

OC260175

12 June 2026

Tēnā koe 

I refer to your email dated 11 March 2026, requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

“Any document, briefings, or analyses prepared since October 1, 2024 relating to the Total Mobility Scheme.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- *Internal policy papers or briefing notes, reviews, proposed improvements, policy directions, or funding arrangements.*
- *Consultation documents and analyses of stakeholder feedback.*
- *Presentations, reports, or emails prepared for senior Ministry staff or the Minister regarding the scheme.”*

On 20 March 2026, we reached out to clarify the scope of your request as the request as initially framed was quite broad and there was a large volume of information to search through. We asked whether you were interested in the Total Mobility Scheme in general or the Total Mobility Review.

On 30 March 2026, we followed up via email as we hadn't received a response. On 2 April 2026, we rang you to discuss refinement of your request and you agreed to a refined scope of:

“Any final versions of documents, briefings, or analyses prepared since 1 June 2025 relating to the Review of the Total Mobility Scheme.

- *Internal papers, presentations, and reports.*
- *Papers or briefing notes on the funding settings for the scheme itself (for example, the subsidy level or Crown appropriation).*
- *Consultation documents and analyses of stakeholder feedback.*
- *Presentations, reports, or emails prepared for Senior Leadership or the Minister regarding the Review.”*

On 4 May 2026, we advised that due to the search through a large quantity of information and consultations necessary to make a decision on the request, a proper response could not reasonably be made within the original time limit. We advised you that we would be extending the due date on your request by up to 27 working days.

We have now completed the search through the large quantity of information in scope and necessary consultations to make a decision on your request.

There are 22 documents within the scope of your request that are detailed in the document schedule attached as Annex 1. Of these, eight are released in full, 11 are released with some information withheld or refused and three are refused as they will soon be publicly available.

The document schedule attached as Annex 1 outlines how the documents have been treated under the Act. Certain information is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons
- 9(2)(ba)(i) to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied
- 9(2)(f)(iv) to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials
- 9(2)(h) to maintain legal professional privilege
- 18(d) the information requested is or will soon be publicly available

With regard to the information that has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding the information at this time are not outweighed by public interest considerations that would make it desirable to make the information available.

If you would like to discuss this decision with us, please do not hesitate to contact us at OIA@transport.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

The Ministry publishes our Official Information Act responses and the information contained in our reply to you may be published on the Ministry's website. Before publishing we will remove any personal or identifiable information.

Nāku noa, nā



Marian Willberg
Manager, Maritime, Freight and Access

Annex 1: Document Schedule

Doc #	Reference number	Date	Title of Document	Decision on request
Part 1 – Presentations, reports, or emails prepared for Senior Leadership or the Minister regarding the Review.				
1	N/A	24/06/2025 – 23/03/2026	Excerpts from Transport Portfolio Weekly Reports 24 June 2025 – 23 March 2026	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(ba)(i).
2	OC250491	16/07/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN: HanLing - OC250491 Total Mobility - Options to stabilise cost pressures Attachments: OC250491 Total Mobility – Options to stabilise cost pressures	Released with some information withheld under sections 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(f)(iv).
3	OC250728	4/09/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN: EMMA - OC250728 Total Mobility - Additional options to manage cost pressures Attachments: Briefing: OC250728 Total Mobility - additional options to manage cost pressures Annex 1: Total Mobility A3s	Released with some information withheld under sections 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(f)(iv).
4	N/A	9/09/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN Emma: Additional Total Mobility information Attachment: Total Mobility phasing scenarios	Released in full.
5	N/A	23/09/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: Note on regional Total Mobility coordinators meeting	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a).
6	OC250839	10/10/2025	Email from: Whitney Adam (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: Total Mobility - stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation - for feedback	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a) and refused under section 18(d). Annex 2 is publicly available on the Ministry's website here:

Doc #	Reference number	Date	Title of Document	Decision on request
			Attachments: OC250839 Draft Cabinet paper Total Mobility Discussion Document - Briefing Annex 1 Draft Cabinet paper: Total Mobility – Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation Annex 2 Total Mobility Discussion Document Annex 3 High level engagement plan	https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Consultation/Total-Mobility/Total-Mobility-Discussion-Document-Final.pdf Draft versions of documents are not in scope of the request. The final Cabinet paper is released in document 10.
7	N/A	23/10/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN Emma: Total Mobility Cabinet paper and Discussion Document for ministerial consultation Attachments: Total Mobility Discussion Document - Ministerial consultation Draft Cabinet paper: Total Mobility – Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation - Ministerial consultation	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a). Attachments treated/referenced in document 6 above.
8	N/A	28/10/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN EMMA: Letter from Minister Bishop to Minister Willis to approve a new category "Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall" Attachment: Total Mobility letter to Minister of Finance re new category	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a).
9	N/A	7/11/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: Total Mobility - Draft Cabinet committee talking points and press release Attachments: Draft press release on Total Mobility Cabinet talking points on Total Mobility	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a). Final press release available here: https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/changes-ensure-continued-access-transport-subsidy-disability-community

Doc #	Reference number	Date	Title of Document	Decision on request
10	OC251106	12/11/2025	Cabinet paper: Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee Minute of Decision: SOU-25-MIN-0159 Cabinet Minute of Decision: CAB-25-MIN-0411	Release with some information withheld under section 9(2)(h). Some information in the Cabinet Minute is marked out of scope.
11	N/A	15/12/2025	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: Total Mobility - Information on funding pressures provided to Whaikaha	Released with some information withheld under sections 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(ba)(i).
12	OC260048	26/02/2026	Email from: Danny Eyre (Ministry of Transport) to Emma Wardle (Office of Hon Chris Bishop) Subject: ATTN Emma: OC260048 Meeting with Blake Forbes about Total Mobility Attachment: Meeting with Blake Forbes about Total Mobility	Released with some information withheld under section 9(2)(a).
Part 2 – Internal papers, presentations, and reports.				
13	N/A	1/07/2025	TM data analysis – 1 July 2025	Released in full.
14	N/A	9/07/2025	Total Mobility Dataset Description, Scope and Limitations	Released in full.
15	N/A	07/2025	2025 07 Community Connect appropriation update	Released in full.
Part 3 – Consultation documents and analyses of stakeholder feedback.				
16	N/A	1/11/2025	Total Mobility Comms Engagement Plan - December 2025 to March 2026	Released in full.
17	N/A	7/11/2025	Total Mobility QAs - Nov 2025	Released in full.
18	N/A	17/11/2025	Cabinet paper departmental consultation and feedback received	Released in full.
19	N/A	1/02/2026	Total Mobility consultation presentation	Released in full.

Doc #	Reference number	Date	Title of Document	Decision on request
Part 4 – Papers or briefing notes on the funding settings for the scheme itself (for example, the subsidy level or Crown appropriation).				
20	OC250857	1/10/2025	Briefing: Overview of Vote Transport Cost Pressures	Refused under section 18(d). Some information is out of scope of the request. This will be included in the Budget 2026 proactive release and will be published on the Ministry's website in due course.
21	N/A	10/02/2026	SLT Memo: Budget 2026 – Options to utilise savings for Vote Transport cost pressures	Refused under section 18(d). Some information is out of scope of the request. This will be included in the Budget 2026 proactive release and will be published on the Ministry's website in due course.
22	OC260075	18/02/2026	Briefing: Budget 2026: Options to Utilise Savings for Vote Transport Cost Pressures	Refused under section 18(d). Some information is out of scope of the request. This will be included in the Budget 2026 proactive release and will be published on the Ministry's website in due course.

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 24 June 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We are continuing to work with Ministry of Social Development, Whaikaha, Ministry of Health and NZTA to inform our advice on the options and implications for managing Total Mobility cost pressures. We have received raw data from NZTA on Total Mobility users, which we are analysing to understand how Total Mobility users could be impacted by options to manage cost pressures.	
Associated papers	
Briefing to joint Ministers: Total Mobility Scheme – Further advice	Date: Wednesday 16 July 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 01 July 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We responded to a media query from Radio New Zealand about funding for Total Mobility, and a radio interview with a disability advocate was held on 25 June 2025 following this. The main concern was about the future of Total Mobility funding, which follows the recent release of documents under the OIA. We have not received any further media queries but are proactively updating Public Transport Agencies about the advice we are preparing on cost pressures. We are liaising with your Office on this.	
Associated papers	
Briefing to joint Ministers: Total Mobility Scheme – Further advice	Date: Wednesday 16 July 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 15 July 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility		
Project Status: We have incorporated further feedback from Whaikaha, Ministry of Social Development and Disability Support Services, and NZTA into the upcoming advice on addressing cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme. We have provided a response to your Office for a media query from the New Zealand Herald about the Total Mobility review. The query was about the Community Connect subsidy.		
Associated papers		
Briefing: Total Mobility – options to address cost pressures on the scheme This paper provides further advice on options to stabilise cost pressures, including the level of the Community Connect subsidy, and scheme settings that could help stabilise costs in the longer term. It also provides further information on users of Total Mobility.	Date: Wednesday 16 July 2025	
Decisions required		Confirmed / Denied
None this week		N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 22 July 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility

Project Status: On 16 July, we provided your Office with a briefing that presents options to address cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme. Our next steps will reflect your direction and preferred timing, noting the Ministry Output Plan includes a draft Cabinet paper on policy and funding in August 2025.

We note an increasing media interest in the Total Mobility review, specifically about funding the scheme. We provided your Office with a response to a media query this week from 'The D* List' podcast.

We will meet with Auckland Transport over the next two weeks to understand its experience and views on cost pressures in the Total Mobility scheme.

Decisions required

Confirmed / Denied

None this week

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 5 August 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Actions from transport officials meeting

Meeting with the Ministry of Transport (the Ministry) Thursday 7 August 2025	Due date
Total Mobility Provide an updated briefing on options to address the cost pressures, including a broader scope of options. This will inform a subsequent meeting with Minister Upston that will be scheduled by the Office.	20 August 2025

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We are discussing the briefing on options to stabilise the cost pressures on Total Mobility (OC250491) with you this week and are preparing additional information to enable you to make decisions. We met with Auckland Transport on 31 July to understand its experience and views on cost pressures in the Total Mobility scheme. Auckland Transport's feedback largely related to operational matters, such as the assessment process, and their implications on cost. They also emphasised making sure the scheme is reaching those who "need it the most". We are working on two Official Information Act requests about the Total Mobility scheme and its review, which will be shared with your Office.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 12 August 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Actions from transport officials meeting

Ongoing actions from transport officials meetings		
Officials meeting date	Action	Due date
7 August 2025	Total Mobility Provide an updated briefing on options to address the cost pressures, including a broader scope of options. This will inform a subsequent meeting with Minister Upston that will be scheduled by the Office.	27 August 2025

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: You have asked for further options to be considered to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility, in addition to those provided in our last briefing (OC250491). We are working with the Ministry of Disabled People, Ministry of Social Development (including Disability Support Services), Health NZ and the NZTA to help inform these additional options Your Office is scheduling a meeting with Minister Upston. Briefing OC250491 has now been provided to her office and the additional advice will also be provided to Minister Upston in advance of the meeting. We are also talking with your Office about whether Minister Costello, in her role as Minister for Seniors, should also be included given that many Total Mobility users are over 65 years. The Total Mobility review continues to receive increased media attention, and we are working with your Office on the responses.	
Associated papers	
Briefing: Additional options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility	Date: Wednesday 20 August 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 19 August 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Actions from transport officials meeting

Ongoing actions from transport officials meetings		
Officials meeting date	Action	Due date
7 August 2025	Total Mobility Provide an updated briefing on options to address the cost pressures, including a broader scope of options. This will inform a subsequent meeting with Minister Upston that will be scheduled by the Office.	27 August 2025

