

29 September 2025

Committee Secretariat
Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Submitted via: [Antisocial Road Use Legislation Amendment Bill - New Zealand Parliament](#)

Dear Members of the Justice Committee

Submission from the Manawātū District Council on Antisocial Road Use Legislation Amendment Bill

The Manawātū District Council (MDC) thanks the Justice Committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Antisocial Road Use Legislation Amendment Bill (“the Bill”). MDC strongly supports the intent of the Bill to reduce antisocial road use in New Zealand and welcomes the opportunity to contribute local insights. However, MDC does have some concerns regarding how central government will ensure Police resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient to ensure the changes have a meaningful impact in our community.

Introduction

Antisocial road use has become a persistent issue within the Manawātū District. Residents frequently report the disruption it causes, and there is a perception that authorities are unable to adequately manage this behaviour.

According to New Zealand Police Statistics, in the Manawātū District there were 181 reported incidents of unauthorised street and drag racing between July 2024 and July 2025, an increase of 13 on the same period the previous year. These incidents must be considered in light of the fact that the Manawātū District, with a population of approximately 33,700, has limited Police resourcing. The main station is the Feilding Police Station, which has six staff who work set hours and have a prevention and community focus. In addition, Feilding and the surrounding villages are served by a dedicated two-person patrol car that provides 24/7 coverage. While resources are available from the neighbouring city of Palmerston North when required, the travel time involved can mean that offenders have vacated the area before Police arrive. Furthermore, given competing demands, offences of this nature may be deprioritised in order for Police to respond to higher-harm crimes. As a result, residents often express frustration that Police either do not attend or, when they do, are unable to take meaningful action, often due to being outnumbered by antisocial road users. This has led some people to stop reporting incidents altogether, leaving Council as a last point of call out of desperation.

The challenges are particularly acute in rural parts of the District, where police presence is even more limited. Antisocial road users have been known to exploit this by using scanners and social media to monitor police movements, dispersing before officers arrive. There have been instances where members of the public, when attempting to intervene in street racer events, have been advised by street racers to leave rural locations for their own safety. On

one occasion, when police were contacted to address the situation, the caller was informed that Police would not attend due to the sheer number of antisocial road users involved and the limited Police presence available. During another incident reported to Council, elderly residents returning home encountered a large number of vehicles and spectators blocking their driveway while drivers carried out burnouts. When they requested the group to move, the female resident was assaulted and her husband was beaten so severely, that he required hospital treatment. Although Police were called, again they were unable to help due to the number of antisocial road users involved. Incidents like this demonstrate the serious risks faced by residents, particularly on isolated rural roads where skid marks, debris, and damage are often visible but underreported because people assume Police will not respond.

Feilding is also home to Manfeild Park, a nationally recognised motorsport venue that attracts enthusiasts from across New Zealand. While most attendees respect road rules outside the track, there is potential for spillover into the community. At these times Police would need to allocate resources accordingly. A key question is how central government intends to ensure that police resourcing is proportionally allocated in communities hosting significant motorsport activity.

The aforementioned issues mean that residents are now relying on local government to try to resolve or manage antisocial road use through local-level tools, even though these issues are better addressed at the national level. Council regularly receives calls, often on a weekly basis, related to excessive noise, damage to berms, litter, and roading damage caused by antisocial road use. Between 14 April and 17 August 2025, Council received 14 complaints, of which 11 required direct Council action. Expenses associated with complaints and related factors came to an approximate cost of \$12,800 to Council.

Council officers have explored a range of options to manage antisocial road use locally, including the development of a bylaw to support Police. While this remains under consideration, significant challenges have been identified with introducing a bylaw, including, the fact that bylaws can be costly to develop, can be difficult to enforce and often displace the problem rather than resolve it.

Other options reviewed by Council officers include:

- **Amending the Current Traffic and Parking Bylaw.** This option would authorise the New Zealand Police to issue infringement notices to light vehicles (not exceeding 3,500kg) gathering on specified roads during set hours (e.g., 10:00pm – 4:00am daily). Exemptions would apply to vehicles with a genuine reason to be on the road, such as residents or their visitors, emergency services, medical professionals attending emergencies, council staff conducting council business, network operators, or delivery vehicles. However, any amendment of this kind requires Council to have sufficient evidence to reasonably justify the level of restriction imposed. Enforcement is also challenging, as effective monitoring would need to be consistent, which is not feasible, particularly on rural roads or in industrial areas with low traffic volumes. In addition, such restrictions often do not eliminate the issue. Instead, antisocial road users tend to move to other locations, relocating rather than ending the problem.
- **Installation of Speedhumps or Asphalt Concrete (AC) Humps.** AC humps are expensive to install, estimated at approximately \$40,000 per location and involve ongoing maintenance costs. They impact other road users by limiting access for heavy vehicles, creating discomfort for road users, generating additional noise impact for residents,

and slowing emergency response times as vehicles must brake and accelerate over humps. Installation of speedbumps requires over 50 percent of residents on a street to agree. Without sufficient support, Council must undertake a formal consultation process, which consumes valuable council resources. Even if installed, speedhumps may only provide a short-term solution, as there have been instances in neighbouring areas where they have been illegally removed. Furthermore, speedhumps can only be installed in urban areas, while most antisocial road user activity in the District occurs in rural zones. In recent years MDC has not been installing speedhumps due to these challenges, compounded by reduced funding for such measures from NZTA.

