vehicle dimension & mass

RULE IMPLEMENTATION

Benefits

The new Vehicle Dimensions and Mass (VDM) Amendment Rule allows freight companies to apply for permits to access routes for high productivity motor vehicles (HPMVs). This could mean that the truck is heavier or slightly longer. Proposed routes, particularly bridges, are assessed to establish whether they can take the new weights. Both vehicles and routes must be approved before permits are issued. Safety is a priority.

The amount of freight to be transported around New Zealand is forecast to increase by as much as 75 percent in the next 25 years. But as more HPMV routes become available, this will allow a reduction in the number of trucks on the road required to move the increased amount of freight.

Improving freight efficiency will help transform New Zealand's economy. Feedback from road transport operators demonstrates that HPMV permits could improve efficiency by up to 20 percent.

The NZTA's plan for full HPMV routes

The NZTA is taking a staged approach to its assessment of HPMV routes so we can provide greater certainty for the road transport industry and speed up route availability. The national office has set out six stages of work to help the Agency prioritise HPMV routes through to September 2011.

The first stage has largely concluded. This involved regional consultation with our stakeholders to agree indicative HPMV routes. We are now ready to screen our key HPMV route capability based on HPMV type and to look at the restrictions along those routes.

'The key to screening HPMV routes is to identify the maximum loads trucks can carry across structures on our existing state highway network without improvements', says VDM Project Manager, Stephen Patience.

'We will maximise allowable vehicle loads on these bridges without compromising safety. This will optimise the effective movement of freight. This may mean some structures will have a reduced life, but the benefits of getting freight moving sooner rather than later is worth it,' he says.

In early 2011, as a deliverable of stage two, the NZTA will develop regional HPMV route maps providing data on route availability for HPMVs.

'We're committed to our customers, and that's why we've decided to get NZTA regional permit issuing staff to revisit HPMV applications they have declined since 1 May. The aim of stage three will be to determine alternative acceptable HPMV loads for these applications,' says Stephen.

In stage four, HPMV routes will be prioritised against national freight requirements. This reflects the government's strategic direction and its priorities for investment and productivity improvements for the freight sector.

Stage five of the oversight plan considers the demand from the road transport industry for full HPMV routes and the structures NZTA will need to strengthen to carry higher mass. This leads into stage six where routes will be prioritised for investment and evaluated according to their expected efficiencies and productivity gains over the short and longer terms.

Check your HPMV application status and our maps of approved routes

You can learn about the HPMV applications that we've received through the NZTA's website. Firstly, we have provided a tool to monitor the status of HPMV applications. With nearly 700 applications received to date, all road transport operators will benefit from knowing what routes have been 'approved' or 'declined'. You will also be able to determine:

• the vehicle types for travel on approved routes together with weights applied for

• the route restrictions and reasons why an application has been declined

• the status of applications that are 'in progress'

• regional and national totals for all applications the NZTA has received.

With over 40 HPMV permits issued to date for higher mass loads plus 129 for overlength, the NZTA now has maps of HPMV routes to visually show what we've approved.

You can view the above here: www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicle/your/over/hpmv.html

More flexibility for axle weight

Operators have raised concerns that once an HPMV is loaded to the gross allowable weight, there could be variances in the axle loadings that leave them overweight on an axle and in breach of the HPMV permit.

To make sure freight operators can fully access the benefits of the VDM Rule change, the NZTA is working on a solution to provide more flexibility on allowable maximum axle weights. It's important that we understand the problem from the perspective of the industry as well as from a road engineering point of view. The NZTA's discussions with industry representatives have been very valuable and we now better appreciate how our overweight permitting system could be adapted to help the industry. The challenge is for the NZTA to provide increased gross weight and more flexibility on the axle loadings, while still making sure the operation of HPMVs on a route do not compromise the safety of bridges.

This will require some trade-offs with a relatively small reduction in maximum total gross weight to allow for the flexibility on each axle. The reduction in weight is dependent on how much flexibility is required – the more flexibility the greater the reduction. In order to provide greater flexibility on axles, we need to develop a bridge assessment system that can take into account the greater complexity that a range of axle weights represent. Getting this right is a priority for the NZTA. We're planning a new permitting methodology early in 2011 to provide axle weight flexibility. Where axle weight flexibility is not required, the existing system will still be in place. HPMV permit holders and applicants who wish to have increased axle weight flexibility should contact the NZTA to see if we can provide an interim solution. To help us get it right, let us know what level of flexibility you as an operator require.

For more information

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