# Getting around as a senior

**Knowing your transport options** 





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Note: A number of internet links for further information are provided in this booklet, so it can be useful to have access to the internet when reading this booklet (on smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer). The support agencies listed on page 28 will be able to help you if you do not have an internet connected device.

You can download this guide to your device at: www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/getting-around-as-a-senior

Free hardcopies of this resource can be ordered by calling: 0800 822 422.

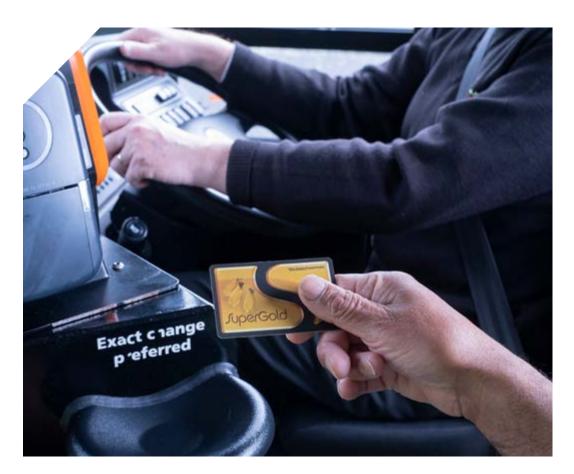
### Knowing your transport options



This booklet discusses a wide range of options for seniors when it comes to getting around. These options maintain your independence and freedom without using a car or motorbike.

Many people of all ages get around using different transport options, as there are many benefits including:

- Saving money.
- Using the time to do other activities such as reading and writing, while someone else takes the strain of driving.
- Being safe and comfortable when taking public transport.
- Having social interactions, particularly if you travel with people you know.
- Supporting a person's health (eg walking to the bus stop).
- Supporting the community and the planet (less pollution).



You might drive a car or ride a motorbike presently, but perhaps you do this less than you used to. Perhaps you avoid driving when the roads are busy; through complex intersections; at night; over long distances; or to places that are new or far away. Different transport options can help fill any gaps you have to getting around.

This booklet looks more closely at the following transport options:

- Shared rides (includes taxis/shared ride/community transport services/ Total Mobility Scheme).
- Bus/rail/plane/ferry includes coaches, longer distance trains, flying and the Cook Strait ferry.
- Walking.
- Biking.
- Mobility scooters.

#### **Comparative cost for different transport modes**

The chart below compares some of the most common ways of getting around and an approximate weighting of the proportionate costs involved:

Transport mode	Fuel (when using petrol/diesel)	Repairs/ servicing	Taxes/ insurance	Fares	Parking
Car	+++	+++	+++		+
Taxi				+++	
Train				++	
Bus				+	
Cycling		+			
Walking					

You might want to talk about 'getting around' issues with your peers. Waka Kotahi and Age Concern provide free 'Staying Safe' refresher theory courses for senior drivers around Aotearoa New Zealand. This free refresher course offers the chance to meet up with other senior drivers to discuss driving and transport related matters in a relaxed and friendly environment. You can find out where your nearest course is at:

www.nzta.govt.nz/staying-safe

#### SuperGold card

All seniors, from the age of 65, are entitled to a SuperGold card which gives you a range of discounts on daily living expenses, including free off-peak travel on most public transport trains and buses. Many taxi firms also give discounts. In most areas, the off-peak period is usually 9am-3pm and from 6.30pm weekdays and any time on weekends and public holidays. In Auckland, you can travel free for the whole day after 9am weekdays. Outside of these off-peak times, you'll need to pay the standard adult fare.

Once you are granted your NZ Superannuation pension at age 65 by Work and Income, you will then automatically be sent your SuperGold card by the Ministry of Social Development.

A list of questions and answers about the SuperGold card is available at: www.supergold.govt.nz/info\_for\_cardholders/q\_and\_a

For more information visit: www.supergold.govt.nz or phone 0800 25 45 65

Additionally, a range of financial benefits are available from Work and Income. For more information visit: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/seniors

The Office for Seniors also provides a very useful brochure *No car, no problem* which is available at: **www.superseniors.msd.govt. nz/health-wellbeing/out-about/transport-driving** 



### Shared rides/taxis



## All areas of the country are served by taxi or shared ride/community transport services, so it's worth finding out which services operate in your area.

