



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Waka, Take Hanganga

54th Parliament
November 2025

Petition of New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network: Vulnerable road user status for New Zealand horse riders

Interim report

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Andy Foster, Chairperson

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Petition of New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network

Recommendation

The Transport and Infrastructure Committee has considered the petition of New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network—Vulnerable road user status for New Zealand horse riders—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request for vulnerable road user status for horse riders

This petition was signed by 7,549 people. It was presented to the House by Grant McCallum on 15 October 2024 and transferred to us on 21 November 2024, and requests:

That the House of Representatives hold an inquiry into road user behaviour towards vulnerable road users, including people riding horses, recognise that horse riders are vulnerable road users, and amend the Land Transport Act and associated Rules to include safe provision for horse riders in legislation; and note that 1,417 people have signed similar petitions.

Comments from the New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network

The New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network (NZEAN) is a registered charity dedicated to supporting the safety and access of recreational equestrians across New Zealand. Its mission is to preserve equestrian access to public lands, trails, and beaches.

Its petition requests that the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004 be amended to formally recognise the vulnerability of horse riders and carriage riders in transport legislation. It also suggests that an inquiry be initiated into road users' behaviour towards vulnerable road users.

Vulnerable road users

NZEAN considers that the legislation about road use does not appropriately address the risks that horse riders face on roads. Horse riders are considered “other road users” in transport legislation. NZEAN told us that this label, and the corresponding lack of specific safety initiatives, puts horse riders at risk.

We heard from NZEAN that there is no definition of “vulnerable road user” in the New Zealand Transport Agency's (NZTA) literature, as there is in other jurisdictions. NZEAN believes that this has led to inconsistencies in how local, regional, and central government agencies view horse riders when considering road safety, transport guidelines, and access to off-road pathways.

NZEAN pointed to the European Commission's Intelligent Transport Systems Directive definition of vulnerable road users as "non-motorised road users", including horse riders.¹ It also noted that the United Kingdom highway code includes a "hierarchy of road users", which places road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top of the hierarchy.² In this hierarchy, horse riders and cyclists are placed in the same category because they are considered equally vulnerable.

NZEAN suggested that New Zealand take a similar approach and establish a formal definition of "vulnerable road user" that encompasses horse riders and carriage riders.

Other requests

NZEAN raised additional requests to improve the safety of horse riders on New Zealand roads. These included requests for:

- New Zealand Police, the Ministry of Transport, and NZTA to introduce data-collecting measures that are specific to horse and carriage riders on the road network, as no single agency currently captures data about near misses or incidents involving horse riders
- the current \$55 infringement fee for drivers that fail to exercise due care to a person moving or riding an animal to be increased
- New Zealand Police to increase its enforcement of the rules about drivers who fail to exercise due care to a person moving or riding an animal³
- drivers to be better educated on how to approach and pass horses on the road safely.

On the subject of driver education, NZEAN told us about the Pass Wide and Slow campaign.⁴ This is a permanent educational road safety platform that aims to reduce the number of incidents and near misses on the road when horses are nearby.

Comments from Julia McLean

We understand that, at the time the petition was lodged, Julia McLean was a member of NZEAN and was the author of the original written submission. She has since parted ways with NZEAN and is the founder of Pass Wide and Slow New Zealand. After we heard from NZEAN, Ms McLean requested to be heard as well. We heard from Ms McLean on 5 June 2025, along with her daughter, Delia McLean, and the marketing and brand strategist of Pass Wide and Slow, Eve Leniston.

Ms McLean reiterated the points raised in the NZEAN submission, stating that horse riders must be formally recognised as vulnerable road users in transport legislation, and respectfully included in community infrastructure and road safety programmes. She also provided more information about data collection.

¹ [ITS & Vulnerable Road Users | European Commission](#).

² [The Highway Code—Introduction | United Kingdom Government](#).

³ NZEAN told us that there have only been 13 enforcements in 13 years, despite anecdotal evidence that the number of incidents is much higher.

⁴ [Home | Pass Wide & Slow New Zealand](#).

Data collection

Ms McLean believes that it is too difficult to find data about road accidents involving horses. Data on road incidents involving crashes, injuries, and fatalities is collected by many different agencies, including the Ministry of Health, WorkSafe New Zealand, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), and NZTA. The agencies collect different data in different ways. For example, Ms McLean told us that ACC collects its data based around claims and voluntary reporting, while the Ministry of Health uses a range of sources including Police, funeral director, coroner, and hospital records to validate its data reliability.