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We continue to progress work on further options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility, in addition to those provided in our last briefing (OC250491). Your Office has scheduled a meeting with Minister Upston for Wednesday 10 September 2025. The additional advice will be provided to Minister Upston in parallel to you receiving it.	
Associated papers	
Briefing: Additional options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility	Date: Wednesday 27 August 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 26 August 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Actions from transport officials meeting

Ongoing actions from transport officials meetings		
Officials meeting date	Action	Due date
7 August 2025	Total Mobility Provide an updated briefing on options to address the cost pressures, including a broader scope of options. This will inform a subsequent meeting with Minister Upston on Wednesday 10 September.	Wednesday 3 September 2025

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We are developing advice on further options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility, in addition to those provided in our last briefing (OC250491). Your Office has scheduled a meeting with Minister Upston for Wednesday 10 September 2025. The additional advice is being provided to Minister Upston in parallel to you receiving it.	
Associated papers	
Briefing: Additional options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility	Date: Wednesday 3 September 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 2 September 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Actions from transport officials meeting

Ongoing actions from transport officials meetings		
Officials meeting date	Action	Due date
7 August 2025	Total Mobility Provide an updated briefing on options to address the cost pressures, including a broader scope of options. This will inform a subsequent meeting with Minister Upston on Wednesday 10 September.	Provided Thursday 4 September 2025

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We have developed advice on further options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility, in addition to those provided in our last briefing (OC250491). Your Office has scheduled a meeting with Minister Upston for Wednesday 10 September 2025. The additional advice is being provided to Minister Upston in parallel to you receiving it.	
Associated papers	
Briefing: Additional options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility	Date: Thursday 4 September 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 9 September 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We met with you on 7 September 2025 to talk through options to stabilise cost pressures on Total Mobility. You asked for more information on the impact of phasing the Crown subsidy down over time and agreed that we could informally test some options with Auckland Transport and Greater Wellington Regional Council. We provided this further information to your Office ahead of your meeting with Minister Upston scheduled on Wednesday 10 September 2025, where you will discuss the options and possible next steps.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 16 September 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility

Project Status: You met with Minister Upston on 10 September 2025 to discuss the options and next steps for stabilising cost pressures on Total Mobility. In that meeting you directed officials to progress work on a draft Cabinet paper and discussion document on Total Mobility. This will be a joint paper from the Minister of Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues, though we note that MSD officials are confirming this with Minister Upston's Office. The discussion document will outline the cost pressures facing the scheme for the Crown, NLTF and PTAs, the options to address these pressures and better target the scheme to need, and a range of other options to improve the scheme. In our cover briefing we will include a short summary of the engagement plan as well as a timeline for Cabinet decisions, the consultation period, and next steps following consultation. We are working with NZTA, MSD and Whaikaha on this.

We are meeting with the regional Total Mobility coordinators (PTAs) on Wednesday 17 September 2025 who have requested an update on the Total Mobility review. We will indicate our intention to talk with some PTAs to help inform the options.

Decisions required

Confirmed / Denied

None this week

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 23 September 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: We are progressing work on the draft Cabinet paper, discussion document and engagement plan to consult on options to stabilise and improve Total Mobility. We continue to work closely with NZTA, MSD and Whaikaha. We attended a meeting with regional Total Mobility coordinators (PTAs) on 17 September 2025 and provided an update on the Total Mobility review. In that update, we assured PTAs that you and the Minister for Disability Issues are aware of the cost pressures of Total Mobility on all funders and that we are working on options to address this. We indicated that Ministers are prepared to consider a reduction in the Crown subsidy, together with other options. Invercargill City Council and Otago Regional Council shared options that they are considering to manage their own cost pressures in their regions s 9(2)(ba)(i)	
Associated Papers	
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility This Cabinet paper will seek agreement to reduce the overall subsidy to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	First draft to Minister: Wednesday 8 October 2025 Ministerial consultation: Week commencing 27 October 2025 To lodge: 13 November 2025 To Committee (ECO or SOU): 19 November 2025 To Cabinet: 24 November 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 30 September 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility		
Project Status: We are progressing work on the draft Cabinet paper, discussion document and engagement plan to consult on options to stabilise and improve Total Mobility. We continue to work closely with NZTA, MSD, and Whaikaha. We will meet with Auckland Transport, Greater Wellington Regional Council (PTAs with the highest number of trips) and Otago Regional Council (PTA with the largest projected shortfall in 2024/25) on Thursday 2 October 2025 to discuss the key funding package to be proposed in the draft Cabinet paper. The purpose is to test the extent to which our proposed package will alleviate PTA funding pressures sufficiently and promptly enough for them to remain in the Scheme. We will signal that Crown funding could be made available to support <i>some</i> shortfall for PTAs for 2025/26.		
Associated Papers		
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility This Cabinet paper will seek agreement to reduce the overall subsidy to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	First draft to Minister: Wednesday 8 October 2025 Ministerial consultation: Week commencing 27 October 2025 To lodge: 13 November 2025 To Committee (ECO or SOU): 19 November 2025 To Cabinet: 24 November 2025	
Decisions required		Confirmed / Denied
None this week		N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 7 October 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility		
Project Status: On Thursday 9 October we will send to your Office a draft Cabinet paper, discussion document and 2-page engagement plan summary to consult on options to stabilise and strengthen Total Mobility. The options have been developed together with NZTA, MSD, and Whaikaha. On Thursday 2 October the Ministry met with Auckland Transport, Greater Wellington Regional Council (Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) with the highest number of trips) and Otago Regional Council (PTA with the largest projected shortfall in 2024/25) to discuss the funding package to be proposed in the draft Cabinet paper. We signalled that Crown funding could be made available to support <i>some</i> shortfall for PTAs for 2025/26. The three PTAs all indicated their intent to continue delivering the scheme in their regions, as long as the cost pressures could be managed and Government decisions are communicated as early as possible to provide certainty.		
Associated Papers		
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility This Cabinet paper will seek agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	First draft to Minister: Thursday 9 October Ministerial consultation: Week commencing 27 October To lodge: 13 November To Committee (SOU): 19 November To Cabinet: 24 November	
Decisions required		Confirmed / Denied
None this week		N/A

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 14 October 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: On 10 October, we delivered to your Office a draft Cabinet paper, discussion document and 2-page engagement plan summary to consult on options to stabilise and strengthen Total Mobility. The documents have been shared directly with the Minister for Disability Issues' Office. We are seeking your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document by Monday 20 October 2025. This week, we spoke to Invercargill City Council (ICC) s 9(2)(ba)(i)	
Consistent with our earlier stakeholder engagement with Auckland, Greater Wellington and Otago Councils on 2 October 2025, we discussed likely options to address the shortfall to all funders, including providing financial support to public transport authorities (PTAs) this financial year and reducing the subsidy from 1 July 2026. s 9(2)(ba)(i)	
Following any feedback you have on the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document, we would also like to discuss what additional information, if any, we can share with PTAs at this stage.	
Associated Papers	
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	Ministerial consultation: Week commencing 27 October To lodge: 13 November To Committee (SOU): 19 November To Cabinet: 24 November
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 21 October 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: Subject to confirming your preferred timing for public consultation and any further feedback from you and Minister Upston, we will commence departmental consultation on the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document week commencing 27 October to coincide with ministerial consultation.	
Associated Papers	
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a public discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	Ministerial consultation: Week commencing 27 October 2025 To lodge: Thursday 13 November 2025 To Committee (SOU): 19 November 2025 To Cabinet: 24 November 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 28 October 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: At the officials meeting on 23 October 2025, you agreed to announce before Christmas the Total Mobility subsidy change, support to public transport authorities, and that public consultation will take place. You also agreed to publicly consult in 2026 when alternate formats of the Discussion Document are available. Ministerial and departmental consultation both started on 28 October 2025. In parallel, we provided your office a letter to send to the Minister of Finance to seek agreement to create a new category in the Public Transport Concessions Multi-Category-Appropriation. This new category will enable Crown funding to be provided to Public Transport Authorities to cover their local share funding shortfall to deliver the Total Mobility scheme.	
Associated Papers	
Cabinet paper: Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a public discussion document to address longer-term challenges.	Ministerial consultation: 28 October 2025 To lodge: Thursday 13 November 2025 To Committee (SOU): 19 November 2025 To Cabinet: 24 November 2025
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

As at Tuesday 4 November 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility

Project Status: We are working with your Office to lodge the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document, for Social Outcomes Committee on Wednesday 12 November 2025. We are also working with the Ministry for Disabled People Whaikaha to prepare for an announcement on Cabinet decisions before Christmas 2025, and to line-up the production of accessible formats, for consultation in February 2026.

Associated Papers

Cabinet paper: Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals

This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a public discussion document to address longer-term challenges.

Ministerial consultation: 28 October 2025
To lodge: Thursday 6 November 2025
To Committee (SOU): 12 November 2025
To Cabinet: 17 November 2025

Decisions required

None this week

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing 10 November 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility

Project Status: You are scheduled to present the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document at the Social Outcomes Committee on Wednesday 12 November 2025. We are working with your Office and the Ministry for Disabled People Whaikaha to prepare for an announcement on Cabinet decisions in early December 2025 and to release the discussion document soon after the announcement. We are also working through the details of the public consultation and prioritising the production of alternate formats of the discussion document.

Associated Papers

Cabinet paper: Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals

This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to reduce the overall subsidy from 75% to 65%, recycle Crown funding to support PTAs, and to release a public discussion document to address longer-term challenges.

To Committee (SOU): Wednesday 12 November 2025

To Cabinet: Monday 17 November 2025

Decisions required

None this week

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing 17 November 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: On Monday 17 November 2025, Cabinet agreed to the recommendations in your paper <i>Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals</i>. We have provided your Office with a draft press release and media Q&A. We recommend you announce Cabinet's decisions and the start of public consultation in the week of 8 December 2025. This would allow time to set up the online platform for public consultation that will accompany the discussion document. We are also working to get a short update in alternate formats to put on the Ministry website. This is important given that alternate formats of the discussion document are unlikely to be ready for the start of public consultation in December 2025. We also understand that Minister Upston is planning other disability-related announcements for the week of 1 December to coincide with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which she may want to avoid for the Total Mobility announcement date. We are working with your Office to confirm the announcement date. We will provide a short update to Public Transport Authorities on Total Mobility at a regular quarterly meeting on Wednesday 19 November 2025. We will advise that decisions have been made by Ministers, and an announcement is expected by the end of the year. We note continued interest from the disability community in the Total Mobility review with some recent media attention this week on the status of the review.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing 01 December 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: There are no substantive updates this week. We continue to work with providers to produce the accessible versions of the consultation materials. This includes a news item to be published on the Ministry of Transport website following your announcement in the week commencing 8 December 2025. The news item has been shared with your Office and will be available in alternate formats (audio, large print, Braille, Easy Read and NZSL). We will also provide you with a version of the Cabinet paper suitable for proactive release for your consideration. This could be released at the same time as the public consultation commences.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A



Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing 08 December 2025

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility	
Project Status: Following your announcement on Tuesday 16 December 2025, consultation material (discussion document and online survey) will be available on the Ministry of Transport website. As a priority, we will send an email to Public Transport Authorities (PTAs), outlining decisions on funding, including the next steps for support for PTAs. The Ministry for Disabled People – Whaikaha and Office for Seniors will share information about the consultation with their networks. We have shared our full engagement plan with your Office and will continue to refine the details for the online sessions with the disability community and seniors, planned for February 2026. We note that two PTAs (Invercargill City Council and Otago Regional Council) have this week sought to progress steps to reduce forecasted overspend on Total Mobility. Otago is considering steps that are broadly aligned with your announcement (reducing its fare cap and considering trip caps), while Invercargill wants to speak with the Ministry ^{s 9(2)(ba)(i)} Depending on how PTAs react to your announcement, we may speak with these councils directly. A petition to increase funding for Total Mobility was presented to Parliament on Tuesday 9 December 2025.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week	N/A



Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Tuesday 20 January 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review	
Project Status: Public consultation on the Total Mobility discussion document commenced on Tuesday 16 December 2025, following your announcement. All accessible formats of the discussion document (New Zealand Sign Language, Large Print, Braille, Audio, and Easy Read) are now available on the Ministry's website. As of Tuesday 20 January 2026, we had received 100 submissions through the online form and 10 submissions by email. Some of the submissions have expressed disappointment at the decision to reduce the Total Mobility subsidy from 75% to 65%. Since consultation launched, we have had some requests to meet with us. We have met with Age Concern New Zealand (charity for people aged over 65), People First (advocacy organisation for people with learning disabilities) and Aspire Canterbury - Disabled Persons Centre Trust (provides Total Mobility assessments on behalf of Environment Canterbury). We meet with ESL Ridewise (electronic platform used by most Public Transport Authorities to record Total Mobility trips) on Wednesday 21 January 2026 and on Thursday 29 January 2026 we will be interviewed about the Total Mobility consultation on the <i>No Labels</i> programme of Access Radio (Wellington-based community radio station). We will provide details to your Office about the online and in-person sessions to be held in February and March 2026 once we have finalised the session dates.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week.	Yes / No

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Tuesday 26 January 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: There are no substantive updates this week. We continue to receive submissions on the Total Mobility proposals and on Thursday 29 January 2026 we will be interviewed about the Total Mobility consultation on the *No Labels* programme of Access Radio (Wellington-based community radio station). We will post a reminder about the Total Mobility consultation on the Ministry's social media, which will be reposted by Whaikaha – Ministry for Disabled People and the Office for Seniors.