There are a number of community transport services that specifically support senior drivers. These services often charge by time rather than distance, and they often provide assistance, such as helping you get the shopping out of the car or helping fold up a wheelchair. Many of them also provide companion services and can do things like take you for a scenic drive or spend time with you at a nearby cafe. These providers include 'Driving Miss Daisy' (not exclusively for women), 'Freedom Companion Driving' and 'Lift Companion Driving'.

Age Concern, or your local council can usually help you with local information about these and other providers, including local community organisations, which could be free or very low cost, and the potential for savings in relation to regular travel needs (see page 28). Additionally, very low or no cost shuttle buses may be provided by hospitals and medical centres to help you get to and from clinic appointments, and retirement villages may also provide transport services.



'Me and my son take taxis all over the place. We share the cost which makes it pretty affordable. And we enjoy having a chat with the driver on the way home.'

If you have a long-term health condition that affects your mobility, you might also be entitled to access the Total Mobility Scheme, which provides up to half price discounts on taxi/shared ride fares. Fare limits apply. If you exceed these fare limits, you need to pay for all of the excess fare. For more information visit: www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/services/how-can-we-help/total-mobility-taxi-vouchers

Waka Kotahi provides a guide which outlines the detail of Total Mobility Scheme fare subsidies in different regions. The guide also discusses how to make use of the scheme if you want to use a taxi outside of your home region, and some of the restrictions that apply to the scheme. *Total mobility around New Zealand* is available at:

www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/total-mobility-scheme

Taxis may seem expensive, but owning a car is usually more expensive. Let's say you spend \$4000 on your car every year (including fuel, parking, repairs, taxes, insurance). That's 100 \$40 journeys a year. Would you really use taxis that much?

You can also make savings by:

- asking the provider if they provide a SuperGold card or AA member (membership fees apply) discount
- sharing rides with relatives/whānau and friends
- asking relatives/whānau and friends who drive if they can give you a lift, maybe in return for a contribution to fuel costs
- ask the taxi/shared ride provider for a fixed cost for the journey, so you can budget effectively
- look online to see what taxi/shared ride providers are available in your area and shop around
- mix and match your transport options with your needs, so sometimes you might want to use the bus or train (if a train service is available in your area) instead of a taxi, which is dramatically cheaper.



# Bus/rail and long distance travel



You can travel for free at most times on bus and rail with your SuperGold card. If you travel at times when fares apply, remember that buses are the cheapest form of public transport, and that although rail might cost more, it is still an affordable option.

Some questions to ask yourself about these options include:

- How regular and reliable are services in your area?
- Do you know how to find the timetable and information regarding timetable changes?
- How accessible are they (eg steps, handrails, do they have a wheelchair ramp if you need one)?
- How close is the bus stop or train station to your home?
- Does the route run close to where you want to go?

It's likely that you'll have a service that better meets your needs if you are living in an urban area, which could be something to consider if you are moving to a new house or changing living arrangements. Rail services are generally more accessible in the Auckland and Wellington urban areas.

You might want to think about mixing and matching your options. For example, if where you want to go isn't on the bus route, you might travel on a bus for most of the journey, and then take a taxi for the last kilometre or two.

You can check timetable options by visiting the service's website. Your local council might also have information on the provision of these services. With most services you can also sign up for alerts and newsletters which will inform you of any timetable changes and special cost saving deals.



#### Long distance travel

Options for long distance travel include long distance trains, buses and flying. Flying can be very expensive, but if you book some months in advance, or sign up for newsletters (so you are notified about special offers) you can make substantial savings which can make the cost of flying closer to the cost of other travel options. An advantage of flying is that it is much faster than travelling by bus or rail, although a disadvantage is that pollution from air travel can be more damaging to the environment, and it might be challenging getting to your nearest airport.

#### **Ferries**

If you are travelling between the North and South Islands you could consider using the Cook Strait ferry. Water taxis are also provided in many areas to cross bodies of water – check to see if water taxis are available in your area by doing an internet search, looking in your local business telephone directory or contacting your local council.

