

Road Mirrors – Private Crossings Policy (#4114)

Adopted: August 2014

Background

Council's policy to date has been to not use or allow road mirrors. Council's position was that road mirrors are not considered safe for public use due to distortion which may encourage unfamiliar users to make bad decisions.

It is now considered that the use of road mirrors may be acceptable in some circumstances to enhance road safety. However, they should be subject to specific criteria and conditions.

Mirrors should only be used in specific situations due to the problems associated with them, such as limited visibility when raining or at dawn or dusk, difficulty for non-regular users and slight distortions of image.

Nevertheless, the provision of these devices at locations where other factors make it difficult to achieve the necessary sight distance may be considered an effective mitigation measure, providing the following specific requirements are met.

Mirrors are not always the most appropriate solution. Accordingly, the approval of a road mirror is expected to be the exception rather than the norm.

This policy relates to existing private vehicle crossings. It is not for use in regard to public roads.

Objectives

1. To allow the use of road mirrors to improve safety at the intersections of driveways, private ways and other forms of private access with formed roads under the control of the Council.
2. To promote a consistent decision making process in regard to approving road mirrors.

Definitions

In terms of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

ACCESS WAYS – include driveways that cross legal roads and paths, or steps that provide access to private property.

LEGAL ROAD – a road as defined by the Local Government Act; generally this means any land owned by the Council that:

- is laid out or constructed as a road or street or public highway is intended for the use of the general public
- is vested in the Council for the purpose of a road as shown on a deposited survey plan or any other enactment
- includes land from the centre-line to the private property boundary and includes kerbs, footpaths, berms, any green unoccupied space not formed as a road or footpath, and airspace above legal road.

ROAD MIRROR – a convex mirror installed for the purposes of aiding access to and from a site.

ENCROACHMENT LICENSE – provides the license holder with permission to erect and use a road mirror to aid with access to and from their site only. It does not create any legal interest in the land.

CORRIDOR ACCESS REQUEST (CAR) – is required for any activity that will alter or cause to be altered the surface of any part of the road reserve, including but not limited to excavating, drilling, resurfacing, and placement of any pipe, duct, pole, cabinet, or other structure below, on, or above the legal road.

Policies

1. The safety and efficiency of the road network will not be unduly compromised by the erection of the mirror, consistent with policies for Resource Management purposes and the duties of Council under the Local Government Act.
2. Mirrors will only be installed in areas with a 50km/hr speed limit or less, as speed environment relates directly to the stopping distance and consequently to the severity of an accident if one were to occur.
3. A mirror will only be approved if it is impossible to improve sight distances by some other, practical means. These means may include:
 - removal of vegetation,
 - trimming of a bank
 - realignment or removal of a structure such as a fence
 - relocation or realignment of a driveway
 - making the desired driving manoeuvre at another location
4. A mirror is used only where the benefits of providing off-street parking will make the route safer for existing road users. It is seen as appropriate to encourage off street parking in these areas to improve the deficiencies of the road network, which can sometimes only be achieved by the construction of a driveway with substandard sight distances relying on the installation of a mirror.
5. In areas where parking on street does not create a congestion or safety issue and there is ample parking available, the application will be refused as the hazards associated with the driveway, even including the mitigation provided by a mirror, outweigh the adverse effects of the cars continuing to be parked on the street.
6. Mirrors must be erected at such a height so as not to compromise pedestrian or vehicular safety (Typically 2.5 metres above any ground to which pedestrians have access). The higher the mirror, the greater the benefit to motorists and the less likely it is to be vandalised.
7. An Encroachment Licence is obtained if a road mirror is to be installed on a private structure within the boundaries of legal road. All private structures within the road reserve are required to be covered by a Licence to Occupy to protect both the Council's and installer's interests. The licence must be sought and gained prior to installation of the mirror.
8. Council officers have the right to require a traffic report from a reputable traffic engineer at the applicant's expense should they be uncertain whether the mirror will be beneficial or create additional hazards, though this is likely to be required in very few cases.

Procedures

The following procedures will be followed to ensure a consistent approach is taken with applications to install road mirrors:

1. The applicant submits a request to be able to install a mirror for traffic safety reasons with the proposed location of the mirror attached and lists the perceived benefits of its installation.
2. The request initially goes to the Development Consents & Engineering Standards Manager (DC & ES Manager).
3. The relevant Roading Area Engineer carries out an assessment as to whether the mirror is warranted in regard to each item in the Policy Statement.
4. The Area Engineer reports back to the DC & ES Manager on whether the mirror meets the requirements of the Policy.
5. If the Area Engineer reports that the mirror is warranted, the DC & ES Manager will write to the applicant confirming that the mirror can be installed within the legal road subject to a Licence to Occupy (LTO) application being approved if a new supporting pole is required and a Corridor Access Request obtained. The Manager includes an LTO application form with the letter.
6. The LTO application is received and processed by Council.
7. A further letter is sent to the applicant with the License enclosed, requesting that a CAR be applied for prior to installing the mirror.
8. If the Engineer reports that the proposed mirror does not meet the Policy then the DC & ES Manager writes to the applicant confirming this.