

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Transport Signage Information
Date	12 September 2024
Briefing number	BRI-3133

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1st contact
Meredith Ussher	Acting Group General Manager Commercial & Corporate		s 9(2)(a)	✓

Action taken by Office of the Minister

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- Withdrawn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

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

12 September 2024

Hon Simeon Brown – Minister of Transport

TRANSPORT SIGNAGE INFORMATION

Purpose

1. This briefing responds to your expectations of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) in relation to transport signage that you expressed in your letter dated 16 July 2024 to Simon Bridges, NZTA Board Chair.

Background and context

2. Following the release of the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024 (GPS) you outlined a number of expectations relating to the GPS and also expressed the following:
 - *“I expect NZTA to work with the Ministry of Transport to ensure transport signage (including public transport signage) that is part funded by the Crown, is made accessible (including communicating firstly in English), providing consistency with the commitments set out in the New Zealand National Party and New Zealand First Coalition agreement. I expect to see a plan on how this will be implemented by 1 September 2024.”*

Summary

3. An available mechanism by which the Minister of Transport may seek to control or influence the content or language used in transport signage across the land transport system is through rules made under the Land Transport Act 1998.
4. There are existing rules for “traffic signs” under the Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices 2004 (TCD Rule) which all road controlling authorities (including NZTA) must comply with.
5. We plan to work with the Ministry of Transport (the Ministry) to explore how your expectations could be reflected through the TCD Rule.

Existing rules in the TCD Rule relating to language used in traffic signs

6. Traffic signs as defined below are regulated by the Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices 2004 (TCD Rule). According to the TCD Rule a traffic sign may be:
 - a) ‘regulatory’ (including speed limit and parking signs), that is, it instructs road users by requiring or prohibiting specified actions in using a road;
 - b) ‘warning’, that is, it informs road users of hazards or of other features requiring a safe response on or near a road;
 - c) ‘advisory’, that is, it provides road users with information or guidance (including information about destinations, routes, amenities, distances, street name signs and place names).

7. Unless otherwise provided for in the TCD Rule or specifically authorised by NZTA under clause 4.4(4), traffic signs may only display words or symbols as set out in Schedule 1 of the Rule. In some instances, the wording in Schedule 1 is prescribed, and in other cases it is not. For example, regulatory and warning signs tend to have prescribed wording such as “except authorised vehicles” or “bridge repairs”, although in some cases the Rule will provide for variations in applicable time/weight etc. Supplementary ‘school’ signs are examples of signs with prescribed wording in Schedule 1, and an amendment to the TCD Rule was passed in 2022 to provide for te reo Māori and English on these signs when they are due for replacement. This is the only instance of prescribed bilingual signage in the TCD Rule.
8. Advisory signs will in many instances have prescribed wording, but sometimes provide flexibility, such as with respect to localities. Wherever there is discretion, signage must still comply with the general requirements for traffic control devices at clause 3.1 of the TCD Rule. This requires that the device is safe and appropriate for the road, conveys a clear and consistent message and is visible and legible to road users. These requirements are supported by an extensive Traffic Control Devices Manual. On the localities point, the TCD Rule does not specify which language must be used, but the Traffic Control Devices Manual refers to the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa, which grants some places and features a name that incorporates both English and te reo Māori (e.g., Aoraki / Mount Cook). Part 2 of the TCD Manual outlines the use of dual names at Appendix A.
9. The above covers traffic control devices only. For completeness, RCAs can also make bylaws that control signage visible from the road, for example, advertising signage. The TCD Rule exists alongside these bylaws – bylaws cannot be used to allow other traffic control signage that is different to that prescribed in the TCD Rule. (An example bylaw is the Signs on State Highways Bylaw 2010). In addition, the above does not cover signs or advertising on public transport or elsewhere that sit outside of the TCD Rule.

s 9(2)(h)

Next steps

14. s 9(2)(f)(iv)



It is recommended that you:

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing



.....
Meredith Ussher

Acting Group General Manager, Commercial & Corporate

.....

Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport

Date: 2024

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Appendix One: TCD Rule Clauses**Section 3 General requirements for traffic control devices****3.1 General safety requirements for traffic control devices**

Traffic control devices, whether used singly or in combination, must contribute to the safe and effective control of traffic, and must:

- (a) be safe and appropriate for the road, its environment or the use of the road; and
- (b) not dazzle, distract or mislead road users; and
- (c) convey a clear and consistent message to road users; and
- (d) be placed so as to:
 - (i) be visible to road users; and
 - (ii) be legible to road users, if of a type that includes written words or symbols; and
 - (iii) allow adequate time for the intended response from road users; and
- (e) comply with the relevant requirements in *Schedules 1, 2 and 3*; and
- (f) be maintained in good repair.

4.4 General requirements for traffic signs*Description of traffic signs*

- 4.4(1) Subject to 4.4(2), a traffic sign, and the details on the sign, must comply with the minimum dimensions specified in *Schedule 1*.
- 4.4(2) The dimensions of a traffic sign may be increased provided that the dimensions of each letter, numeral, symbol or other detail on the sign are kept in approximate proportion to the dimensions of the other details on the sign.
- 4.4(3) Except as provided in 4.4(4) and 4.4(5), a traffic sign may display only words or symbols that are allowed by this rule.
- 4.4(4) Despite 4.4(1), 4.4(2), and 4.4(3), the Agency may, by notice in the *Gazette*, authorise the installation and maintenance of a traffic sign that does not comply with the colour, shape, dimensions, words, numerals, symbols, number of elements, background, border, or legend specified in *Schedule 1*.