Decisions required

None this week.

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 09 February 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: On 5 February, we met with the Older Disabled People Network (a self-organised group recommended by the Office for Seniors), who mainly shared concerns on the proposals to make assessment more targeted and consistent, specifically the proposed requirement to require a Total Mobility user to provide evidence of impairment. This group expressed concern at the pending funding changes to come into effect on 1 July 2026, in particular the impact on the cost of living for older disabled people.

On 10 February, we met with ESL Limited (company that provides Ridewise, the current software used for Total Mobility operation) about the possible implementation of the Total Mobility proposals.

On 12 February, we will meet with Public Transport Authorities (regional coordinators of Total Mobility) and the Disabled Peoples Organisations Coalition to listen to feedback on the Total Mobility proposals.

On 12 February, the *Petition of Nick Ruane: Increase funding for the Total Mobility scheme* will be presented at the Petitions Committee.

Decisions required

Confirmed / Denied

None this week.

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 16 February 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: On 12 February, we met with Public Transport Authorities (regional coordinators of Total Mobility) and the Disabled Peoples Organisations Coalition (DPOC) to listen to feedback on the Total Mobility proposals. Public Transport Authorities mainly focussed on the implementation aspects of the proposals, whilst DPOC focussed on the potential impact of the proposals on disabled people, with a particular concern about the proposals relating to assessment for entry to Total Mobility and introducing trip caps.

On 16 February, we met with some representative organisations of seniors, recommended to us by the Office for Seniors. We spoke with representatives from Alzheimers New Zealand, Arthritis New Zealand, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, and Age Concern.

On Tuesday 17 February, we met with Driving Miss Daisy (a current Total Mobility provider).

On Thursday 19 February, we will facilitate a public consultation session online. Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People will attend the public session as an observer.

Decisions required

None this week.

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 23 February 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: On 19 February, we facilitated a public consultation session online with 30 attendees, including two New Zealand Sign Language interpreters. We answered questions and received comments on the Total Mobility proposals, which included people sharing their experience of using Total Mobility, and more broadly, public transport.

On Tuesday 24 February, we met with Waka Eastern Bay Community Transport, a Total Mobility service provider based in Whakatāne. It is one of the few providers delivering Total Mobility using a community transport model. On Thursday 26 February, we will facilitate a second public consultation online session. Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People will attend the public session again as an observer.

A pre-recorded interview about the Total Mobility consultation with the No Labels programme of Access Radio (Wellington-based community radio station) went live on Tuesday 24 February.

We have received 187 submissions on the Total Mobility proposals through the online survey and 29 submissions via email.

Decisions required

None this week.

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 2 March 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: On 26 February, we facilitated the second public consultation session online with around 30 attendees, including two New Zealand Sign Language interpreters. We once again answered questions and received comments on the Total Mobility proposals, which included people sharing their experience of using Total Mobility, and ride hail services.

We have received 233 submissions on the Total Mobility proposals through the online survey.

Decisions required

None this week.

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 9 March 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review	
Project Status: On 5 March we met with the Parent, Family, Whānau Network (people who typically care for disabled people), facilitated by Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, to listen to their views on the Total Mobility proposals. On 10 March we met in person with members of People First (a Disabled Peoples Organisation representing learning disability) in a workshop setting. On Thursday 12 March we will attend a Hui Taumata with tāngata whaikaha Māori to discuss the Total Mobility proposals. Consultation closes on Sunday 22 March.	
Decisions required	Confirmed / Denied
None this week.	N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 16 March 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

Total Mobility

Project: Total Mobility Review

Project Status: On 16 March, we met with representatives from Uber to listen to their views on the proposal to enable new providers to enter the Total Mobility scheme. Uber also presented findings from their recent market research study to test "operational viability and user experience" of providing Total Mobility services in New Zealand. 74 existing Total Mobility users from eight regions were part of the study which ran between November and December 2025 (8 weeks).

Uber have been a provider for Safe Transport Victoria's (Australia) Multi-Purpose Taxi Programme (MPTP) since 2021. The MPTP is similar to Total Mobility. We will speak with an official from Safe Transport Victoria about Uber and the MPTP on 24 March.

On 16 March, we also met with members from Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand (Blind Citizens). Some members shared their frustration about the funding changes not being consulted on. Most of the discussion focussed on the proposals relating to assessment and trip caps. We also received positive feedback on the accessibility of the public consultation.

As at Tuesday 17 March we have received 98 email submissions and 294 online submissions. A social media post has been shared on Ministry of Transport channels as a last reminder to submit before the consultation closes on Sunday 22 March.

Decisions required

None this week.

Confirmed / Denied

N/A

Transport Portfolio Weekly Report

Week commencing Monday 23 March 2026

Recipient:

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Minister's comments:

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility Review consultation feedback

Consultation on the Total Mobility proposals closed on Sunday 22 March. We received 560 submissions, 408 submissions via the online survey, and 152 submissions via email. We are also expecting late submissions from five separate submitters this week.

Broadly, the feedback we received through the online and in person sessions was constructive, informed and robust. We heard that Total Mobility is clearly an important and valued service for disabled people. While some people expressed disappointment and frustration at the pending changes to funding settings, most feedback focussed on the proposals we were consulting on.

Some themes from the consultation meetings were:

- A clear purpose for Total Mobility was important for people but should be grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Proposals relating to assessments (requiring evidence of impairment and reassessment) as well as introducing trip caps were the most contentious.
 - Assessments - many people expressed concern at the cost, time and potential administrative burden of these options. People wanted fewer assessments, (which were described as traumatising for those with life-long disabilities), better use of existing evidence, clearer national guidance, and accessible, non-digital assessment options.
 - Trip caps - most people viewed the proposal to introduce trip caps as undermining participation in their communities and were concerned that it would oversimplify diverse needs and create inequities between different trip purposes.
- There was strong support for improving accessibility and supply of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- People had polarised views on the introduction of ride hail operators to Total Mobility, centred primarily on expressed safety concerns or lower standards and, for those in support, greater choice and lower cost
- Introducing a national public transport concession for disabled people had wide support, with the view that it would help to make subsidised access to public transport for disabled people consistent across the country.

We have received positive feedback on the accessibility of the public consultation. Specifically, the consultation material being made available in multiple accessible formats, the length of consultation, and multiple ways to give feedback.

We are now progressing detailed analysis of the submissions. Following this, we will prepare a briefing which will include a more detailed summary of consultation and recommendations on proposals to progress further. This briefing is planned for May 2026.

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Wednesday, 16 July 2025 6:10 pm
To: HanLing Petredean
Cc: OCU; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Dmitry Mitenkoff; Ministers Office; Siobhan Routledge
Subject: ATTN: HanLing - OC250491 Total Mobility - Options to stabilise cost pressures
Attachments: OC250491 Total Mobility - Options to stabilise cost pressure - Briefing - Policy.docx;
 OC250491 Total Mobility - Options to stabilise cost pressure - Briefing - Policy.pdf

Kia ora HanLing

Please find attached briefing OC250491 Total Mobility - Options to stabilise cost pressures. Thanks for your patience.

We're happy to discuss if there are any questions.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
 Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz



TE MANATŪ WAKA
 MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
 Enabling New Zealanders to flourish



16 July 2025

OC250491

Hon Chris Bishop

Action required by:

Minister of Transport

Wednesday, 30 July 2025

TOTAL MOBILITY – OPTIONS TO STABILISE COST PRESSURES

Purpose

To provide further advice on options to stabilise cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme.

Key points

- You requested advice on stabilising Total Mobility cost pressures, including reducing the Crown subsidy (Community Connect), strengthening the scheme's policy settings and enabling other Total Mobility providers.
- Total Mobility is highly valued by people with disabilities to enhance access to transport services in a safe and dignified manner. It is also an important part of the government's support for better outcomes for disabled people. Most users are over 65 with limited incomes and age-related physical impairments. A smaller group of users are younger people with physical impairments, neurological or developmental conditions. Most Total Mobility users make two or fewer return trips per week, but we do not have a demographic breakdown of those trips.
- Total Mobility needs to be financially sustainable to continue over the long term. It is currently funded 50 percent by Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) and the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and a further 25 percent by the Crown (Community Connect) appropriation.
- Overall costs are not capped but are driven by demand and Total Mobility is expected to exceed funding from FY2025/26. Some PTAs have indicated they are considering opting out of receiving the Crown funding (Community Connect) because of the increasing costs.
- We recommend you stabilise the Total Mobility cost pressures in two stages:
 - Stage 1: take decisions on the level of the Community Connect subsidy, which would stabilise funding pressures quickly
 - Stage 2: take decisions on the scheme's policy settings, informed by sector consultation, which would stabilise funding over the longer term.

- For Stage 1, the most direct way to stabilise cost pressures is to reduce the Community Connect subsidy. This would increase fares for Total Mobility users, which would lower demand and therefore cost to all funders.
- Reducing the Community Connect subsidy from 25 percent to 15 percent (reducing the overall subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent) is expected to stabilise funding based on current demand. Removing the Community Connect subsidy entirely (reducing the overall subsidy to 50 percent) would further lower demand and result in Community Connect funds being available to be returned or reprioritised.
- The trade-off is that reducing the subsidy would impact Total Mobility users, who already spend a large portion of their income on transport. Reducing the subsidy to 50 percent would double fares, while reducing to 65 percent would increase fares by 40 percent. It is unclear who or what trips would be most impacted.
- If the Community Connect subsidy was reduced, there would likely be a small amount of cost shifting to other government agencies, such as to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), which contributes to the cost of the co-payment to allow disabled people to participate in their communities, employment and training.
- You could choose to reduce the subsidy as soon as possible, likely January or February 2026, giving limited notice to Total Mobility users. This could enable more informed decisions on any savings that could be returned or reprioritised for FY2026/27. Alternatively, you could choose to reduce the subsidy from the start of FY2026/27, which would provide more notice to Total Mobility users.
- For Stage 2, strengthening the scheme's policy settings could help stabilise costs if the changes result in fewer people or fewer trips being eligible; this is more likely to have an effect over the longer term.
- The Total Mobility review, being carried out by the Ministry, has been exploring two different purposes of the scheme: addressing high transport need (for example, by focusing support to people with no access to a private vehicle) or addressing equitable access to public transport (closer to the status quo). Data gaps currently make it difficult to quantify how these options would affect costs and demand.
- If you wish to proceed with considering changes to the scheme's policy settings (Stage 2), we recommend consulting with the sector as part of the Total Mobility review. Sector consultation could take place after decisions on the Community Connect subsidy level have been made, which would mean the consultation could focus on optimising the scheme within clear, sustainable funding levels, and better inform decisions than current data allows.
- The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) is clarifying existing policy and operational guidelines for PTAs, which may make it easier for new operators, such as ride-hail services, to enter the scheme.
- Depending on your direction, we can prepare a Cabinet paper to seek agreement to decisions to reduce the Community Connect subsidy (Stage 1) and to seek permission for you and the Minister for Disability Issues to release a discussion document to the sector to inform changes to the scheme's policy settings (Stage 2).