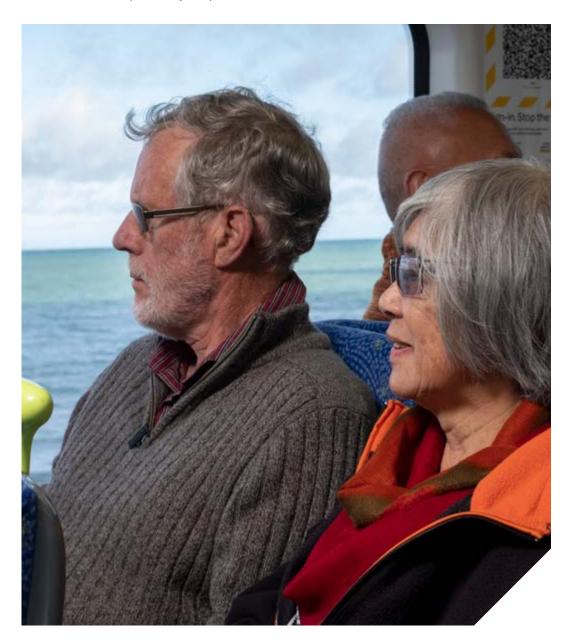
#### **Trains**

The long distance train network is provided by 'The Great Journeys of New Zealand' division of KiwiRail, which offers three routes - 'Coastal Pacific' between Picton and Christchurch; 'Northern Explorer' between Wellington and Auckland; and 'TranzAlpine' between Christchurch and Greymouth. Each of these services has a number of stops along the way, so this option may work for you if you want to stop off at some point along the route, as well as the destination. A disadvantage is that these services are infrequent. However, they offer a very comfortable, relaxing journey. Find out more at: www.greatjourneysofnz.co.nz

#### **Buses**

The main company providing national bus services is 'InterCity'. You may be able to find out more about local bus companies by doing an internet search or by looking in your local business telephone directory.

When booking long distance travel, always check to see if the provider offers a discount for seniors, or if your SuperGold card or AA membership (membership fees apply) gets you a discount. If you travel long distance on a regular basis, maybe to visit family/whānau, see if there are any reward programmes which can get you future discounts on the cost of travel (like 'frequent flyer' points).



## Walking



Walking is a healthy way to get around at any time of life. It keeps you fit, costs nothing and it's a good way of contributing to a cleaner environment by not adding to air pollution. Walking helps to keep joints flexible, strengthens your arms and legs, assists your agility and balance, keeps you alert and can help you sleep well at night. It's also good for your heart and blood vessels, and it helps you to maintain a healthy body weight, muscle mass and bone density. In addition to this, walking is also good for emotional wellbeing and helps boost some of the natural feel-good chemicals in our body.

If you have a health condition that affects your mobility, you could talk about this with your health care professional (GP or nurse), as they may be able to help with access to walking aids such as walking sticks, frames or walking braces/supports. Your health care professional could also write you a 'green prescription' which gives you access to low or no cost exercise programmes in your community. The Office for Seniors also has useful information on keeping active at:

#### superseniors.msd.govt.nz/health-wellbeing/keeping-active/index.html

Take it easy if you are starting out with walking and build up slowly. Over time you will find that you can walk further than you initially thought possible. You could do five-minute walks to begin with, then 10-minute walks, then 20 and 30 minute walks, or possibly even longer. Listen to your body, and only increase your walking once you feel the amount of walking you are currently doing is comfortable. You might only increase your walking amounts once a week, or once a fortnight for example. Doing multiple short walks a day can also help to increase your endurance.

You can also do exercise at home which can help increase your endurance, physical ability and confidence with walking. Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) has developed an easy to use website with lots of good information on exercising at home. This website also provides information on local strength and balance classes.

#### www.livestronger.org.nz

Age Concern also provide 'Steady as you go' © classes in many communities, which can help you to build your strength, balance and confidence: Contact Age Concern to find out more.

If you move to somewhere new, consider what facilities are within walking distance, such as bus stops, train stations, community centres, shops, health centres and places of worship. It makes life much more enjoyable if the facilities we frequently use are within easy reach.

#### Staying motivated with walking

- Walk with friends or family/whānau.
- You could join a walking group if one operates in your community. This
  also helps strengthen your social connections. Contact Age Concern to
  see if they facilitate a walking group in your area.
- Build walking into your routines. If you catch a bus somewhere, maybe get off the bus a stop or two earlier than usual.
- Consider building some mindfulness activities into your walking activities. Appreciating the small and large details of the natural world provides extra benefits for your health.
- Maybe invest in a fitness tracker or download a fitness app to your smartphone so you can monitor your progress and receive inspirational reminders.
- Keep a diary of how often, how far and how long you walk for. Looking back over your achievements can inspire you to keep going.
- Maybe set yourself a goal to work towards, such as walking up the biggest hill in your local area.
- Remind yourself of how good you feel after a walk. This is usually a result of exercise related endorphins being released in your body.
- Create a variety of walking routes for yourself to keep things interesting.
- If the weather is cold or rainy, or surfaces are slippery, you could do your walking in a shopping mall or other indoor venue, like a museum, where it is warm and dry.



