



Rail And Maritime Transport Union Media Release

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The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) says that plans to allow larger trucks on the road will have bad consequences.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says if larger trucks are permitted, it will make New Zealand roads less safe and will be bad for the environment.

He says rail and coastal shipping are better methods of moving heavy goods.

Public submissions close this week on the Government proposals to allow bigger trucks on the road and Mr Butson says New Zealanders should make their voice heard.

"We urge New Zealanders to make a submission opposing the plan for bigger heavier trucks as it will be the public who will be following them going more slowly up the steep hills and having to take greater risks to get past logging trucks that are 2 metres longer."

The proposed rule changes within the discussion document will allow large trucks "with a gross mass of up to and including 53 tonnes or more which is a 20% increase on current maximum tonnages" on to the roads, subject to a permit being issued by the New Zealand Transport Agency. Logging trucks will also be 2 metres longer.

Mr Butson says the internationally accepted formula is that if you double the size of the truck, you will do sixteen times the damage to the road. In moving from 44 to 53 tonnes, twice as much damage will result for each truck movement.

He says it is unreasonable of the trucking industry to expect other road users to carry the additional road damage cost.

"The RMTU is concerned at moves to replace road user charges with a flat diesel tax, which would exacerbate the already unlevel playing field between road and rail/coastal shipping and would be another subsidy from the taxpayer to the trucking industry."

The Minister of "Road" Transport Steven Joyce has claimed that the change would result in fewer trucks on the road which is a ridiculous statement unless the trucking industry is about to make hundreds of truck drivers redundant, says Mr Butson.

The Union has also criticized how information used to justify the truck plan had been "buried."

When launching the proposed changes, Minister Joyce said that New Zealand would receive productivity gains of \$250-\$500 million if the rule changes were implemented.

However, attempts to obtain the report containing the figures have been blocked by officials, as it "contains commercially sensitive information gained from the freight/trucking companies who took part."

Mr Butson says it is unacceptable the evidence used to justify the proposals is unobtainable by New Zealand citizens.

He says the environmental and emissions impact of allowing bigger trucks on the road is a serious concern, alongside many other negative factors.

"The poor safety record of the trucking industry, the impacts of excessive truck traffic on roadside communities and motorists, and the essentially unregulated nature of road transport operations, all justify more, not less, restriction of the road transport industry."

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The Government proposals can be viewed at

<http://www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/vehicle-dimensions-and-mass-amendment/index.html>