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- 1 **agree** to reduce the Community Connect subsidy by either:
 - reducing the Crown subsidy level from 25 to 15 percent so that the Total Mobility scheme provides an overall 65 percent subsidy Yes / No
 - OR Yes / No
 - removing the Crown subsidy entirely so that the Total Mobility scheme provides an overall 50 percent subsidy
- 2 **indicate** your preferred timing to implement changes to the subsidy as either:
 - as early as possible, most likely January/February 2026 Yes / No
 - OR
 - from the start of FY2026/27, that is, 1 July 2026 Yes / No
- 3 **agree** to also seek Cabinet approval for you and the Minister for Disability Issues to release a discussion document on potential changes to the scheme's settings in 2026, as part of the Total Mobility review Yes / No
- 4 **direct** officials to develop a draft Cabinet paper to give effect to your decisions Yes / No
- 5 **refer** this briefing to Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues, for her information. Yes / No

M Willberg

Marian Willberg
Manager, Freight, Maritime and Access
16 / 7 / 2025

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport
..... / /

Minister's office to complete:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Approved | ☐ Declined |
| ☐ Seen by Minister | ☐ Not seen by Minister |
| ☐ Overtaken by events | |

Comments

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Marian Willberg, Manager – Freight, Maritime and Access	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Whitney Adam, Senior Adviser – Freight, Maritime and Access		

TOTAL MOBILITY – OPTIONS TO STABILISE COST PRESSURES

You have asked for advice on options to stabilise Total Mobility cost pressures

- 1 By the 2026/27 financial year, Community Connect Programme expenditure for Total Mobility will exceed the Crown appropriation unless more funding is sought or settings are changed. There is also a risk that some Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) may opt out of receiving the Crown (Community Connect) funding because of increased demand following the introduction of the Crown subsidy and associated increased local share costs. Auckland Transport has already sought an increase in funding to meet increasing costs.
- 2 You have asked for advice on options to stabilise cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme, following your meeting with the Minister for Disability Issues on 21 May 2025 (OC250409 refers). You have also asked for more information on Total Mobility users.
- 3 This briefing has been prepared with some input from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), the Ministry of Disabled People and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA). Annex 1 provides an overview of how Total Mobility operates, including how it is funded, and who uses it. Analysis has been based on available data, which has limitations

Most Total Mobility users are over 65 with age-related impairments

- 4 About 75 percent of Total Mobility users are aged over 65, with limited income and mostly age-related impairments including limited mobility, hearing loss, dementia and Parkinson's disease. Total Mobility users also include younger people with physical impairments, neurological and developmental conditions, such as Down syndrome, epilepsy, and schizophrenia. A high proportion of young Total Mobility users require wheelchair-accessible vehicles.
- 5 A subset of Total Mobility users under 65 years old are also clients of MSD's Disability Support Services (DSS). They have physical, sensory, intellectual disabilities or autism. MSD does not collect data on how many use Total Mobility.

Total Mobility demand has increased sharply since the Community Connect subsidy was introduced in 2023

- 6 In 2023, the previous Government provided additional Crown funding (Community Connect) for Total Mobility on an ongoing basis. This funding essentially halved the cost to the user, allowing twice as much travel at the same cost to the user but increasing costs to PTAs, the NLTF and the Crown.
- 7 Demand rose from 1.8 million trips in 2018/19 to 2.6 million trips in 2023/24, an 8.3 percent annual increase versus 2.3 percent previously. Figure 1 shows the subsidy changes and demand growth from 2022/23. Demand is expected to continue rising and surpass allocated funding under existing settings.

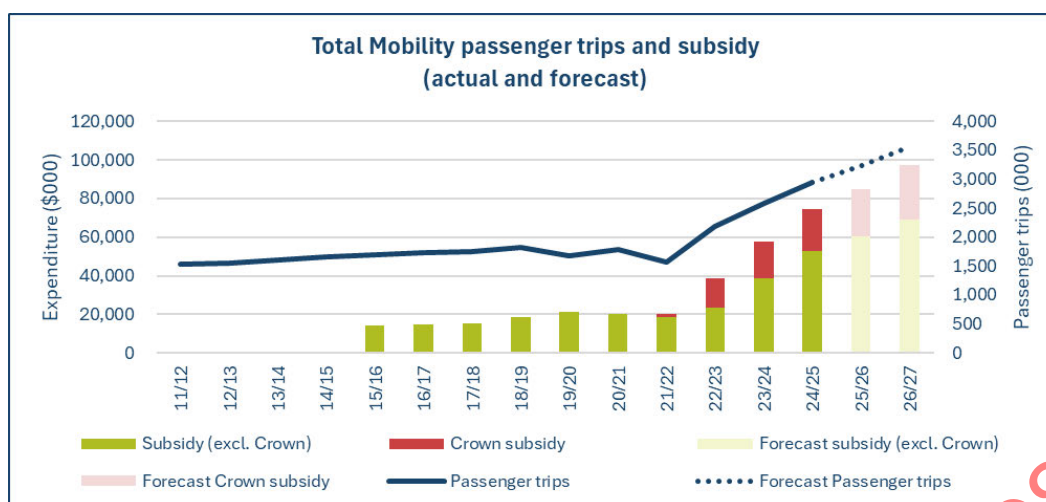


Figure 1. Total Mobility passenger trips and subsidy (actual and forecast) (NZTA modelling, June 2025)

- 8 The Community Connect budget for Total Mobility is \$24 335 million per annum. With current demand and policy settings, NZTA forecast Crown funding for Total Mobility (Community Connect) will need to be \$28 million in FY26/27, rising to \$42.5 million by FY29/30. The Community Connect appropriation also funds the Community Services Card subsidy. While there is some ability to adjust funding between Total Mobility and the Community Services Card, both face funding pressures.

Stage 1: Reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy will have the greatest impact on stabilising funding pressures quickly

- 9 Reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy will have the greatest impact on reducing funding pressures to Total Mobility in the short term for all funding partners, but it does not need to be completely removed to address these cost pressures.
- 10 NZTA modelled three changes to the Crown subsidy: reducing the overall subsidy from 75 down to 70, 65 or 50 percent (Table 1).¹ It found that reducing the subsidy down to either 65 percent or 50 percent would stabilise cost pressures within the existing appropriation. Reducing the overall subsidy to 50 percent would further facilitate an affordable funding approach by keeping funding demand in-line with the funding allocation approved in the 2024-27 National Land Transport Programme. Lowering the subsidy to 70 percent would not stabilise costs.
- 11 There is a trade-off between reducing the subsidy level and the impact on Total Mobility users. Reducing the overall subsidy to 50 percent would double fares for the user (and also return them to pre-2023 settings) while reducing the overall subsidy to 65 percent would increase fares by 40 percent. We assume that fare increases would particularly affect those with high transport needs for whom Total Mobility use is not discretionary.² Limited data means it is difficult to know which trips would be most impacted.

¹ NZTA also considered changing the subsidy region-by-region; however, the Ministry does not recommend this approach as it would create uneven Crown subsidy levels across the country. Subsidy levels were modelled on data from FY24/25. Other levers modelled in the NZTA work included fare caps and trip caps. NZTA will share this information with PTAs.

² Broadly, this means people who have limited, independent access to public or private transport to travel to basic community activities and services (for example, work, education, health care, welfare, and shopping).

- 12 A small amount of cost shifting to other government agencies, such as MSD, is likely. MSD contributes to the cost of the co-payment to allow disabled people to participate in their communities, employment and training.

Table 1. Savings and impact of reducing Crown funding for Total Mobility

Option	Crown appropriation released ³ (Cumulative across 2026-2030)	Impact on Total Mobility users
Reduce overall subsidy from 75% to 50% per trip	\$140 million	100% increase in fares for Total Mobility users
Reduce overall subsidy from 75% to 65% per trip	\$56 million	40% increase in fares for Total Mobility users
Reduce overall subsidy from 75% to 70% per trip	\$28 million (Cost pressures not stabilised)	20% increase in fares for Total Mobility users

Reducing the Community Connect subsidy would impact Total Mobility users by increasing fares, but it is unclear what the impact would be on disabled people with high transport needs

- 13 The Community Connect subsidy was introduced for Total Mobility to “alleviate financial barriers for disabled people to find and participate in employment, leisure and education opportunities” (CAB-22-SUB-0478 refers).⁴
- 14 Most Total Mobility users rely on some form of government financial support as their primary source of income, meaning limited transport budgets. Without other improvements to the provision of accessible transport by local councils, reducing the Community Connect subsidy would impact on Total Mobility users’ ability to find and participate in employment, leisure and education opportunities.
- 15 Data gaps on Total Mobility users means it is difficult to quantify or meaningfully assess how Total Mobility users with high transport needs would be impacted, particularly those without access to a private vehicle or carers or family support.

[BUDGET SENSITIVE] *You could change the subsidy in either early or mid-2026, with trade-offs between providing notice to Total Mobility users and seeking to return or reprioritise any forecast savings through Budget 2026*

- 16 NZTA advises it would take 3-4 months to implement changes to the subsidy level, so the earliest implementation could occur is likely to be January or February 2026. This would mean:
- Total Mobility users have limited notice of changes. There is already high interest in potential changes to the Total Mobility subsidy. There may be heightened public criticism from the disability community, who are sensitive to any perceived lack of consultation following changes to disability support funding in 2024

³ This is estimated using NZTA modelling (April 2025) of Community Connect budgeted amount and projected expenditure. Crown savings not verified by NZTA.

⁴ In May 2024, eligibility for half price public transport fares funded through Community Connect changed. Half price fares for Total Mobility users and Community Service Card holders continued.

- Cost pressures to PTAs would be addressed earlier, which may take some pressure off any that are considering opting out of the Community Connect subsidy to manage its own cost pressures
- NZTA could measure the impact of the change on user demand over January to March 2026. This could inform decisions on any savings that could be returned or reprioritised from the Community Connect multi-year appropriation as part of Budget 2026. This would mitigate the risk of reallocating too much (or too little) funding through Budget 2026, although this may still not be long enough to get a clear understanding of changes in demand and cost.

