



West Coast

Regional Public Transport Plan

April 2015

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Introduction

The West Coast Regional Council (the Council) is required by the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA) to prepare a Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP). The LTMA sets out the requirements regarding the content and consultation process required in preparing the RPTP.

This RPTP updates the 2011 RPTP as included within the West Coast Regional Land Transport Strategy to ensure it meets the requirements of the recent changes to the LTMA, which now governs public transport. The changes to the LTMA included the introduction of a new operating model for public transport in New Zealand, with regional public transport plans being the cornerstone of the new operating model.

New matters that must now be addressed by the RPTP include the following:

- How Councils will work with bus operators to ensure services meet the needs of the passengers;
- How the bus services Council intends to provide will be arranged into 'units'; and
- How bus fares will be reviewed and set.

However, given that this Council does not provide subsidised public transport bus services, it is irrelevant to include these matters within this RPTP. Instead the Council has focussed on those services that are funded and subsidised by the Regional or District Councils of the West Coast, primarily the taxi companies within the region. However, this does not preclude the public from commenting on potential future services for the region. Any such proposals need to be accompanied by a strong business case supporting future change.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The LTMA states that the purpose of the RPTP is to provide:

- A means of encouraging Council and public transport operators to work together in developing public transport services and infrastructure; and
- An instrument in engaging with the public in the region on the design and operation of the public transport network; and
- A statement of:
 - The public transport services that are integral to the public transport network; and
 - The policies and procedures that apply to those services; and
 - The information and infrastructure that support those services.

This RPTP sets out the Council's intentions and policies regarding public transport throughout the West Coast region over the next three years. The RPTP takes into account all relevant national and local policies, and the public transport funding likely to be available to Council.

This RPTP is set out as follows:

- Part A sets out the services that are intended to be provided on the West Coast;
- Part B details the policies and actions for the delivery of public transport on the West Coast;
- Part C sets out the policy to determine significance for the purpose of consultation on variations to this RPTP; and
- Part D sets out the monitoring and review to be undertaken on this RPTP.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The LTMA was amended in 2013, repealing the Public Transport Management Act 2008 and bringing the relevant provisions into the LTMA. The new purpose of the LTMA is to "contribute to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system in the public interest" and the LTMA requires the adoption of a regional public transport plan if there is an intent to:

- a) Enter into any contract for the supply of any public transport service; or
- b) Provide any financial assistance to any operator or user of:
 - A taxi service
 - A shuttle service.

Section 124 of the LTMA requires that a RPTP must:

- Contribute to the purpose of the LTMA;

- Have been prepared in accordance with NZTA guidelines;
- Be consistent with any Regional Land Transport Plan¹;
- Apply the principles specified in the LTMA, namely:
 - Councils and operators should work in partnership to deliver services and infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of passengers;
 - The provision of services should be coordinated with the aim of achieving the levels of integration, reliability, frequency, and coverage necessary to encourage passenger growth;
 - Competitors should have access to public transport markets to increase confidence that services are priced efficiently;
 - Incentives should exist to reduce reliance on public subsidies to cover the cost of providing public transport services;
 - The planning and procurement of public transport services should be transparent;
- Take into account:
 - Any national energy efficiency and conservation strategy;
 - Any relevant regional policy statement, regional plan or district plan;
 - The public transport funding likely to be available;
 - The need to obtain the best value for money, having regard to the desirability of encouraging a competitive and efficient market for public transport services;
 - The views of public transport operators; and
- Consider the needs of people who are transport-disadvantaged.

Other Council documents relevant to public transport on the West Coast include the Regional and District Council Long Term Plans and Annual Plans.

Council has complied with all of the above requirements when preparing this RPTP. However, it is noted that some of these are less relevant due to the very limited range of public transport services funded on the West Coast.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The 'public transport' referred to in this RPTP are the services that provide for the Total Mobility scheme. This includes the taxi services in Greymouth, Westport and Hokitika only. It does not include long-distance bus services, Ministry of Education funded bus services, privately funded bus services or train services.

FUNDING

Public transport services (Total Mobility taxi services) on the West Coast, as throughout the rest of New Zealand, are subsidised. The subsidy is provided in approximately equal proportions by the Councils and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA)².