- **Installation of High Friction Roding Surfaces.** There is limited research investigating the effectiveness of high friction roding treatments to deter anti-social road users. Other Councils have noted that high friction road surface treatments are considerably more expensive to install than standard road surface treatments and are only effective if antisocial road users repeatedly visit the site. In addition, some members of the street racer community have reported that these surfaces can be more desirable as they produce a better result for those engaging in antisocial road use behaviours.
- **CCTV Cameras:** Council regularly receives calls from residents requesting CCTV cameras. These have been used in other communities to identify and prosecute offenders, showing their effectiveness in supporting enforcement after the fact. However, offenders are known to obscure licence plates or remove cameras once their location is identified. This creates significant additional expense for Councils, not only installing and reinstalling cameras, but also monitoring footage, maintaining the equipment, and ensuring a reliable power supply - either via a fixed connection or with batteries that need to be regularly replaced. While CCTV footage may assist in prosecution, their effectiveness as a deterrent to antisocial road use, especially in rural locations, remains limited.

In a climate in which central government is urging Councils to reduce spending and focus on core services, local authorities are consistently being faced with the challenge of balancing financial responsibility with strong community expectations for action. The tools available to local government to manage antisocial road use are limited and do not align with the back-to-basics approach currently promoted by central government. National legislation provides stronger and more enforceable mechanisms that do not place disproportionate cost and responsibility on Councils.

Antisocial Road Use Legislation Amendment Bill Clause Specific Feedback

New Offence of Frightening or Intimidating Convoy

MDC supports the creation of a new offence targeting frightening or intimidating convoy behaviour. Convoy-style gatherings have been observed in both urban and rural areas of the District and are highly intimidating for residents. These events are difficult to address under the current law. The new offence will provide Police with stronger tools to intervene, but MDC emphasises that its effectiveness will depend on sufficient Police presence in affected communities.

Expanded Power to Request Driver Information

Council endorses the clearer rewriting of section 118 into new sections 118, 118A, and 118B. Importantly, the changes expand the powers of enforcement officers by authorising them to

request driver information, not only from the registered persons but also from the hirer of a vehicle, where there are reasonable grounds to believe an offence has been committed under section 36A(1)(a) or (c) or new section 39A. MDC considers this enhancement will strengthen accountability and provides enforcement officers with more effective tools to identify offenders and support enforcement action.

Offence for Failing or Refusing to Provide Information

MDC is in favour of the changes related to failing or refusing to provide information, as they address a gap frequently exploited by antisocial drivers. Council notes that offenders often obscure or swap licence plates, which undermines identification and makes registered owner accountability essential. While obscuring plates can make it difficult to immediately identify the registered owner, the offence provisions ensure accountability remains enforceable once the vehicle or driver is identified. MDC also considers the reduced maximum fine appropriate, given the stronger deterrence provided through associated impoundment and forfeiture powers.

Consistent 28-day Impoundment Regime

MDC supports aligning impounding powers to a consistent 28-day regime, including fail-to-stop offences. This simplifies enforcement and strengthens deterrence. However, the effectiveness of this power is dependent on adequate Police resourcing and timely attendance, as in Feilding and surrounding villages, vehicles often disperse before officers arrive. MDC urges central government to ensure rural areas receive sufficient Police funding so that these powers can be meaningfully applied.

Power to Seize and Impound Vehicles Where Information is Withheld

Council considers the extension of impoundment powers necessary to assist in cases where drivers deliberately avoid identification. This is a common frustration expressed by residents and enforcement partners.

Right of Appeal Against Impoundment

MDC is supportive of the retention of a right of appeal against impoundment decisions to ensure fairness. However, we emphasise that the appeal process must be accessible for residents in rural areas who may face barriers to lodging appeals promptly due to distance from service centres and connectivity. Approximately 40% of the District relies on wireless internet rather than high-speed fibre, which constrains residents' ability to reliably access online services. This can make time-sensitive processes, such as appeal applications, significantly more difficult.

Transport barriers also need to be recognised. While there is a rural bus service between Feilding and the District's rural communities, services are not fully developed. For many rural residents, accessing Police stations or service centres within statutory appeal time frames may therefore be challenging. Ensuring appeals can be submitted by multiple channels and providing accessible guidance so that residents are aware of the steps required will help to ensure that all residents, regardless of location or digital connectivity, can exercise their right to appeal fairly and effectively.