17 Alternatively, NZTA could implement a subsidy change at a later date, such as the start of the 2026/27 financial year. This would mean:

- Total Mobility users get more than 6 months notice of the change to support, which could mitigate public criticism
- Cost pressures to PTAs would not be addressed as earlier, although certainty over the subsidy level may be sufficient to mitigate the risk of PTAs withdrawing

• s 9(2)(f)(iv)

18 For either option, we recommend you seek Cabinet approval in September 2025.

Stage 2: Strengthening Total Mobility policy settings could impact current funding pressures, although likely over the medium- to long-term

Tightening the assessment processes for entry to Total Mobility could improve consistency and decrease demand, ensuring the scheme is more targeted

- 19 The Total Mobility assessment process is inconsistent across regions, and it is unclear whether the people who need Total Mobility the most get it through the current assessment processes (OC241020 refers). The assessment process could be refined by tightening the assessment process itself (operational) or the eligibility settings being assessed (policy settings), both of which could impact demand for the scheme
- 20 Some work is already underway in this area. NZTA is updating its guidelines to PTAs on administering Total Mobility, which will include identifying assessment inconsistencies and improvements that can be made to the assessment process.
- 21 MSD will soon update its DSS assessment process as part of MSD's current DSS stabilisation process.⁵ There may be an opportunity to streamline the assessment processes for people with disabilities who are eligible for both Total Mobility and MSD's DSS as part of this process. However, any improvements may be limited, given that only 25 percent of Total Mobility users are under 65 years (and therefore could be assessed through this DSS process). We will continue to work with MSD to

⁵ MSD is currently working to stabilise DSS. This includes work to update DSS assessment and allocation processes to be more consistent, transparent and equitable.

understand the impact and any future streamlining opportunities from MSD's improvements to its DSS assessment processes

Enabling different commercial practices could improve availability for some Total Mobility users but will have limited impact on immediate cost pressures

- 22 Total Mobility services are usually provided by private taxi companies. To become a Total Mobility provider, operators must meet a set of standards and conditions, including training for drivers to support the needs of Total Mobility users.
- 23 Encouraging a wider range of providers, such as ride-hailing services like Uber, DiDi and Bolt to become Total Mobility operators would increase the availability of some services for some Total Mobility users, particularly in major urban centres.⁶ It would also result in lower fares for some users, particularly in off peak periods, as ride hailing trips cost less than taxi trips, on average.⁷
- 24 There is potential to make it easier for new operators to enter the scheme by working with NZTA to clarify existing policy and operational guidelines for PTAs. PTAs currently balance new operator access to the scheme against their regional needs. There are generally two reasons why ride-hailing providers are not serving the scheme:
 - those providers do not meet a need in market, for example, providing wheelchair hoist cover or available 24 hours
 - those providers are reluctant to integrate with the national administration system used to validate client eligibility and manage operator claims for subsidies (which is a key control in reducing the potential for fraud and misuse of the scheme).
- 25 There would also be challenges ensuring that drivers of ride-hailing services meet existing standards and conditions, especially as many such drivers work only part-time. Overall, we consider that enabling more commercial practices to provide Total Mobility services would modernise the scheme and improve the experience for most Total Mobility users. We will continue to liaise with NZTA on clarifying the relevant policy and guidelines.

Procurement processes could improve to get better a better fare rates and service levels

- 26 Total Mobility is a significant revenue earner for many operators. In Auckland, Total Mobility operators receive over \$15 million in local and Crown funding, with one firm dominating the market. Given this, we consider there could be opportunities for local authorities to seek more competitive or innovative delivery and pricing models to reduce costs through the procurement process. NZTA have advised that they are reviewing their procurement guidelines and will consider this.
- 27 NZTA is also monitoring reports of Total Mobility fraud, particularly in Auckland, and will update you through a briefing scheduled for the end of July 2025.

⁶ It is unlikely to improve availability for all users, however, such as those that require wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Ways to improve availability and access for wheelchair users could be raised as part of broader engagement.

⁷ Based on an average of 1.56 passengers per trip and an average trip length of 6.38km, a total per passenger trip cost (on a financial basis) is \$12.24 and \$15.20 for ride-hailing and taxis, respectively (Ministry of Transport, 2023. Domestic Transport Costs and Charges Study. Working Paper C9 Taxi and Ride-hailing).

Total Mobility's purpose could refocus the scheme where transport need is greatest

- 28 Total Mobility lacks a clear purpose statement, which means the scheme may apply to more people or broader circumstances at the expense of more targeted support to those most in need. In addition, eligibility for the current scheme is based on criteria that is often broader than the criteria used by other agencies (e.g. MSD's DSS or the Ministry of Health) (OC240554 and OC241020 refers).
- 29 Clarifying the purpose and eligibility settings would help ensure Total Mobility meets the outcomes the Government is seeking from the scheme. Table 2 shows two possible outcomes to more tightly focus Total Mobility. Both outcomes should be fiscally sustainable to provide certainty for the Crown, PTAs and Total Mobility users themselves. The best way to clarify the scheme settings is through the Total Mobility review and engaging with the sector.

Table 2. Scheme outcomes, purpose and eligibility settings and possible impact

Outcome	Purpose and eligibility settings	Impact
Outcome 1 – Address high transport need	Make the scheme more targeted to disabled people who have difficulty using public transport and/or cannot otherwise easily access transport to attend appointments, work and social events. Facilitates more targeted eligibility settings, such as excluding people with access to a private vehicle.	Likely to reduce demand and make the scheme more affordable for the Crown and PTAs. Better value for money, i.e., targeted at people who need transport support the most. Could make the scheme harder to administer as it may be difficult to assess e.g. whether a person has a car or not. There could be more emphasis on making public transport more accessible for disabled people.
Outcome 2 – Equitable access to public transport	For disabled people who have difficulty using public transport because of their disability, regardless of their access to transport to attend appointments, work and social events. Supported by broader eligibility settings, as is the current setting.	Better alignment with Government disability goals and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This could be mitigated by more effort to make public transport more accessible for disabled people, rather than reliance on Total Mobility. The cost of making public transport accessible would likely outweigh the cost of Total Mobility. PTAs could be directed to focus on how they are making public transport accessible in their regions.

Outcome 1 is more aligned to why Total Mobility was originally established and what can realistically be delivered by the scheme

- 30 Total Mobility was started to support people who experience severe accessibility barriers that meant they could not use a private vehicle or public transport. Initially, it filled a niche service gap where no other support was available. We have previously advised that the purpose of Total Mobility should remain substantively as it is but that

the wording could be made more explicit about how Total Mobility supports disabled people who are unable to access appropriate transport (OC241020 refers).

- 31 The previous Minister of Transport, Hon Simeon Brown, considered the scheme should not be eligible to disabled people with access to a private vehicle. He wanted this reflected in the scheme's purpose (OC241020 refers). Narrowing eligibility in this way could further target the scheme to those people who have greatest unmet public transport needs. reduce the number of people eligible for Total Mobility and, therefore, reduce overall costs. It is consistent with Outcome 1 but less consistent with how the scheme has responded to social expectations that a person should not be disadvantaged because the public transport system is not designed for disability.
- 32 Excluding people with access to private vehicle would likely help stabilise demand, but the impact on cost is unclear. It would require input from the sector to design workable eligibility settings.

Total Mobility is not the only way to support disabled people to access public transport

- 33 Outcome 2 is also important to people with disabilities and more could be done to make public transport services and infrastructure more accessible. The responsibility for doing so falls on PTAs. Under the Land Transport Management Act 2013, local government is required to consider the needs of transport for disadvantaged people. The Ministry of Disabled People is engaging with local councils on the issue of increasing access to transport for disabled people.
- 34 The scheme could deliver both outcomes, but it comes at a cost to people who sit at the higher end of the unmet transport need end of the spectrum. For example, increased demand has resulted in longer waiting times and unavailability of taxis.

Public engagement would provide insight into the likely impacts of the changes to settings discussed under Stage 2

- 35 The impacts of the changes discussed under Stage 2 are unclear, especially given data gaps on how Total Mobility is used. These options would benefit from sector consultation. This would also serve as the next step towards concluding the Total Mobility review and making final decisions on any changes to Total Mobility.

Next steps

- 36 Depending on your direction and preferred timing, we can prepare a Cabinet paper to seek agreement to reduce the Community Connect subsidy (Stage 1) and issue a discussion document on potential changes to the scheme settings to the sector as part of the Total Mobility review (Stage 2).
- 37 The disability community want to know what is happening with the Total Mobility review, and specifically, whether funding for Total Mobility services will be affected because of the review. Announcing sector consultation alongside decisions on the subsidy settings would provide clarity to the sector that Total Mobility will continue and that the Government is committed to improving the scheme within more sustainable funding settings.

ANNEX 1: TOTAL MOBILITY SCHEME – WHO USES IT AND HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Data on Total Mobility users is limited. Information on Total Mobility users has been compiled using raw data provided by Ridewise (the national electronic billing and user database for Total Mobility), via NZTA. It is based on data collected since Ridewise started in 2013. Stats NZ's 2023 Household Disability Survey (HDS) has also been used to complement the understanding of Total Mobility users.
- 2 Table 3 provides a summary of demographic information on Total Mobility users.

Table 3 Demographic information on Total Mobility users

Demographic information	Total Mobility users
Age	Mainly over 65 years old but some younger people, too Total Mobility is primarily used by older adults, with over 74% of Total Mobility users aged 65 and over. This strong uptake among older adults suggests both the ageing population and the mobility challenges associated with older age. The next largest group are adults aged 30-64 (16%), followed by younger people aged 17-29(4%) and children under 16 (1%).
Gender	Mainly women Across all age groups, women make up a high proportion of Total Mobility users, accounting for approximately 61% of the total user base.
Ethnicity	There are too many gaps in the data to get a clear picture of ethnicity at a national level, but we do have some regional specific information from some PTAs in 2024 In the three largest urban centres where Total Mobility operates (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch), people who identify as NZ European/Pākehā are the most common ethnicity type. National level data shows that the next most common ethnicity group after "Other" is Māori.

Reported impairments for Total Mobility users vary depending on age

- 3 The most frequently reported impairments for Total Mobility users are physical impairments, reported by over 60% of people, followed by neurological (over 22%) and mobility impairments (20%).
- 4 Total Mobility users with physical, neurological, and mobility impairments are also the most likely to require a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV). These groups make up the majority of the over 9,000 (or just over 63% of the top five user groups by impairments) users who reported requiring WAV support.
- 5 There are clear age-linked patterns in impairment types:
 - 5.1 For Total Mobility users aged over 65, the most common impairments are dementia (95%), hearing loss (91%), Parkinson's (91%), and physical impairments (81%).

5.2 For Total Mobility users aged 30-64, the most common conditions are schizophrenia (67%), multiple sclerosis (54%), and epilepsy (51%).

5.3 For Total Mobility users under 30, there is a higher prevalence of developmental and intellectual impairments, including Down syndrome, Willi syndrome, and dyslexia.

6 These patterns suggests that while Total Mobility mainly supports older adults, it also serves a smaller but diverse group of younger disabled people with complex support needs.

Most Total Mobility users receive government financial support

7 Most Total Mobility users receive New Zealand Superannuation, which is consistent with the older age Total Mobility user base. Beneficiaries make up the next largest income group.

How Total Mobility works

8 Total Mobility is a subsidised transport service for disabled people who cannot use public transport (buses, trains and ferries). It enables eligible users to access door-to-door transport services such as taxis, with a portion of their fare covered by government funding.

9 The scheme is jointly funded by local government, the NLTF, and an additional 25% Crown subsidy provided through the Community Connect programme. Each participating region sets a maximum subsidy per trip, which varies significantly (e.g., \$7.50 in some parts of Rangitikei, up to \$80 in Auckland and Wellington). It also provides funding assistance to purchase and install wheelchair hoists in taxi vans.

10 The Ministry of Transport sets the Total Mobility policy and NZTA looks after the scheme's operational administration, working with regional councils to administer and fund the scheme

11 Eligibility is based on an individual's inability to independently use public transport due to a disability. Assessments are conducted by regional assessors, and the process varies across the country. Some councils deliver assessments in-house, others use community agencies or disability service providers. This variation has contributed to inconsistent experiences and understanding of the scheme's purpose.

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Thursday, 4 September 2025 5:23 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: Ministers Office; Siobhan Routledge; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Dmitry Mitenkoff; OCU
Subject: ATTN: EMMA - OC250728 Total Mobility - Additional options to manage cost pressures
Attachments: Total Mobility A3s 3.0.docx; Total Mobility A3s 3.0.pdf; OC250728 Total Mobility - additional options to manage cost pressures - Briefing - Policy 2.0.pdf; OC250728 Total Mobility - additional options to manage cost pressures - Briefing - Policy 2.0.docx

Hi Emma

Please find attached OC250728 Total Mobility - Additional options to manage cost pressures, and Annex 1 for the minister's consideration.