#### Staying safe with walking

- If your walk involves crossing open roads, you might want to plan walking trips when there is less traffic.
- If there are no pedestrian crossings, choose the shortest way to cross the road.
- Make use of pedestrian traffic islands to cross halfway, and then halfway again when it is safe to do so.
- If there are no traffic islands for pedestrians, make sure you have plenty of time to get across both lanes.
- It's a good idea to make eye contact with drivers, especially if they are turning.
- Cross where roads are clear and free of objects that can obscure oncoming driver's views (like large bushes or trees).
- If you have a stiff neck or shoulders, turn your whole body to scan the road for traffic.

- If you walk slowly, consider waiting for a fresh green pedestrian crossing signal at traffic intersections.
- Always walk on paths, but if there is no path try to walk on the side of the road that faces oncoming traffic so that you can see vehicles, and drivers can see you with ease.
- Pedestrian crossings over roads have white stripes painted on them.
   Pedestrians have right of way at these crossings, although you should stop and check for oncoming traffic.
- Courtesy crossings do not have white stripes painted on them. They are
  usually raised and have bricks, paint marks or paving that distinguish
  them from the regular road surface. Drivers are encouraged to be
  courteous at these crossings, but pedestrians need to be more wary as
  they do not have right of way.
- Pedestrians have the right of way on the footpath over any wheeled vehicle.
- If you're visiting multiple places, plan your trip to minimise road crossings.
- Wear light-coloured clothing or carry a brightly coloured bag. This helps drivers and cyclists see you.
- If you're walking at night or when the light is poor, you could wear reflective clothing or armbands, and carry a torch.
- If you need glasses or a hearing aid, make sure you wear them when you're walking.



## Cycling



Riding a bike is a fun and low cost way to get around. Cycling also has many health benefits, which are similar to the health benefits associated with walking, and it's an environmentally friendly way to stay mobile.

If you are new to biking, you might want to discuss your health and physical ability with your health care professional at your local health centre. If you have a health condition that affects your balance or your physical strength, then you may benefit from the 'Steady as you go' classes provided by Age Concern. Contact Age Concern for more information regarding courses which may be available in your area. You could also look at ACC's 'live stronger for longer' website, which has lots of good information on exercising at home, as well as details of local strength and balance classes at: www.livestronger.org.nz

#### Maps and riding groups

Your local council will often have maps of cycling routes giving information on the different types of routes available such as shared paths, cycle lanes on the road, but separated from traffic, and painted cycle lanes, so you can plan a route to suit your needs. They could also give you information about local riding groups, including social biking groups for seniors.

Waka Kotahi also provides an interactive cycling network map which can be found at: www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-in-new-zealand/cycle-touring

#### **Cycle touring**

The national New Zealand Cycle Trail has 22 'Great Rides' that you might want to have a look at. The great rides are usually off-road multi-day routes through stunning scenery, and most of them are graded as easy to manage. Electric bikes can be used to make things easier – on most trails you can arrange to hire bikes or e-bikes. Details of the various trails, along with more information about cycling and planning a cycling holiday can be found at: www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-in-new-zealand/cycle-touring

#### **E-bikes**

Electric bikes, commonly known as e-bikes, can make a big difference to your ride, allowing you to travel much longer distances, and they help in dealing with hills and wind much better. They also help you to take off at intersections quicker and make carrying loads much easier.



E-bikes are typically heavier than regular bikes which mean they handle differently. Like any new bicycle it is best to get used to how the bike handles before heading out on the road.

E-bikes come in a wide range of styles – commuter, mountain bike or cargo bike. They have a variety of features and top motor-assisted speeds. Waka Kotahi recommends:

- E-bikes with a maximum speed cut out of 25km/h for those new to riding, or 32km/h for experienced riders who spend more of their time on the road.
- E-bikes that give power in proportion to the amount you pedal as these generally handle much more like a non-powered bike than throttle operated e-bikes.
- E-bikes with a motor located in the middle or rear of the bike, rather than the front wheel, as these generally handle more like non-powered bikes.

