

MIN-3902 Driver Training and Testing Capacity

19 July 2022

Provide answers to questions following briefing BRI-2460 *Progress update on driver licensing system improvements* (3 May 2022).

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

How is the nature of WK's relationship with VTNZ?

Vehicle Testing NZ (VTNZ) is the single contracted service provider for Waka Kotahi for the provision of practical driving testing. They are one of two contracted providers for theory testing. Waka Kotahi and VTNZ are working in partnership to improve access to practical driver testing across New Zealand.

Our key focus is on increasing Driver Testing Officer (DTO) capacity with four rounds of recruitment and training to date this year to increase testing capacity as well as improve wait times for tests in both regional and metropolitan areas. Waka Kotahi and VTNZ meet regularly to ensure we have early visibility of challenges before they become issues and are able to work proactively with VTNZ to remove any barriers.

What regions is it focusing on? Where are the worst affected areas and what improvements are we actually hoping to see there?

When considering impacts of access and equity for rural, remote and commercially uneconomic communities, Te Tai Tokerau and Tairāwhiti were obvious areas for focus.

Waka Kotahi has established two regional trials in Te Tai Tokerau and Te Tairāwhiti to gain insights of the viability of setting up community based and led driver testing services. The trials will run for twelve months with a review at six months, where we are hoping to see a reduction in practical driver testing wait times. This will support and inform decision making and scope of the framework and implementation of operational and delivery changes in the Driver Licensing system to improve access and equity across all regions.

What success stories can the work point to (Cambridge? Upper Hutt? Northland?)

We have been working with VTNZ to reinstate Driver Licensing services in Upper Hutt. An announcement is planned for August.

The Northland (Te Tai Tokerau) trial has recently commenced, with practical testing being delivered in Kaitiaki. Waka Kotahi is working closely with the Community Provider and Driver Testing team to better understand and validate previous feedback and insights from those affected by a lack of access to the driver licence system in this area. As a result, we are adapting things along the way and seeing positive outcomes both in individuals gaining their licence, but also in behaviours and mindsets where road safety and the responsibility of a newly licenced driver, is acknowledged and valued.

Cambridge is the first review Waka Kotahi has conducted where consideration was given to outcomes (what locations would provide the most benefit and relief to the region) alongside the viability of establishing practical

driver testing services based on applicant demand, traffic volumes, the roading network, testing locations and costs.

From the Waikato testing route review, we are working collaboratively with VTNZ to provide additional practical testing into Matamata within the next six months.

What targets have been set for this work?

The Driver Licensing Improvement Programme has been established to address and improve access and equity of the current system, to:

- increase DTO capacity in remote and commercially uneconomic areas
- increase mobile theory and practical testing services into locations where testing options are not ordinarily available (e.g. marae, community centres, employment hubs)
- establish group booking functionality so that providers can plan and link course completion with testing availability
- establish new regional roles to support future community driver training and mentoring programmes, while also building capability across the provider group to ensure road safety education and advice is incorporated to support safer licensed driver outcomes, and
- provide targeted support that will see improved access for Māori to driver licences to address systemic disadvantage in the current Graduated Driver Licensing System and improve access to services and employment. These initiatives will support existing providers who offer by Māori for Māori support and aims to increase sector capacity to provide culturally responsive driver training.

What are the “regulatory bottlenecks” at Waka Kotahi that the note refers to?

Right now, there is insufficient testing capacity across the country with a range of rural and some metropolitan centres identified as being significantly impacted. We also know the Driver Licence Register works for individuals but cannot process group bookings for driver tests submitted by community providers. Waka Kotahi is working alongside VTNZ to address these issues in order to create increased and flexible capacity and group booking functionality.