As discussed, please also pass this briefing onto the office of the Minister for Disability Issues. We will see you on Monday for the officials' meeting.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
 Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz



TE MANATŪ WAKA
 MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
 Enabling New Zealanders to flourish



4 September 2025

OC250728

Hon Chris Bishop**Action required by:****Minister of Transport**

Wednesday, 10 September 2025

cc Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Disability Issues

TOTAL MOBILITY – ADVICE ON ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO STABILISE COST PRESSURES

Purpose

Providing you advice on additional options that could be progressed to stabilise Total Mobility cost pressures ahead of your meeting with the Minister for Disability Issues on 10 September 2025.

Key points

- At the Transport Officials meeting on 7 August 2025, you requested advice on additional options to manage cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme, further to those provided in briefing Total Mobility – Options to Stabilise Cost Pressures (OC250491).
- You also asked for more information on how the funding works between Public Transport Authorities (PTAs), the Crown and the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and for more information on the funding forecasts.
- The Ministry started a review of Total Mobility in 2023 (the Review). The Review's Terms of Reference were narrowed in 2024 and cover four elements, including sustainable funding. With cost pressures becoming a more urgent issue for the Crown, the NLTF, and PTAs, priority is being given to addressing funding pressures over other elements of the Review.
- Annex 1 has a package of A3s that provide key context on the Total Mobility scheme, current funding arrangements, six options that could address funding pressures, and an overview of the Review to date.
- In providing this advice, we have considered ensuring that the scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders (across the Crown, PTAs and the NLTF) and minimising the impact on Total Mobility users, while noting that the scheme's sustainability is important for certainty for users. This does result in some difficult trade-offs.
- NZTA has modelled the impact of three options to manage demand: reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy, reducing regional fare caps, and introducing trip caps. The impact

of these options on the Crown's costs over 2025/26-2029/30 is shown in Table 1, together with the status quo shortfall.

- The Crown's cost pressures could be addressed by combining a reduction in the overall subsidy from 75% to 70% through reducing the Crown subsidy and reducing regional fare caps by 10%. This would result in a \$13.2 million underspend over the 2025/26-2029/30 period.
- However, this combination would not reduce demand sufficiently to address the cost pressures faced by the NLTF or PTAs in the 2025/26-2029/30 period, nor is it expected to address cost pressures to the Crown (Community Connect) after 2030.
- Combining a reduction in the overall subsidy from 75% to 65% through reducing the Crown subsidy and reducing regional fare caps by 10% would substantially, although not completely, reduce cost pressures faced by all funders.

Table 1: NZTA's modelled impact of three options on the Crown and NLTF-PTA costs over 2025/26-2029/30

Option	Impact on Crown	Crown shortfall (\$m)	NLTF + PTA shortfall
Status quo: Overall subsidy of 75%	N/A	\$43.1	\$193.0
Option 1A: Reducing the overall subsidy to 70% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy	25% decrease	\$1.2	\$161.5
Option 2: Reducing regional fare caps by 10%	9% decrease	\$28.3	\$157.0
Options 1A + 2: Reducing the overall subsidy to 70% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy <u>and</u> reducing regional fare caps by 10%	34% decrease	(\$13.2)	\$118.4
Option 1B: Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy	53% decrease	(\$44.1)	\$99.4
Option 1B + 2: Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy <u>and</u> reducing regional caps by 10%	61% decrease	(\$57.6)	\$45.8

- Changes to Total Mobility eligibility that target support more tightly could complement the options set out above and further close any remaining funding shortfall. Three options to change to Total Mobility eligibility are presented in Annex 1, page 4:
 - introducing means testing
 - tightening eligibility and assessment criteria (for example, by introducing a higher threshold for impairments that make it difficult to take public transport), and
 - linking eligibility to the Ministry of Social Development's Disability Support Services.
- We recommend progressing further work on means testing, including considering interaction with other entitlements for over 65s, and tightening eligibility and assessment criteria, alongside your preferred options from Table 1. Eligibility changes could be progressed as part of the Total Mobility Review.

- We note that there is concern and anxiety amongst the disability community about future funding for the scheme. We acknowledge decisions on managing cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme raise sensitive and complex issues.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- 1 **note** that you are meeting with the Minister for Disability Issues on 10 September 2025 to discuss cost pressures on Total Mobility, including possible next steps
- 2 **note** this briefing has been referred directly to Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues
- 3 **indicate** in the attached A3s the option(s) you want officials to progress further work on to help stabilise cost pressures.

Yes / No



Marian Willberg
Manager, Maritime, Freight and Access

4 / 09 / 2025

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport

..... / /

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Seen by Minister

☐ Not seen by Minister

☐ Overtaken by events

Comments

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Marian Willberg, Manager Maritime, Freight & Access	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Danny Eyre, Principal Adviser, Maritime, Freight & Access		

TOTAL MOBILITY – ADVICE ON ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO STABILISE COST PRESSURES

You have asked for advice on additional options to stabilise Total Mobility cost pressures

- 1 In our briefing, *OC250491 Total Mobility – Options to Stabilise Cost Pressures*, we provided advice on stabilising cost pressures to Total Mobility including advising that the most direct way to achieve this was reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy. We advised that reducing the overall subsidy from 75% down to 65% through reducing the Crown subsidy would largely address cost pressures to the Crown, National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) and public transport authorities (PTAs).
- 2 You asked for additional options. You also asked for more information on how the funding works between PTAs, the Crown and the NLTF, and funding forecasts.
- 3 We have considered the following factors in providing this advice:
 - 3.1 ensuring that the scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders (the Crown, PTAs and the NLTF), and
 - 3.2 minimising the impact on Total Mobility users, while noting that the scheme's sustainability is important for certainty for users.
- 4 Your next meeting with the Minister for Disability Issues is on 10 September 2025. This briefing has been shared directly with Minister Upston ahead of that meeting.

Annex 1 contains five A3s with information and advice on options for you to consider

- 5 Annex 1 presents a package of five A3s:
 - 5.1 **Total Mobility Overview:** how eligibility currently works, who Total Mobility users are, and the purposes Total Mobility is used for.
 - 5.2 **Current Funding:** how Total Mobility is currently funded; actual and forecast costs to the Crown appropriation; and steps to address funding pressures to date.
 - 5.3 **Options to address Total Mobility demand:** advice on changing the Crown subsidy, reducing fare caps and introducing trip caps, and how these could affect funding pressures for the Crown, NLTF and PTAs.
 - 5.4 **Options around Total Mobility eligibility:** advice on changing eligibility by introducing means testing, impairment thresholds to access Total Mobility, and linking to the Ministry of Social Development's Disability Support Services; these would need to be in addition to options under 5.3.
 - 5.5 **Total Mobility Review:** background and scope of the Review, engagement so far, and how this advice interacts with the Review's scope.

Stabilising the cost pressures requires difficult trade-offs

Options to address demand are a good start, but unlikely to be sufficient on their own...

- 6 Cost pressures are being felt by all funders of Total Mobility, although to different degrees. In March 2025, the Crown shifted \$12 m p.a. funding within the Community Connect appropriation from public transport concessions for Community Services Cards holders to Total Mobility.
- 7 Through Budget 2025, Cabinet also agreed in principle to the carry forward of 2024/25 underspends to 2025/26, with the actual carry-forward amount to be confirmed by joint Ministers (Transport and Finance) through the October Baseline Update. There is an underspend of \$5.2 million available for transfer to 2025/26. This would relieve cost pressures in the short-term only – ^{s 9(2)(f)(iv)} overspend is forecast out to 2029/30.
- 8 To address the overspend, NZTA has modelled the impact of three options to manage Total Mobility demand: reducing the level of overall subsidy, decreasing fare caps, and introducing trip caps.
- 9 From the modelled scenarios, combining a reduction of the overall subsidy to 70% (through reducing the Crown subsidy) and working with PTAs to reduce fare caps by 10% is expected to result in a Crown surplus across 2025-2030. It would still leave the NLTF and PTAs with a shortfall of \$118m.
- 10 Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% would result in a Crown surplus of \$44.1m and resolve most of the NLTF and PTA shortfalls. The reduced Crown cost under this option would also be sufficient to reallocate some funding back to the Community Services Card public transport concessions, and resolve its expected \$7m shortfall out to 2030 (see Annex 1, page 2). Trip caps have limited impact on cost pressures and so we do not consider these a priority.
- 11 Table 2 below shows the impact on the forecast cost to the Crown and other funders of these options. While the bottom three rows would result in a Crown surplus over 2025-2030, only the final row would substantially reduce the NLTF and PTA shortfalls. The cost pressures on the NLTF could be managed by increasing the allocations under the next National Land Transport Programme (for 2027-2030).

Table 2: NZTA's modelled impact of three options on the Crown's costs over 2025/26-2029/30

Option	Impact on Crown	Crown shortfall (\$m)	NLTF + PTA shortfall
Status quo: Overall subsidy of 75%	N/A	\$43.1	\$193.0
Option 1A: Reducing the overall subsidy to 70% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy	25% decrease	\$1.2	\$161.5
Option 2: Reducing regional fare caps by 10%	9% decrease	\$28.3	\$157.0
Options 1A + 2: Reducing the overall subsidy to 70% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy <u>and</u> reducing regional fare caps by 10%	34% decrease	(\$13.2)	\$118.4

Option 1B: Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy	53% decrease	(\$44.1)	\$99.4
Option 1B + 2: Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% by reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy <u>and</u> reducing regional caps by 10%	61% decrease	(\$57.6)	\$45.8

- 12 There are difficult trade-offs to be made to manage the funding pressures, including the extent to which the cost pressures to all funders are addressed:
- 12.1 Reducing the overall subsidy will increase prices for Total Mobility users, although it would spread this across all users. To illustrate the changes, on a \$40 fare a Total Mobility user currently pays \$10. Decreasing the overall subsidy to 70% would see the user pay \$12 (out of \$40) while decreasing to 65% would see them pay \$14.
 - 12.2 Reducing fare caps would increase prices only for the portion of Total Mobility users that make trips above the regional cap. Trip caps would limit travel for the small group that use Total Mobility extensively, but have limited overall cost reduction.
 - 12.3 Some PTAs have already indicated they want the full Crown subsidy element removed to address long term funding sustainability. Addressing only the Crown pressures risks these PTAs opting out of the additional Crown funding, leaving Total Mobility users in that region facing higher fares than in any of the options outlined above.
- 13 Reducing the overall subsidy to 65%, combined with reducing regional fare caps, would address the Crown shortfall, but more impactful changes to eligibility would be needed to fully address the NLTF and PTA shortfalls.
- ...and changes to eligibility settings will be needed to further stabilise cost pressures in the medium-to-longer term*
- 14 Three options to change eligibility are presented in Annex 1: introducing means testing, tightening eligibility criteria and assessments, and linking eligibility to MSD's Disability Support Services. These options would focus Total Mobility toward those with most need, whether due to financial means or degree of impairment.
- 15 We recommend progressing further work on introducing means testing, and tightening eligibility criteria and assessments. Further work on means testing could also consider the best approach for users over 65 that have access to other transport entitlements on a non-means tested basis (e.g. SuperGold card public transport concessions). While we have some data on the composition of different impairments among Total Mobility users, we do not currently know the number and cost of trips associated with these impairments, or the financial means of users.
- 16 MSD and the Ministry for Disabled People are comfortable with progressing further work on these options. They have also noted the potential for a small amount of cost shifting from the options (greater demand for support funding provided by MSD and other agencies as a result), which would need to be investigated further.