More information on e-bikes, can be found at: www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-in-new-zealand/electric-bikes

#### Rules for cycling on roads and pathways

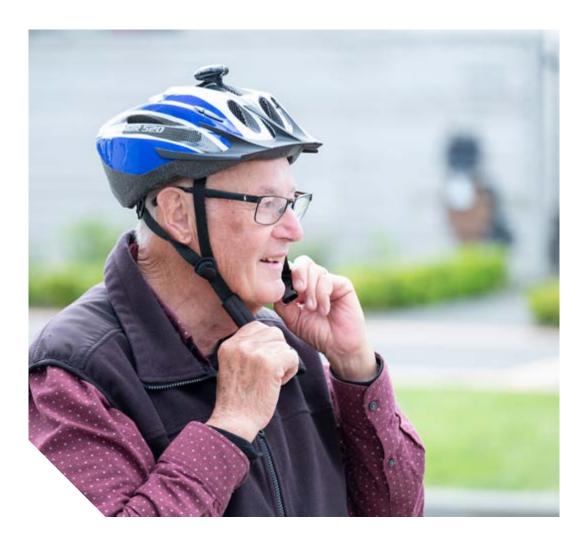
The New Zealand code for cycling tells you how to apply the land transport rules. The code provides clear information about what to do when you are cycling and interacting with other people on New Zealand roads and pathways. It also covers off the many different situations and signs you will encounter, including advice to help you be confident you are doing the right thing.

The code can be found at:

www.nzta.govt.nz/roadcode/code-for-cycling\_

#### Tips for everyday bike riding

The BikeReady and Waka Kotahi websites both provide advice and resources to help you prepare for cycling and to manage situations you may encounter. The BikeReady website includes information and videos on topics like signalling and negotiating intersections. Details are available at: www.bikeready.govt.nz/adults



#### **Preparing to ride**

- Make sure your bike is in good working order, with good brakes.
- Plan a route that suits your comfort or skill level.
- Make sure you have lights (and they are charged) if you are going to be out at night.
- Make sure you have a helmet that fits. A helmet only protects your brain once. If your helmet has been in a crash or has had a very hard knock, get a new one. If you don't know a helmet's history, get a new one.

#### **Riding along**

- Communicate your intentions by signalling clearly.
- Scan for risks such as a car door suddenly opening, cars turning into or out of side roads in front of you, people dashing out onto the road in front of you, or debris/potholes that might cause you to veer or wobble.
- Position yourself to be seen, ride out of the gutter to avoid grates and debris, keep a steady line when riding rather than weaving in and out and take the lane, at intersections, when riding past parked cars, and when the road is too narrow for people driving to pass you safely.
- Pay attention to trucks and buses. Large vehicles like trucks have large turning circles, and big blind spots, meaning the driver may not be able to see you if you are directly in front, behind or riding alongside them. Either stay back so you can see them or get well out in front so they can see you. Don't ride alongside. If you have pulled up to an intersection and think the driver may not have seen you, move out and make eye contact.
- Shine bright at night. Make sure you have lights front and back. Reflective clothing, particularly on the legs helps make you more visible at night.
- Slow down around others on shared paths. Where people on bikes, scooters and foot all share the path, travel at slower speeds when around others and give people space when passing.
- Stop cycling if you feel impaired. Impairment can be caused by injury, illness, medication, alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances.

A good way to practice these skills is to attend a cycle skills training course for adults. You might meet a few like-minded people to cycle with too. Visit the BikeReady website to find out if there are courses available in your region.

## Mobility scooters



The primary purpose of an electric-powered four-wheeled (usually) mobility scooter is to help people get around their local community if they find it very tiring or uncomfortable to walk more than a short distance, or if they cannot walk. Mobility scooters do not need to be registered or require the user to have a licence.

If you are considering buying a mobility scooter, ask yourself these questions:

- Can I judge distances well?
- Do I have good eyesight (with or without glasses)?
- Do I react quickly when something unexpected happens?
- Can I hear well (with or without a hearing aid)?
- Can I look from left to right, and back from right to left, without any problems?
- Am I able to handle a motorised vehicle safely?

If you answer 'yes' to these questions, then a mobility scooter is a potential option for getting around. If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, then it's a good idea to discuss the situation with your health care professional. You shouldn't use a mobility scooter if you've lost your driver licence because of eyesight or hearing problems.



