There has been an unusually high number of cycling fatalities in New Zealand during the past year; what has been particularly noticeable is the increased proportion that involved heavy vehicles. Since November 2016, ten of the 17 cycling fatalities due to a motor vehicle have featured a truck, well above the long-term average. The Cycling Safety Panel, convened by the Transport Agency to investigate cycling crashes in NZ, made a number of recommendations in 2014 for improving cycle safety around heavy vehicles, including the introduction of side under-run protection, better training for truck drivers and cyclists, and investigation of new in-vehicle bicycle detection technologies. However, to date there has been limited progress on implementing these recommendations.

This paper investigates the factors involved in recent truck/bike crashes (injuries and fatalities) to identify common patterns. A number of themes emerge including a high number of cases where the truck driver reportedly did not see the person cycling. Next steps should be to carry out a “safe system” analysis of cases to understand how multiple system failures are resulting in truck/cycle fatalities. In turn, this could be used to set out a logic for interventions (regulatory, engineering, vehicles, etc) that are likely to prevent complete system failure. Among the interventions there is a fundamental question about the ethics of road environments where trucks and cycles share the same road space. The findings will be compared with the Panel’s earlier recommendations, to assess the likely effectiveness in reducing or mitigating the crashes that have occurred if these initiatives had been implemented.