on the development of the guide, provide advice on its application and information on obtaining copies.

2. Development background

The guide was prepared with assistance from a stakeholder committee representing NZ Association of Blind Citizens, Royal NZ Foundation of the Blind, Disabled Persons' Assembly, local government engineers and the supply industries for tactile paving and traffic signals. A consultation draft was widely circulated in May 2003: the resulting publication was released to the industry and discussed at the IPENZ Traffic Management Workshop in September and the Traffic Signals Workshop in November.

3. Methods of assisting blind and vision impaired pedestrians

There are two main methods used to assist blind and vision-impaired pedestrians with their orientation and mobility.

- audible–tactile traffic signals
- tactile ground surface indicators (tactile paving).

Disclaimer: The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) has endeavoured to ensure the material in this document is technically accurate and reflects legal requirements. However, the document does not override governing legislation. The LTSA does not accept liability for any consequences arising from the use of this document. If the user of this document is unsure whether the material is correct, they should make direct reference to the relevant legislation and contact the LTSA.

Audible-tactile traffic signals

The New Zealand traffic signal industry has agreed on one standard for the audible and tactile features of traffic signals. An international literature search confirmed the design embodied in Australian standard *AS2353 - 1999 Pedestrian push button assemblies* is best practice. National adoption of this design, which forms the basis for many existing installations, will give consistent messages to blind and vision-impaired people. RTS14 gives guidance on the location, height and orientation of the pedestrian push button assembly to provide consistency and predictability for users.

Tactile ground surface indicators (tactile paving).

For blind and vision-impaired pedestrians the transition from footpath to roadway can be hard to detect, particularly at pram crossings and at the bottom of kerb ramps built for easy negotiation by wheelchairs. Tactile ground surface indicators (tactile paving) can assist. Use of tactile paving is described in the 1997 edition of RTS 14, *NZS4121:2001 Design for access and mobility* and *AS/NZS 1428.4:2002 Design for access and mobility Part 4: Tactile indicators*. Practitioners have found advice in these documents conflict and, for many common layouts, sometimes inappropriate. The revision of RTS 14 resolves any conflicts and provides application guidance for most commonly encountered situations. RTS 14 is now the appropriate guide for the installation of tactile paving on public footpaths.

4. Implementation and prioritisation

RTS14 recommends all new pedestrian facilities be designed and installed with features detailed in the guide. The standard should be applied wherever traffic signal pedestrian phases are being installed or upgraded. Tactile paving should be installed at all new or upgraded kerb crossings.

Because it will take a long time to upgrade existing crossings criteria for setting priorities have been suggested in RTS14.

5. Status of RTS14

RTS 14 is a best practice guideline and is not mandated by law. Road controlling authorities should adopt the guideline as a fundamental document for designing and installing facilities for blind and vision-impaired pedestrians.

6. Obtaining RTS 14

Printed copies of RTS 14 can be obtained from LTSA offices for \$10. A slightly lower resolution electronic version can be downloaded from:

www.ltsa.govt.nz/roads/rts/rts-14-2003.pdf