Council has decided that it should continue to provide the Total Mobility scheme. The Total Mobility scheme assists eligible people with impairments to access appropriate transport to enhance their community participation. This provides significant social benefits enabling a level of independence for members of the community to get to where they need to go to access services as well as for shopping and recreating.

The continuing provision of the subsidy to ensure the viability of the taxi services within Westport and Hokitika also provides significant social and safety benefits to those communities.

NZTA funding is not unlimited, and any extra funding, such as may be required to introduce new services, (i.e. subsidised bus services within the region) will only be provided if it is supported by a suitable business case prepared in accordance with NZTA guidelines³. The business case is required to assess the costs and benefits of the proposed new service, and how the service fits within current

¹ The first Regional Land Transport Plan is currently being prepared and will be consulted on at the same time as this RPTP.

² This funding arrangement may change once the Financial Assistance Rate Review is complete. NZTA have indicated that for 2015-18 the current funding arrangement will remain which for the Regional Council is at a 50/50 share.

³ A suggested business case approach has been developed by NZTA, and is contained in the NZTA online Planning and Investment Knowledge Base.

NZTA funding criteria. Funding guidelines indicate that this extra funding will only be provided where the proposed new service can show:

- It will improve access to social and economic opportunities, particularly for those with limited access to a private vehicle;
- It will be effective at achieving the objectives of the service; and
- The benefits of providing the service outweigh the costs.

Requests for extra funding will then be assessed against the demands for improvements from other regions in New Zealand. Priority is given where congestion and demands on the public transport network are the highest, and the reliability of journey times the worst. There will also need to be consideration by the Council on any potential increased service as extra funding to the scale required to introduce a new service, is likely to necessitate a rates increase to support it.

Because only services specified in a RTP are able to be subsidised, proposals for new services will need to be incorporated into this document (and therefore subject to public consultation guidelines) in addition to meeting NZTA business case requirements.

THE TRANSPORT DISADVANTAGED

The RTP is required to describe how the proposed services will assist people who are 'transport disadvantaged'. The term 'transport disadvantaged' is defined in the LTMA as people who the Council has reasonable grounds to believe are the least able to travel to basic community activities and services (for example, work, education, health care, welfare and shopping).

The Council will assist the needs of these people through the range of services proposed in this RTP. The Total Mobility scheme provides services to assist those with impairments. The taxi services within the main urban areas also provide essential services to a section of the community who do not have access to their own vehicle, or who may have an illness, disability or do not have a drivers licence.

Part A: Passenger transport services intended to be provided

Services that are intended to be provided on the West Coast include:

TOTAL MOBILITY SCHEME

Council provides administration support and funding for the Total Mobility scheme. This scheme provides transport assistance to people with disabilities through the provision of half-priced taxi fares (up to a maximum subsidy per trip of \$15 one way). Total Mobility operates in Westport, Greymouth, and Hokitika and between Greymouth and Christchurch via West Coast Shuttle Ltd.

Approximately 15,000 trips are made on the West Coast through the Total Mobility scheme. 11,000 of these are made by scheme members who reside in the Grey District, 2,800 by residents in Westport and 1,200 in Hokitika. Only a small number of trips are made via West Coast Shuttle.

The annual cost of this service was approximately \$87,000 in 2013/14, of which 50%⁴ was funded by NZTA. Regional ratepayers therefore contributed \$43,500 to the provision of this service.

Currently approximately 363 people in Greymouth, 170 in Westport and 80 in Hokitika are registered for the Total Mobility scheme.

The scheme also provides for a taxi-van in Greymouth capable of carrying people in wheel-chairs, and provides for an extra \$11.50 subsidy per trip of the use of this taxi-van in recognition of the cost and time involved in carrying passengers using a wheelchair. This is currently funded by NZTA at 100%⁵.

The Regional Council administers the scheme, with the District Council Offices in Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika responsible for the distribution of vouchers for use in the taxis. The Regional Council is responsible for payments to the taxi companies and West Coast Shuttle Ltd.

Because the scheme runs nationally, there are certain rules about how it is run, set by NZTA. Council will continue to comply with these rules and thus ensure West Coast members can continue to use the scheme elsewhere in New Zealand.