Relationship between Confiscation and Forfeiture Regimes

MDC has no objection to these changes. Alignment of penalties provides consistency and clarity. The new regime applies only when the offender is the registered owner of the vehicle,

or otherwise has a legal interest in it, at the time of the offence. This appropriately limits the scope of forfeiture and destruction powers so that vehicles owned solely by innocent third parties such as parents or employers, are not at risk from having vehicles unfairly confiscated.

However, MDC reiterates the importance of ensuring that these safeguards are robust and accessible. Clear processes must be in place for third-party owners to assert their rights, and appeal mechanisms should be straightforward and affordable to prevent unintended penalties on those with no involvement in offending behaviour.

New Mandatory Forfeiture and Destruction Regime

MDC supports in principle the introduction of a presumption that courts must order forfeiture, or forfeiture and destruction, of vehicles on a first offence. This provides a strong deterrent for behaviours that are deeply frustrating to residents and costly for councils. However, MDC notes that equity considerations must be carefully managed where the vehicle is not owned by the offender but by family or whānau members. Clear operational guidelines and exemptions are needed.

Temporary Closure of Accessible Places

MDC supports empowering Police with the ability to temporarily close accessible places where antisocial road use is occurring or reasonably expected, particularly as gatherings in rural parts of the District can have substantial local impact. However, to ensure these powers are exercised fairly and effectively, MDC emphasises the importance of partnership with local government. Where roads or accessible places are part of the local roading network, Police should work in coordination with the Road Controlling Authority to ensure that safety, traffic management, alternative routes, and community impacts are properly considered.

MDC further notes that known gathering spots in the District are located on or adjacent to State Highways, which are vital thoroughfares for traffic, freight, and stock movements. Council seeks clarification from central government on how temporary closures will be managed on State Highways, and whether specific protocols will be developed between NZTA, Police, and the Road Controlling Authority to ensure that essential transport flows are not unduly disrupted.

Finally, MDC also highlights that the new closure powers under section 35A of the Policing Act must be understood in light of the Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (TTM) and the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA). Under the HSWA, the contractor undertaking the closure (in this case, the Police) is the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) and therefore responsible for ensuring the safety of all road users. While the Road Controlling Authority must ensure processes are in place, responsibility for health and safety must not be transferred back to councils.

Finally, MDC recommends that, where time allows, procedural safeguards be introduced alongside the new powers, such as requirements for public notice, minimum lead times for notification in non-urgent circumstances, and transparent criteria for closure decisions. Such safeguards would help ensure that closures are exercised consistently, that the appropriate party is held responsible for safety, and that disruption for rural communities, businesses, and essential services is minimised.

Infringement Offence for Failing to Comply with Closure Directions

MDC supports the introduction of this infringement offence. A clear penalty for non-compliance is necessary to ensure temporary closure powers are effective. Infringement levels are a proportionate tool that avoids overburdening the courts while still sending a strong deterrent message.

Increased Penalties for Creating Excessive Noise Within or on a Vehicle

MDC supports the proposed increase in penalties for excessive in-vehicle noise (raising the infringement fee from \$50 to \$300), and the maximum court fine from \$1,000 to \$3,000). Noise complaints are a common issue raised in connection to antisocial road use. Stronger penalties align with the nuisance and disruption these behaviours cause to the community.

Technical and Consequential Amendments

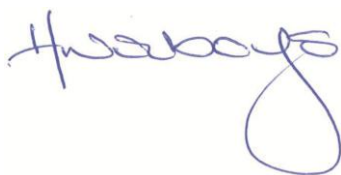
MDC has no objection to these technical amendments.

Conclusion

The Manawātū District Council strongly supports the Antisocial Road Use Legislation Bill as a necessary step to strengthen deterrence and provide Police with improved enforcement tools. Unlike a bylaw - which would be costly to develop, difficult to enforce, and likely displace the problem to other areas - or other local government tools that carry their own limitations, this legislation provides a more direct and nationally consistent mechanism to address antisocial road use. It places enforcement responsibility with Police, who have the powers and reach required to intervene effectively. However, legislation alone will not resolve the challenges our communities face. Legislative changes must be supported with adequate resourcing and effective collaboration. MDC seeks clarity from central government on how Police resourcing will be allocated to ensure the new powers can be enforced effectively, particularly outside standard Police duty hours, in rural districts, and during major motorsport events.

MDC also highlights the importance of clearly defining responsibilities between Police, NZTA and local government. Questions remain as to how operational procedures will be managed in practice, particularly for road closures. Councils must not be left to carry disproportionate responsibility for enforcement or communication where issues are more appropriately managed at the national level. Strong, coordinated procedures will be essential to deliver the intent of the Bill and restore public confidence that antisocial road use can be managed effectively.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Worboys', with a large loop at the end.

Helen Worboys, JP
Mayor