NZTA uses a crash analysis system, and collects data on equestrian, driver, and passenger deaths after accidents involving horses. Ms McLean told us that this system only records road crashes that involve a vehicle. This would therefore not capture incidents where a vehicle scares a horse and the rider subsequently falls and is injured or dies.

Ms McLean said that NZTA manages this system but relies on the Police for data following their investigation into a vehicle crash. She said that the Police told her that statistics related to death and serious injury involving horse riders are held by NZTA, but NZTA told her it does not hold data on what type of animal is involved in a crash.

Ms McLean considers that there is a lack of clarity around who holds what data and what data should be recorded. This means that there are gaps in the information. Ms McLean believes that having “no data equals no idea of what is happening on the road”. This means that provisions around road offences are not and cannot be enforced. She suggested that the Police include additional data when filling in an incident report card, or data collection systems be changed to allow more information to be recorded.

Comments from the Ministry of Transport and the New Zealand Transport Agency

In early 2025, we received written and oral submissions from the Ministry of Transport and NZTA. Their initial response stated that:

- developing advice on including the term “vulnerable road user” in legislation is not currently on the ministry’s or NZTA’s work programmes, but both agencies would soon be briefing the new Minister of Transport to understand his priorities
- guidance for sharing the road with horse riders is in the New Zealand Road Code
- NZTA intends to share new road safety messages in summer 2024/25, which includes messages promoting motor vehicle and horse rider safety
- NZTA’s crash analysis system shows that there were four crashes between 2020 and 2024 involving horse riders
- the crash analysis system does not collect information about near misses on the road network for any road users.

On 16 October 2025 we held another hearing with the two agencies to hear about any updates, which we detail below.

In June 2025, the Minister of Transport announced a comprehensive review of New Zealand's land transport rules, with the aim of increasing productivity and efficiency.⁵ This work is intended to include consideration of changes to passing distances around horses, pedestrians, and cyclists. We understand that this may include introducing a 1.5 metre passing gap for horse riders. This is shorter than the 2 metre distance advocated by Pass Wide and Slow, but is in line with Australian states. We were advised that a new rule will be considered by June 2026. The ministry also told us that a definition of "vulnerable road user" may be included in a future rules reform programme but this has yet to be decided.

NZTA told us that it has continued to run social media content on all of its channels relating to horse riders on the road. It has also updated the New Zealand Road Code to include information on what people should do when they encounter horses and riders on the road. NZTA has also included this content in the theory test required for learner licenses. It told us that about 15 percent of learner licence tests in 2025 included a question on horse riders, and that there was a 98 percent pass rate for that question.

Our interim response to the petition

We thank the New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network, and Julia McLean, for their advocacy work on behalf of the equestrian community in New Zealand. We thank them for bringing this issue to our attention, and we understand that horse riders in New Zealand do not feel safe on the road.

We are very interested to see the outcome of the ministry's rules review process and whether this will include any updates relevant to the petitioner's requests. We intend to follow up on this topic during our upcoming 2024/25 annual reviews of the Ministry of Transport and NZTA. We intend to seek an update on the ministry's progress when work on the rules review programme is further along, and produce a final report at that stage.

⁵ [Land Transport Rules Reform Programme 2025 | Ministry of Transport—Te Manatū Waka](#).

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by 7,549 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Grant McCallum on 15 October 2024 and referred to us on 21 November 2024. We began considering this petition on 30 January 2025 and finalised this interim report on 20 November 2025. The Petitions Committee received a written submission from the New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network. We received supplementary written submissions and heard oral evidence from the New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network. We also received written and oral submissions from Julia McLean, the Ministry of Transport, and the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Committee members

Andy Foster (Chairperson)

Dan Bidois

Dr Carlos Cheung (from 9 April 2025)

Simon Court (from 19 November 2025)

Hon Julie Anne Genter

Mariameno Kapa-Kingi

Cameron Luxton (until 19 November 2025)

Hon Kieran McNulty (from 12 March to 14 May 2025)

Dr Tracey McLellan (from 14 May 2025)

Stuart Smith (until 9 April 2025)

Tangi Utikere

Arena Williams (until 12 March 2025)

Hon Damien O'Connor and Hon Jan Tinetti participated in some of our work on this petition.

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition so far are available on the [Parliament website](#).

Recordings of our hearings can be accessed online at the following links:

- [Hearing with the New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network, the Ministry of Transport, and the New Zealand Transport Agency on 3 April 2025](#) (from 47:15).
- [Hearing with Julia McLean on 5 June 2025](#).
- [Hearing with the Ministry of Transport and the New Zealand Transport Agency on 16 October 2025](#).