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**EMBARGOED** until the day of delivery (Friday 5 October 2012)

**Poor Road Lighting Puts NZ Drivers at Risk**

Poor road lighting means driving at night in New Zealand is almost three times more dangerous than driving at night in other developed countries according to a report being delivered to a road safety conference in Wellington today [Friday 5 October].

The report, entitled “Lighting the way to road safety – A policy blindspot?” says the “evidence supports insufficient road lighting and its low quality being a significant contributor [to] New Zealand’s poor injury and fatality statistics.”

It says, “The risk of death and injury from driving at night in NZ is 5.8 times greater than during daytime in contrast to international experience, which shows it is only twice the risk.”

The report is being presented to the Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference 2012.

The report’s authors, Godfrey Bridger of Bridger Beavis & Associates Ltd, and Bryan King of Lighting Management Consultants Ltd, say the New Zealand road lighting Standard AS/NZS1158 suffers from technical deficiencies, and an approach that has resulted in New Zealand highways being lit to only three-quarters of the levels enjoyed in the UK, Europe and the USA, and our residential streets being lit to as little as a quarter of the lighting levels in other developed countries.

The Standard, which is currently under review, also comes in for criticism for its exclusion of LED road lighting.

The authors say that LED lighting will rapidly replace older technologies, and will allow for modern computerised approaches to integrate crime and accident statistics with traffic flows, lighting levels, and community events to improve night-time safety and community satisfaction.

Furthermore, the authors say, preliminary findings from new international research indicate that white road lighting may provide better, safer driving vision than the yellow lighting shed from the high-pressure sodium luminaires currently used in New Zealand.

With better road lighting, New Zealand could reduce its night-time road fatalities and injuries by 35%, saving 61 lives and 1,538 other road users from injury each year, and substantially reducing the estimated $1.2 billion annual cost to the country of night-time road deaths and injuries.

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One of the authors, Godfrey Bridger, says, “We calculate that without even factoring in savings from greater energy efficiency and reduced maintenance requirements, a $700 million New Zealand-wide upgrade to modern road lighting would return a benefit cost ratio of 10.3 based on reduced night time fatalities and injuries alone.”

“And there’s also the enormous saving in human suffering and misery which isn’t captured in these statistics. A national road lighting upgrade is a no-brainer.”

As a point of comparison, NZTA’s Roads of National Significance are expected to cost $9.7 billion with a benefit cost ratio of between 2.4 and 2.5.

Mr Bridger says New Zealand is not alone in overlooking the benefits of upgrading its national road lighting network.

“We could find no evidence of a systematic strategic asset management approach to road lighting worldwide apart from in Canada.”

He says road lighting is such a small proportion of the overall cost of building and maintaining the national road network that it tends to “fly under the radar” and suffers from little attention.

“Our report is intended to alert transport authorities worldwide, but especially in New Zealand, to the need for greater focus on road lighting to save lives, save energy, improve security, reduce negative environmental impacts, and save money overall.”

Ends

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**Editors Note:**

A full copy of the report “Lighting the Way to Road Safety – A policy blindspot?” is available on a confidential basis only until 5 October when it will be posted publicly at <http://www.bridgerbeavis.com/pdfs>

The authors developed it from a longer, broader-based report they wrote for the NZ Transport Authority in May 2012 entitled “Strategic Road Lighting Opportunities for New Zealand”. This report examined the economic development opportunities for NZ from early adoption of new generation road lighting technologies, as well as the potential for safety improvements and for efficiencies that could substantially benefit both central and local government.

<http://www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/rmtf-interim-report/docs/strategic-road-lighting-opportunities.pdf> [Large file - 18.5 MB]