

Implementation guidance

Bus driver protection screens

June 2024

Purpose

This guidance note provides an overview of a recent update to the Requirement for Urban Buses in New Zealand (RUB) that relates to driver protection screens and guidance for installation and funding.

Requirement for Urban Buses in New Zealand (RUB)

The RUB is a common New Zealand-wide vehicle quality standard for use in urban bus contracts. Public transport authorities (PTAs) must adhere to the RUB as part of obtaining procurement procedure approval and to be eligible for funding from the National and Transport Fund. The RUB:

- Establishes nationally consistent usability, accessibility, and environmental standards to enhance customer experience and support patronage growth.
- Achieve greater value for money by standardising and streamlining bus procurement nationally and enabling buses to be used in different regions.

RUB update

Amendments have been made to The Driver Compartment section of the RUB to include requirements and guidance relevant to the optional fitting of driver protection screens.

Driver protection screens can be an effective option to help mitigate risk associated with antisocial behaviour towards bus drivers. The RUB now includes requirements and guidance for driver protection screens where installation has been identified as an effective option for mitigating risk and improving bus driver safety.

The amendments were developed by a RUB working group comprising representatives from PTAs, the Bus and Coach Association, and NZTA.

The amendments are intended to be flexible while ensuring driver protection screens are fit for purpose to mitigate bus driver risk and support a safe work environment.

The amendment will become effective from 1 July 2024 for all:

- new buses that are nominated to have a driver protection screen installed at time of manufacture, and
- existing buses that are nominated to be retrofitted with a driver protection screen.

For the avoidance of doubt, newly built buses that were ordered prior 1 July 2024 and existing buses that already have a driver protection screen installed prior to this date, do not need to comply with the updated RUB requirements.

Implementation

Driver protection screens are optional. The need for driver protection screens should be identified by way of joint initiatives between operators, public transport authorities and the workforce to assess risk and improve the working environment and safety for bus drivers.

A decision to install driver protection screens should be informed by a risk assessment and be considered alongside a range of other health and safety measures and practices on an ongoing and evolving basis.

Where a driver protection screen is to be provided, the screen must either substantially enclose most of the driver compartment or fully enclose the driver compartment to significantly mitigate risk associated with antisocial behaviour towards bus drivers.

Driver protection screens can be incorporated into newly built buses or retrofitted into existing buses. Best practice is to install screens in newer buses; however, this should not prevent installation in older vehicles where needed.

Cost and funding

For new buses that are to be installed with a driver protection screen, it is expected that:

- the design and installation of the screen will occur at the time of manufacture and the cost will be factored into contract prices as per usual tendering process, or;
- be factored into an agreed contract variation price in the case of a new bus being introduced under an existing contract.

Where driver protection screens are to be retrofitted into existing buses, the cost should be shared between the relevant operator and PTA. This recognises safety is a shared responsibility. The PTA share for retrofitting is eligible for NZTA funding assistance.

Budget 2024

Budget 2024 includes funding in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to support improvements to bus driver safety and working environments. We will be in touch with respect to how this funding may be prioritised and utilised.

Questions

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspects of this memo or RUB amendments further, please email public.transport@nzta.govt.nz or touch base with the relevant regional point of contact from NZTA's public transport team.