- 17 We do not recommend linking Total Mobility to MSD's Disability Support Services as it would exclude many people who cannot access public transport due to an impairment. We note that DSS is mainly for people under 65, while 75% of Total Mobility users are over 65.
- 18 There will be an expectation from PTAs and the disability sector of extensive engagement as part of the review prior to implementing any such changes to eligibility.
- 19 Our advice on eligibility settings is based on the Total Mobility Scheme continuing broadly as it currently operates. However, more fundamental changes could be considered that take account of the particular characteristics of user groups. For example, there may be a case to further consider whether new schemes could be developed for the under 65 and over 65 groups. For the latter group, this could explore how Total Mobility and SuperGold public transport entitlements could be more closely integrated or funded.

Next steps

- 20 We recommend you discuss this advice with the Minister for Disability Issues and jointly agree which of the options you would like officials to progress further. The A3s have a box beside each option for you to indicate your direction.
- 21 The options relating to eligibility need to be further developed, given the lack of data on the number of trips and costs for different types of Total Mobility users. Officials would work closely with other government agencies to develop parameters for your preferred options.
- 22 We consider some of the eligibility options would benefit from targeted engagement with the sector. If you agree, we will work with your Office on a plan for targeted engagement.

Taking a combined package to Cabinet

- 23 We recommend that officials come back to you with a package of options that you could take to Cabinet. While there is no requirement for you to seek Cabinet's agreement, given the sensitive nature of this issue, you may wish to engage with your Cabinet colleagues.
- 24 As part of the advice on the package we will discuss the timing of implementation noting that some options would need a longer timeframe to implement (for example, changing eligibility settings) and other options could be implemented more quickly (such as changes to the overall subsidy or reducing regional fare caps).
- 25 We will also provide advice on the next steps of the Review, including any engagement, as decisions around funding will influence how other elements of the Review can be progressed.
- 26 We note the sensitivity and complexity of managing cost pressures on the Total Mobility scheme and that hard trade-offs may be required. Recent media as well as regular correspondence we receive from the disability community has reinforced the importance and success of the Total Mobility scheme to people's lives.

**ANNEX 1: A3 – ADDITIONAL ADVICE ON OPTIONS TO MANAGE TOTAL
MOBILITY COST PRESSURES**

1 – OVERVIEW

2 – CURRENT FUNDING

3 – OPTIONS TO ADDRESS TOTAL MOBILITY DEMAND

4 – OPTIONS AROUND TOTAL MOBILITY ELIGIBILITY

5 – TOTAL MOBILITY REVIEW

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

1

Total Mobility: Overview

Total Mobility is a subsidised transport service for disabled people who cannot use public transport. It enables eligible users to access door-to-door transport services such as taxis, with a portion of their fare covered by government funding.

Who is eligible for Total Mobility?

Total Mobility is open to people with a permanent, temporary or fluctuating impairment, which could be physical, psychological, sensory or neurological, that prevents them from travelling on buses, trains or ferries in a safe and dignified manner. A disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, for six months or more should be eligible.

To be eligible, the impairment must prevent them from undertaking one of the following five components of a journey unaccompanied:

- getting to the place from where the transport departs
- getting onto the transport
- riding securely
- getting off the transport
- getting to the destination.

NZTA provides guidance on eligibility to all PTAs. Some PTAs assess individuals for eligibility directly while others contract organisations, such as Epilepsy New Zealand or Age Concern, to do assessments in their region.



Who are Total Mobility users?

There are approximately 111,000 registered Total Mobility users. This is up from 88,000 registered users in 2022. Data on Total Mobility users is limited, but what we do know is that:

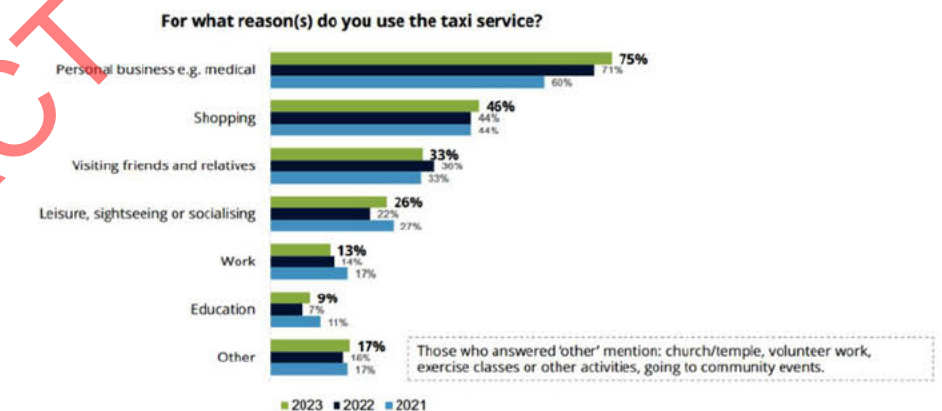
- **Under 65s are around 25% of users.**
 - Some of these people are also clients of Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) Disability Support Services (DSS).*
 - Some of these Total Mobility users **will not be DSS clients**, but may have impairments that still prevent public transport use such as mental health conditions, long-term chronic health conditions, or disabled people who live independently without needing DSS.
 - Around 1,600 Total Mobility users are under 16 years.
- **Over 65s are around 75% of users.**
 - These people mostly have age-related impairments and may receive disability support through Health NZ. They are generally not DSS clients.

* Disability Support Services, broadly, funds support services for people who have physical or intellectual disabilities or autism (or a combination of these) that is likely to continue for 6+ months and needs ongoing support to live independently. DSS is mainly for people under 65 years old.

What do people use Total Mobility for?

Data is not collected on the purpose of individual Total Mobility trips, as the scheme is not limited to any particular use but rather to ensure people with impairments can meet their daily needs in a safe and dignified manner.

Auckland Transport collected some information on trip purposes in Auckland as part of a customer survey in 2023, with 634 Total Mobility users and/or people with a disability that affects their transport needs who responded. Customers could select multiple reasons for why they used Total Mobility.



Source: Auckland Transport (2023) Total Mobility Survey 2023

Total Mobility is a unique transport support

Total Mobility is unique in supporting people with impairments that mean they cannot use public transport in a safe and dignified manner to meet their daily transport needs. It is highly valued by those that use it.

Other government transport support has specific health, education and employment purposes, for example:

- **MSD** has a Job and Training Support Fund that contributes to travel costs that enables people with disabilities and health conditions to access work and training. MSD's Disability Support Services (DSS) funds some transport within DSS clients' flexible funding packages, such as for carers, and funds vehicle modifications for DSS clients and a wider group of people. Many DSS clients rely on Total Mobility, but numbers are not known.
- **ACC** provides some 'travel and transport support' for individuals with **injury-related** disabilities and provides travel assistance for those people who need to attend medical appointments, rehabilitation sessions, or other services as well as for employment and training.
- **Ministry of Health's** National Travel Assistance programme provides financial assistance to those who require long-distance travel (ie, more than 350km for an adult) or travel frequently for specialist health or disability treatment.
- **Ministry of Education's** Specialised School Transport Assistance Programme assists children and young people with safety or mobility needs that prevent independent travel to school.

Total Mobility: Current Funding

Total Mobility fares are subsidised 75% from a combination of Crown, National Land Transport Fund and public transport authority funding. Total Mobility users pay 25% of the fare, up to a regional fare cap.

Public Transport Authorities (PTA) contribution

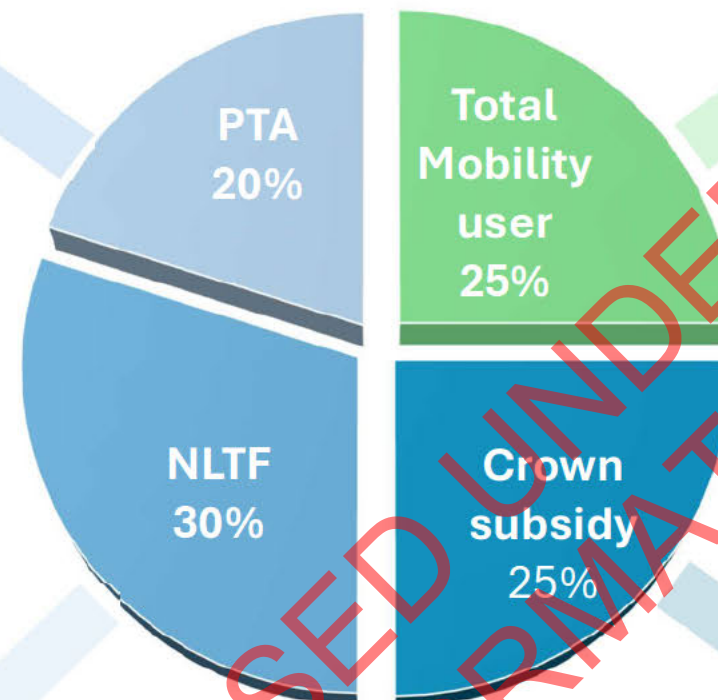
PTAs subsidise 20% of Total Mobility fares, mainly from local government rates. PTAs are responsible for contracting Total Mobility providers and assessors in their region.

PTAs also set regional fare caps, beyond which Total Mobility users pay 100% of the fare. Fare caps range from \$12 in Gisborne to \$80 in Auckland.

Most PTAs are experiencing cost pressures due to increased demand, with 7 PTAs expected to have had funding shortfalls in the 2024/25 year.

Some PTAs are considering opting out of the Crown subsidy or are taking steps to reduce Total Mobility costs. Auckland Transport, for example, allows Total Mobility users to bring a support person with them for free when they travel on a bus service (to shift some trips away from taxi trips). Invercargill plans to limit trips to 30 per month to manage costs.

Total Mobility funding sources



Total Mobility user contribution

Total Mobility users pay 25% of the fare, up to the regional fare cap, then 100% above the cap. (Users could select more than one source so numbers do not sum to total registered users.)

NZ Super recipients make up the largest share of TM users



Source: Data extracted from Ridewise, July 2025

Crown (Community Connect) contribution

The Community Connect contribution was introduced in 2022 as a 'cost of living' measure. It halved existing user fares for Total Mobility and public transport concessions for Community Services Card (CSC) holders. For Total Mobility, this means it subsidises 25% of the overall cost of fares.

Community Connect was made permanent in 2023. It provides \$36 million in funding per year. Initially, this funding was allocated as \$12m p.a. to Total Mobility and \$24m p.a. to CSC concessions. With Total Mobility costs exceeding forecasts and CSC costs less than expected, \$12m p.a. was shifted from CSC concessions to Total Mobility in March 2025.

The actual and forecast costs for Community Connect are below:

Item	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Shortfall
Total Mobility appropriation	24.335	24.335	24.335	24.335	24.335	
Total Mobility forecasts	24.500	28.000	32.500	37.000	42.500	43.1
Community Services card appropriation	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000	
Community Services card actual and forecasts	12.500	13.000	13.500	14.000	14.500	7.5

Forecast costs for Total Mobility are increasing because of a significant increase in user demand from historic levels and increased transport costs (fuel and distance travelled).

There is some ability to manage Total Mobility cost pressures *within* the Community Connect appropriation for 2025/26, based on current demand: through Budget 2025, Cabinet agreed in principle to the carry forward of 2024/25 underspends to 2025/26, with the actual carry-forward amount to be confirmed by joint Ministers (Transport and Finance) through the October Baseline Update. There is an underspend of \$5.2 million available for transfer to 2025/26.

National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) contribution

The NLTF subsidises 30% of Total Mobility fares from the "Public Transport services" activity class in the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP).

To encourage more wheelchair accessible vehicles, the NLTF also funds providers to install wheelchair hoists (~1% of available NLTF funding) and pays an additional \$10 for each trip that uses a wheelchair hoist (~6%).

NZTA allocates funding for Total Mobility when developing the NLTP. There is a limited ability to manage higher than expected demand within the Public transport services activity class, although only by reducing funding elsewhere within the activity class. The NLTP is already under pressure and the Total Mobility funding is expected to exceed current allocations for the years 2025/26 and 2026/27. Allocations for 2027/27-2029/30 will be set as part of the next NLTP.