WESTPORT AND HOKITIKA TAXI SERVICES

The Buller and Westland District Councils provide a subsidy to ensure the provision of taxi services within the towns of Westport and Hokitika. These services are an integral part of the transport network within these towns. The subsidy ensures that these services remain viable and continue to provide a public transport function, not just for the provision of the Total Mobility scheme, but for the community as a whole. The provision of the taxi service enables those without other forms of transport available to them to access shopping, health and other local services; providing for enhanced social connections within the community. They also play an important role in providing an alternative form of transport for those consuming alcohol, as well as giving a safe transport option for the elderly and disabled, and for late night journeys.

In Westport, approximately 15,000 trips were made using the local service in 2013/14. The annual subsidy provided to the service in 2014/15 was \$52,000 of which 50% is currently funded by NZTA. Ratepayers in the Buller District therefore contributed \$26,000 to the provision of this service.

In Hokitika, approximately 13,000 trips were made using the local service in 2013/14. The annual subsidy provided to the service in 2014/15 was \$32,500, of which 50% is currently funded by NZTA. Ratepayers in the Westland District therefore contributed \$16,250 to the provision of this service.

⁴ NZTA currently subsidises 50% of the Total Mobility scheme. This financial assistance rate may change following the current review, however, NZTA have signalled that this rate will remain the same for the next three years.

⁵ This financial assistance rate may change following the review currently being undertaken by NZTA.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Because there is little demand currently for increased public transport services, and funding any major service is unlikely to be available from NZTA in the future, no major plans for changes or new services are proposed in this RPTP. However, this does not preclude the possibility that there may not be any new services in the future tailored to the needs of individual communities and those who use the services for example community vehicle trusts. Future improvements are likely to be around the administration of the Total Mobility scheme, although there are currently no issues with the provision of this service.

FARES AND SUBSIDIES

The LTMA requires the RPTP to set out policies on passenger fares, and how fares will be set and reviewed. Council intends for the subsidy currently set for the Total Mobility scheme to be maintained at its current rate of 50% up to a total value of \$15. This means that should a trip cost \$10, the scheme user will pay \$5 and the Council the remainder of the fare. Should a fare be greater than \$30, then the scheme user will pay the amount outstanding after the \$15 maximum subsidy has been applied. Reviews of the subsidy rate will continue to be made as required.

EXEMPT SERVICES

The LTMA requires all exempt services in a region to be registered before operation. The following services that currently operate on the West Coast that are exempt are:

- Inter-regional public transport services; and
- A public transport service that operates without a subsidy for the provision of the service.

There are exempt services that operate without any financial support from the Council. These include inter-regional bus services such as Inter-City and West Coast Shuttle Ltd as well as the TranzAlpine return train service between Christchurch and Greymouth. A local bus contractor also provides a service on Tuesdays and Thursdays from Runanga and Cobden to Greymouth return. As these services operate independently, operators are able to set fares, timetables and routes as they consider appropriate. Section 153 of the LTMA states that these services will be treated as registered exempt services. A register is maintained by Council of exempt services.

Part B: Policies and methods for the delivery of public transport

TOTAL MOBILITY

The following policy and actions set out the delivery of the Total Mobility scheme.

Policy 1	Actions
Provide a transport service to meet the needs of the transport disadvantaged who meet the Total Mobility eligibility criteria.	<p>Continue to support and fund the Total Mobility Scheme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contracting taxi and shuttle services to provide targeted services; ▪ Providing a discount on qualifying travel (up to a specified limit); ▪ In eligible cases, assisting with accessing funding for the installation of hoists in specialist vehicles so that wheelchairs can be carried; ▪ Providing the ongoing administration of the service including response to questions of scheme users and other agencies; ▪ Managing the day-to-day operation of the scheme which is comprised of the 4 Councils, taxi companies and eligibility assessors; ▪ Continue to improve the administration of the scheme where practicable, and to meet any NZTA requirements; ▪ Allowing new operators to join the Total Mobility scheme where appropriate; ▪ Review subsidies as required.

TAXI SERVICE SUBSIDY

The following policy and action sets out the delivery of the subsidy for the taxi services in Westport and Hokitika.

Policy 2	Actions
Provide a subsidy to the taxi services within Westport and Hokitika to ensure the continuation of a service which meet the needs of both the community and the transport disadvantaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to fund the subsidy and support the taxi services within Westport and Hokitika.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES

The following policy and actions sets out the intention in regards to supporting passenger transport services within the West Coast region.