If you're planning to buy a mobility scooter, you need to know the legal requirements:

- Pedestrians have right of way on the footpath over any wheeled vehicle.
- Ride your mobility scooter in a careful and considerate way.
- Ride your mobility scooter on the footpath whenever possible.
- If there's no footpath, you must keep close to the side of the road.
- Travel on the footpath at a speed that is safe for other people.
- Mobility scooters should be driven in a way that prevents injuries to others.
- Mobility scooters are only to be used by one person who is in the sitting position.
- If you are involved in a crash, you must stop to see if anyone is hurt. You must help anyone who is hurt. And you must report the crash to the police within 24 hours.



The following safe driving requirements should also be followed when using a mobility scooter:

- Be aware when riding on a mobility scooter that loose and long clothing may get caught in the tyres and could potentially cause the rider serious or fatal injury.
- If you normally use glasses, you should wear them when driving.
- If you normally use hearing aids, you should wear them when driving.
- Stop driving if you feel impaired. Impairment can be caused by injury, illness, medication, alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances.
- You should not use a hand-held mobile phone/tablet to send or receive text messages or calls when driving.
- Mobility scooters are closer to the ground than pedestrians or motor vehicles, so make sure you can see and be seen by wearing brightly coloured clothes, and by attaching a brightly coloured flag to your mobility scooter, which is at least one and a half metres off the ground.

More detailed information on mobility scooters is available at:

#### www.nzta.govt.nz/mobility-scooters

The Waka Kotahi Factsheet 31, Disabilities and driving (page 2) also has useful information about mobility scooters and power chairs.

A range of agencies provide mobility scooter courses. A list of course providers is available at:

#### www.nzta.govt.nz/mobility-scooter-courses

Note: Waka Kotahi does not regulate, approve or endorse mobility scooter courses.

You may also want to contact your local council, as sometimes they have schemes where mobility scooters can be borrowed to help you get around the city centre, and sometimes shopping malls provide mobility scooters on site.

## Support and further information

#### **Age Concern**

www.ageconcern.org.nz

Phone: 0800 65 2 105

Email: national.office@ageconcern.org.nz

Free 'Staying Safe' refresher theory courses:

www.nzta.govt.nz/staying-safe

#### Office for Seniors

www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz

Email: osc@msd.govt.nz

#### **Local councils**

www.localcouncils.govt.nz

Click on 'Council Profiles'

#### Neighbourhood support

www.neighbourhoodsupport.co.nz

Phone: 0800 463 444

#### NZ Automobile Association (AA)

www.aa.co.nz/contact-us

Phone: 0800 500 444

(Fees apply to access AA services)

#### **Vehicle Testing NZ (VTNZ)**

www.vtnz.co.nz/contact-us

Phone 0800 88 88 69

(Fees apply to access VTNZ services)

## This booklet is also available online www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/ getting-around-as-a-senior

All the internet links contained within the booklet are live so you can click on them for further information on each subject.

#### **Primary health care**

To access health care professionals (GP or nurse)

www.healthpoint.co.nz/gps-accident-urgent-medical-care

www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-careservices/visiting-doctor-or-nurse

#### Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

www.nzta.govt.nz/senior-drivers

Phone: 0800 822 422

Email: info@nzta.govt.nz

The following Waka Kotahi publications are free, and include information that you might find useful:

- The road ahead for seniors a pamphlet which gives a brief overview of our core senior driver information booklets.
- Driving safely as a senior
- Supporting senior drivers
- Getting around as a senior
- Renewing your driver licence as a senior
- Road rules refresher for seniors
- Check your car
- Guide to the on-road safety test
- Safer winter driving

#### To get copies of any of these publications

Email: info@nzta.govt.nz

Visit: www-ak.bspg.co.nz/WebForm/NZTAWN\_PB?form=Public%20

**Publications** 

Phone: 0800 822 422

#### You can find all our factsheets at

#### www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/factsheets/category

- Factsheet 1: Cycles, road rules and equipment
- Factsheet 7: Child restraints
- Factsheet 16: Diabetes and driving
- Factsheet 17: Epilepsy and driving
- Factsheet 23: Dementia and driving
- Factsheet 24: Fatigue: staying alert while you're driving
- Factsheet 25: Vision and driving
- Factsheet 31: Disabilities and driving
- Factsheet 51: OT assessments: occupational therapists (OT) and driver licensing
- Factsheet 57: Older drivers: licence renewal

#### Road codes

www.nzta.govt.nz/roadcode

#### **Our postal address**

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If you have further queries, call our contact centre on 0800 699 000 or write to us:

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency Private Bag 6995 Wellington 6141

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