



Submission on LTSA Rule 31002 - Heavy Vehicles (February 2003)

Introduction

The Cycling Advocates Network (CAN) is pleased to present this submission on the above Rule. The national committee of the group has prepared this submission, with feedback from CAN members. CAN has based its submission on reviews of the yellow draft, supporting documentation, and background research. Although much of the Rule is not directly relevant to cyclists, we would still like to highlight some issues with you. If you require any clarification of the points raised by us, please feel free to contact us as detailed below.

General Comments

CAN is generally supportive of the proposed Rule. With approximately 200 reported injury accidents between cyclists and heavy vehicles in the past five years¹, we support any moves to improve the safety of heavy vehicles and their associated vehicle systems.

We support the overall move to clarify the construction and maintenance requirements for heavy vehicles by removing any anomalies and introducing greater consistency. Generally, heavy vehicles are operated by (supposedly) professional drivers, on behalf of businesses. Therefore there is arguably a greater expectation (than that for the general public) that the owners and operators should safely maintain their vehicles.

Issues not Covered by this Rule

Although these items are not specifically covered by this Rule (as noted in the accompanying Questions and Answers document), we continue to express our concern at the existing vehicle standards set for window glazing & mirrors, vehicle masses/dimensions, and external projection restrictions. With respect to heavy vehicles, these issues have potentially large ramifications for the safety and encouragement of cyclists; specifically:

- The allowable levels of window tinting seriously affect the ability of drivers to detect cyclists at the periphery of their vision. For heavy vehicles, where this peripheral vision is already seriously impaired, this can lead to tragic results. We note also that in Europe, trucks >7.5 tonnes are now required to have special side-mirrors to recognise cyclists and pedestrians.²
- The creeping trends to introduce vehicles with increased dimensions continue to erode the safety of cyclists (and other vehicles) on the road. As well as increasing the likelihood of truck-cyclist collisions, the presence of bigger vehicles also deters people from cycling on the roads in the first place.

¹ 1997-2001 injury crashes between cyclists and buses or trucks: 202, including 16 fatalities (LTSA AIS crash database)

² European Transport Safety Council: "Priorities for EU Motor Vehicle Safety Design", Brussels, 2001.

- To date the LTSA has been unable to provide the bus industry with guidance on acceptable means of externally carrying bicycles on buses. There appears to be an implied unacceptable safety hazard (particularly for the preferred front-secured bike-racks), despite the countless overseas examples of successful bike-on-bus schemes and the encouragement for cycling that such schemes promote.

At the risk of repeating our previous submissions on these topics, we ask that the LTSA review the relevant Rules.

Section 5: Load-securing equipment

CAN strongly supports improvements to the existing standards for securing heavy vehicle loads. Loose fittings in particular (e.g. lashings flapping about) can potentially have a serious effect on cyclists when a truck passes them.

To that end, we suggest the addition of the following paragraph (or similar) to Section 5.1:

The load securing equipment itself must also not present a hazard to other road users, either when in use or not in use.

Issues still under consideration: Under-run Protection

CAN strongly supports moves to make front, rear and side under-run protection mandatory on heavy vehicles. We note that Christchurch City Council's Road Safety Coordinating Committee recently examined this issue and found that in the past 10 years in Christchurch possibly seven out of 17 fatalities to cyclists and pedestrians from heavy vehicles could have been prevented by some under-run protection³.

Overseas evidence suggests that side protection at least would have a cost-effective outcome, by deflecting any pedestrians or cyclists that were struck from the side away from the heavy vehicle wheels. Some evidence that we are aware of include:

- Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) of 1.2 (over a 25-year lifetime) for the fitting of front, side and rear protection to all trucks in Australia.⁴
- Full-area side under-run protection system could reduce fatalities to pedestrians and cyclists in such situations by about 45%.²
- Norwegian data calculates that the benefits of providing full protection against under-riding would exceed the implementation costs even if the safety effects were as small as a 5% reduction in accident costs.⁵

³ Christchurch City Council, Road Safety Coordinating Committee: Report to Sustainable Transport & Utilities Committee, 5 Nov 2002.

⁴ Keith Seyer & Allan Jonas: "Vehicle Standards", *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Seminar*, Melbourne, October 2002, pp.109-113.

⁵ TRL (Transport Research Laboratory): "Cost-benefit analysis of measures for vulnerable road users", *PROMISING (Promotion of Measures for Vulnerable Road Users)* Deliverable D5, Contract No. RO-97-RS.2112 (Work package 5), UK, July 2001.

Sufficiently rigid (or energy-absorbing) front and rear protection are more likely to have to major benefits for collisions with other motor vehicles, and it may be acceptable to provide lower-strength side protection predominantly for cyclist & pedestrian safety.

We note that some overseas jurisdictions allow maximum clearances of up to 55cm from the bottom of the barriers to the ground. This would still allow a significant gap for cyclists and pedestrians to slip under (and is also higher than many car bonnets) and we recommend that a much lower clearance be specified here, e.g. 30cm.

In summary, we support LTSA's further investigation into this and subsequent inclusion into the Rule.

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The Cycling Advocates' Network of NZ (CAN) Inc is this country's national network of cycling advocate groups. It is a voice for all cyclists - recreational, commuter and touring. We work with central government and local authorities, on behalf of cyclists, for a better cycling environment. We have affiliated groups and individual members throughout the country, and links with overseas cycling organisations. In addition, several national/regional/local government authorities, transportation consultancies, and cycle industry businesses are supporting organisations.