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(4 days ago)

**Geoff Noxon**

to me

Hi Martyn -

You wrote: **“As I understand it, there is no overriding guideline/guidance by TAC to prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users over all other considerations, in particular those most likely to be prejudiced by known dangers?”**

(Note: Your clause after the comma is ambiguous... I think you mean it to modify “vulnerable road users” and not “all other considerations”, but I will ignore it for now.)

So, if you’re asking whether TAC guidance suggests “prioritizing vulnerable road users” -- then the answer to that would be yes. Clearly, a pedestrian is inherently less well protected than an automobile occupant, and warrants special treatments to compensate for risk. Our guidance on traffic calming, pedestrian crossings, etc., speaks very much to this point.

However, if you’re asking whether our guidance elevates VRU safety “over all other considerations” then the answer would be no.... That would imply an overly simplistic approach whereby other factors would simply not be considered in design or operating decisions, and the safety of every pedestrian would be pursued ad infinitum to the state of “zero risk”. But it’s clear that other factors are always important (and risk to individuals will always exist), as is evident in public policy and program decisions related to health care, policing, education, building codes, etc. etc. Exactly how those trade-offs are made (for example, “How earthquake-proof should buildings in Halifax be, versus those in Vancouver?”) is an inherently local

decision best made by the jurisdiction responsible for the policy, program, design or operation in question -- which means municipal and provincial governments, when it comes to road safety.

And if you're asking whether designs and operations should always accommodate the most vulnerable user, then the answer gets murkier.... Think about accessibility experts, who face this problem all the time when deciding what degree of disability (or, even more complicatedly, what combination of disabilities) to accommodate in a given situation. No system can be perfectly accommodating of every conceivable disability or combination of disabilities -- nor (coming back to your question) every conceivable vulnerability or combination of vulnerabilities. Again, constraints exist and trade-offs are required... and no guideline can prescribe the "correct" solution for every circumstance. It is our hope that TAC guidance is (as you say) an aid to better decision making by those who are responsible for those decisions.

Regards,

**Geoff Noxon, M.Sc., P.Eng.**

Director, Technical Programs

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