**Zebra Crossings: A threatened species in New Zealand?**

Over the past fifty years, there has been ongoing debate about the safety and benefits of zebra crossings. An influential study by Herms in 1972 concluded that painted crosswalks had a higher crash rate than unpainted crosswalks. Following the publication of Herms’ study, many Councils removed crossings or refrained from installing new ones. Herms’ study has influenced traffic guidelines and manuals and continues to be referenced by engineers as justification for not installing new crossings.

The New Zealand Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide references that standalone zebra crossings have been shown to increase the risk of a pedestrian crash, aligning with Herms’ findings. In New Zealand, engineers either apply warrant criteria or use the Pedestrian Selection Tool to justify new crossings or determine appropriate pedestrian facilities for the relevant site. While engineers may be hesitant about installing new zebra crossings, communities often demand new or upgraded zebra crossings to resolve local road safety issues.

Despite their safety concerns, zebra crossings are one of the few treatments available that give pedestrians priority when crossing the road, and they continue to be widely used across New Zealand. In an effort to improve the pedestrian environment and enhance access, engineers and urban designers are installing creative and bespoke pedestrian treatments such as courtesy crossings and “crosswalk” art. However instead of tinkering with new and untested solutions, should we seek to address the key problem? Ultimately, engineers and planners are aiming to provide safe and appropriate crossing places for pedestrians that achieve an appropriate and desirable level of service for pedestrians and motorists. Is there an opportunity to focus on identifying ways to improve safety at zebra crossings, a universally recognised pedestrian treatment and one that gives pedestrians right of way, rather than inconsistent and bespoke treatments that create uncertainty and ambiguity?

This paper seeks to understand the deficiencies of zebra crossings in New Zealand by comparing the regulation and design of zebra crossings between New Zealand with Australia and the United Kindgom. It also explores road user attitudes and understanding of various types of pedestrian treatments, with a focus on zebra and courtesy crossings, as well as comparing the visibility of zebra crossings in New Zealand with those in Australia and United Kingdom.