Policy 1	Actions
Support the provision of other passenger transport services where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage the provision of new viable passenger transport services where demand is sufficient; ▪ Continuing with the provision of ongoing support for exempt services; ▪ Continue to identify exempt services and maintaining a register of these services.

Part C: Significance Policy

This policy is required, in accordance with section 120(4) of the LTMA, to set out how to determine the significance of proposed variations to the RPTP. The level of significance determines the consultation regarding the proposed variation that must be undertaken.

APPLICATION

This RPTP can be varied at any time. However, in accordance with section 126(4) of the LTMA, the usual consultation will not be required if the proposed variation is considered 'not significant' under this policy. The approach to consultation will reflect the level of significance of any proposed variation. Consideration will be given to the costs and benefits of any consultative process and the extent to which consultation has already taken place.

The implication of not meeting the significance threshold is that the full consultation requirements of the LTMA will not need to be followed. However, the Council may undertake targeted consultation on matters affecting specific communities and stakeholders, even if the significance threshold outlined in this policy is not invoked.

GENERAL DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of variations to this RPTP will be determined by Council on a case by case basis. When determining the significance of a variation, consideration must be given to the extent to which the variation:

- Signals a material change to the planned level of investment in the public transport network;
- Impacts on the purpose of the LTMA;
- Affects residents (variations with a moderate impact on a large number of residents, or variations with a major impact on a small number of residents will always have greater significance than those with a minor impact);
- Affects the overall integrity of this RPTP, including its overall affordability;
- Has already been the subject of consultation with affected parties.

SIGNIFICANT AND NON-SIGNIFICANT MATTERS

Matters that will always be considered 'significant' are:

- Any variation that amends this policy on significance;
- Any major change to existing services, or the introduction of a new service (other than changes to or the introduction of trial services), for which no consultation regarding the change or introduction has occurred.

Matters that will always be considered 'not significant' are:

- Minor amendments to this RPTP;
- Minor amendments to subsidy levels in accordance with the Regional Land Transport Programme;
- The introduction, alteration or deletion of trial services.

TARGETED CONSULTATION ON NON-SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS

Where the Council finds that a proposed variation is not significant, the Council may undertake targeted consultation. For example, any proposals for changes that affect only a sector of the community or the industry (such as a change to the Total Mobility scheme) will be worked through with those most likely to be affected, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Note that this policy does not preclude the Council from a more comprehensive consultation process for a variation that does not meet the significance threshold if the benefits of that consultation are considered to outweigh the costs.

Part D: Monitoring and Review

Monitoring is an important component of the decision making process. It establishes a process to check on the progress being made towards the achievement of the RPTP and the efficiency and effectiveness of the options that have been chosen.

The Council is required to review the RPTP at intervals not exceeding three years. Any review must be related as much as possible to the timing of associated documents such as the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding, the West Coast Regional Land Transport Plan and/or Council Long Term Plans.

If the Council is not reasonably satisfied that the RPTP fulfils these requirements, then a variation to the RPTP will be required. The Council will determine the significance of any variation according to the policy on significance in Part C. Any variation that is not significant can be made without the need for full public consultation. However, the Council is still obliged to follow the consultation principles in section 82 of the Local Government Act, and consult persons who may be affected by the proposed variation, including public transport operators.

The policies and actions set out in Part B will provide the direction for the monitoring of this RPTP. Further monitoring to complement this information will include:

- The costs of providing the services identified;
- Number of trips/km travelled; and
- Feedback by way of customer satisfaction surveys⁶.

⁶ Undertaking customer satisfaction services is dependent on the information gathering requirements of the NZ Transport Agency. The collection of such data is currently on hold pending their review of Total Mobility.

Appendix A: Consultation Summary

The RPTP was developed with input from District Council staff, the New Zealand Transport Agency and the West Coast Regional Transport Committee (RTC). It also included feedback from the primary bus service contractors in the region to determine the provision of potential future services.

The RPTP was approved for consultation on 19 November 2014 and was available for the public to make submissions on from 3 December 2014 to 23 January 2015. Only one submission was received. The Hearing Panel, made up of the representatives from the four Councils and the NZ Transport Agency, made decisions on the submission made on 17 February 2015.

The RTC approved the RPTP on 31 March 2015 and submitted it to the West Coast Regional Council for adoption at its Council meeting on 14 April 2015.