NLTF funding for Total Mobility



Options to address Total Mobility demand

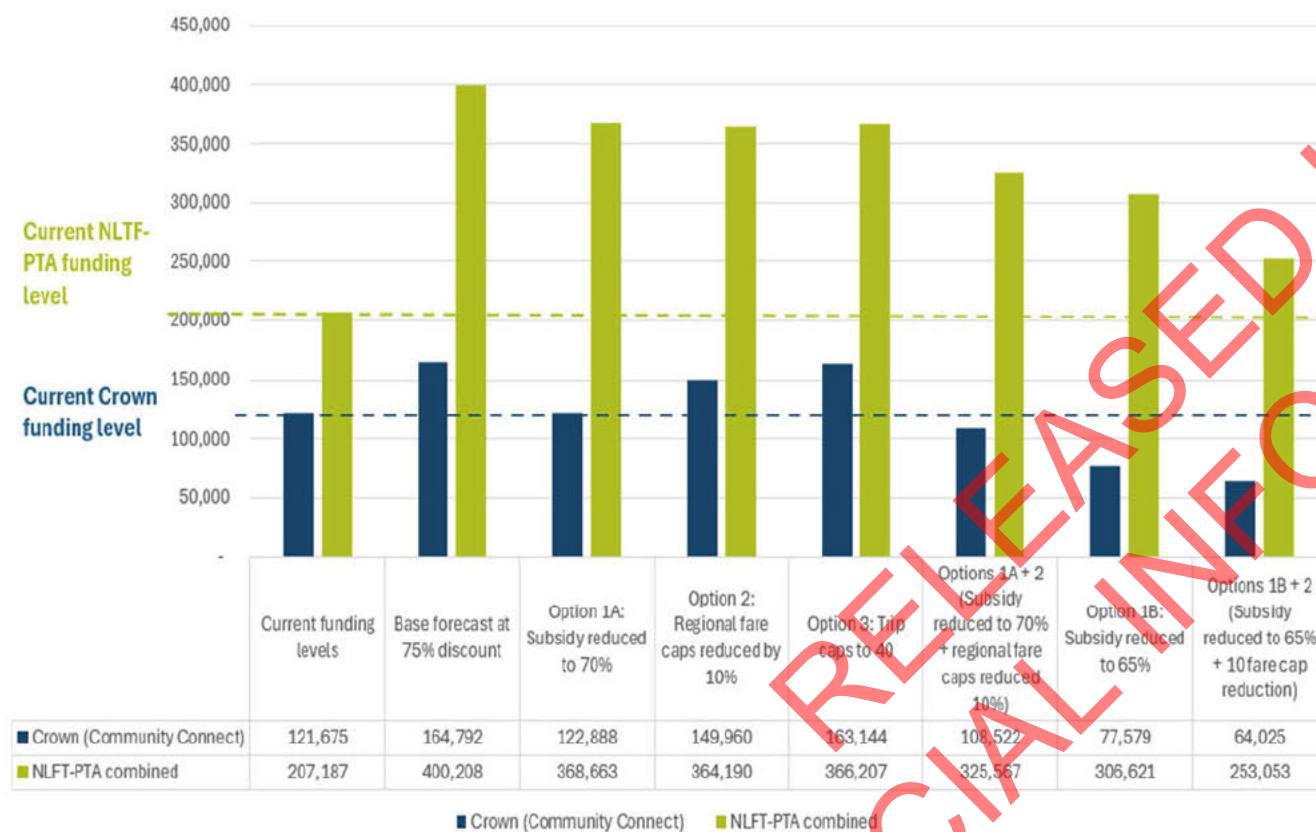
This page presents three modelled options to address demand via the costs of individual fares or overall number of trips. NZTA has modelled the individual impact of these options on demand and cost. These options would apply to all registered Total Mobility users, but the impact would differ depending on how (and how often) people use Total Mobility services. These options require relatively small adjustments that would spread the impact over many people. All options would need to be further explored with all relevant agencies and Ministers, including the potential impact of cost shifting.

Total Mobility users, trips and costs have all risen

Total Mobility trips and costs increased significantly after the 2022 Crown subsidy was introduced. Demand rose from 1.8 million trips in 2018/19 to 2.6 million trips in 2023/24. This is an 8.3 percent annual increase versus 2.3 percent previously. Registered Total Mobility users also increased over this time, rising from 88,000 on 1 July 2022 to 111,000 in the middle of 2024.

This graph shows the impact of different combinations of Options 1, 2 and 3 on the costs to the Crown and combined NLTF-PTA share, compared to current funding levels. This assumes NLTF and PTA funding stays at 2026/27 levels out to 2029/30.

Impact of options on the costs to the Crown and NLTF-PTAs compared to current funding levels (2025/26 - 2029/30)



Option 1B + 2, reducing the subsidy to 65% combined with reducing regional fares by 10%, would substantially although not completely address cost pressures to all funders.

Option 1A + 2, reducing the subsidy to 70% combined with reducing regional fare caps by 10%, would only address the Crown's cost pressures.

Option 1: Reduce the overall subsidy by reducing the Crown subsidy (Recommended) (Option 1A is reduce to 70% and Option 1B is reduce to 65%)

What: Reducing the Crown (Community Connect) subsidy is the most direct way to reduce demand and lower costs for all funders.

Who: This would affect all users and all trips. It would spread the impact of higher fares over all users.

Impact: NZTA modelled a decrease of the overall subsidy to 70% would reduce the Crown's costs by 25%, leaving a \$1.2 m shortfall over the period 2025-2030, but leave \$193m shortfall for the NLTF and PTAs (assuming current appropriations remain unchanged). This equates to a 20% fare increase to Total Mobility users. For example, currently a \$40 fare costs the user \$10; reducing the overall subsidy to 70% would see the user pay \$12 (out of \$40).

Reducing the overall subsidy to 65% would result in a \$44.1 underspend by the Crown but reduce the NLTF-PTA shortfall to \$99.4m over 2025-26-2029-30. This equates to a 40% fare increase to Total Mobility users – the Total Mobility user would pay \$14 (out of \$40).

Next steps: We consider reducing the Crown subsidy to be an essential part of any package of options to reduce cost pressures. A subsidy decrease would need around 4 months to implement.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Reduce
overall
subsidy to:

Option 1A:
70%

Option 1B:
65%

Option 2: Reduce fare caps (Recommended)

What: Fare caps are currently set by PTAs and differ by region (ranging from \$12 in Gisborne to \$80 in Auckland). Nationally, 75% of trips are under the fare caps but regions differ significantly; trips over the cap were 44% in Auckland and 49% in the Waikato.

Who: This option would only affect some Total Mobility users. An Auckland Transport survey in 2023 found that 74% of users never/virtually never exceeded the fare cap. It would likely impact those living more rurally than in urban centres.

Impact: NZTA estimates reducing fare caps by 10% would reduce total costs by 9%. It would reduce the Crown shortfall to \$28.3m and the NLTF-PTA shortfall to \$157m. Given this, reducing fare caps would need to be combined with reducing the Crown subsidy. (NZTA also modelled changing fare caps such that 25% were over the caps, but this had less impact.)

Next steps: We recommend working with NZTA and PTAs to decrease fare caps. PTAs may expect that they maintain their ability to use this lever to suit their context rather than have a blanket reduction imposed. We would work with them in practice to achieve the same overall impact. NZTA has prepared some advice for PTAs on this option.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Option 3: Introduce trip caps

What: Trip caps refer to limiting the number of trips that can be taken over a particular period. Total Mobility users averaged 51 trips per year (less than 1 per week) but a small cohort took significantly more trips.

Who: This option would affect a smaller cohort of users that travel regularly. It is likely many of these are users with higher and more complex needs. We know that 20% of users account for 75% of the total subsidy.

Impact: NZTA estimates that a monthly cap of 40 trips per month would reduce overall trips by 1% and the fare subsidy by 1.4%; 30 trips per month would reduce 2.3% of trips and 2.8% of subsidy, and a 20 trips per month cap would reduce trips by 5.7% and the subsidy by 6.8%. This option would have less impact on reducing cost pressures than options 1 and 2.

Next steps: Trip caps would need to be designed carefully, given that some people use Total Mobility to access employment and education. Sector engagement would help to inform appropriate cap levels. Further work would also be required to develop a practical implementation method. Overall, we consider this option less of a priority.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Options around Total Mobility eligibility

This page presents three potential options to stabilise cost pressures over the longer-term by changing eligibility settings or tightening assessment processes. These options could fundamentally change the purpose or intended focus of Total Mobility. These options would not affect all users but would have significant impact on some people currently using Total Mobility that may be excluded by the changes. There are major data gaps that make it difficult to quantify the impacts at this stage. All would need to be further explored with all relevant agencies and ministers.

Introducing means testing (Recommended to investigate further)

What: Total Mobility is not currently means tested. Its eligibility is based on whether someone has a disability that prevents them from travelling on public transport in a safe and dignified manner, irrespective of their means. For context, some HealthNZ subsidies for older people are means-tested, such as the residential-care subsidy. Most MSD disability support services (DSS) are not means-tested, except for home support services and equipment and modification services.

Who: Most means testing is based on income. The means threshold would need to be considered carefully, reflecting that disabled people are disproportionately affected by financial constraints when compared with non-disabled people, and that 75% of Total Mobility users are superannuitants. Some means testing considers (typically liquid) assets beyond income. This would enable a more nuanced approach to means testing, although would be more challenging and burdensome to implement.

Given that most Total Mobility users are superannuitants, means testing Total Mobility may raise broader questions about superannuitants' access to other entitlements on a non-means tested basis (for example, public transport or winter energy payments).

Impact: Dependant on the threshold. We do not currently collect data on the means of Total Mobility users, so this would be a necessary first step. There will be an expectation from PTAs and the disability sector of extensive engagement as part of the Total Mobility Review prior to implementing such changes.

Next steps: Further work would be required with agencies including the Inland Revenue Department on options and thresholds.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Tightening eligibility criteria and assessments (Recommended to investigate further)

What: Tightening eligibility criteria and the assessment process could reduce cost pressures over a longer time frame.

For example, periodic reassessments are currently only recommended for finite-term impairments expected to last for at least 6 months. Similarly, with permanent impairments, it is not the impairment itself that determines eligibility for Total Mobility, but whether the impairment prevents the prospective client from undertaking the journey. This means improvements in public transport services (or accessibility improvements) could mean that a person would no longer need Total Mobility even if the impairment hasn't changed. Periodic reassessment would assist in exiting users from the scheme that no longer met the criteria.

Eligibility could also be adjusted by introducing 'thresholds' of impairment to more tightly focus the scheme:

- For disabled people under 65 – there could be an approved 'threshold' of functional impairment/s, that arises from a range of diagnosed conditions or impairments
- For older adults with age-related mobility needs (due to old age rather than a diagnosed condition), there could be an approved 'threshold' of age-related impairment.

Who: These options would exclude some current users from the scheme that have lower or less complex needs but leave users with more complex needs unaffected.

Impact: Currently unknown. We do not have data on the number of users that may no longer be eligible through changes like these, and it would depend on how they were implemented. It may also be difficult to determine the threshold for different impairments as well as life circumstance factors, such as needing Total Mobility to access employment.

Next steps: Work with NZTA and PTAs on how improvements to assessment processes could be implemented (noting NZTA already has work underway to update its guidance). Work with relevant agencies on how approved thresholds could work in practice. There could also be an opportunity to work with MSD to streamline the assessment processes for Total Mobility for DSS users. This would provide a better experience / simpler process for DSS users who are users of Total Mobility and reduce some administrative costs.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Linking eligibility to MSD Disability Support Services (DSS)

What: You raised linking with DSS as a potential option. DSS is mainly for people under 65 years old with a physical, intellectual or sensory disability or autism. Linking eligibility to DSS could be done by either:

- limiting Total Mobility to DSS users entirely (primarily excluding users over 65 year, which is 75% of registered Total Mobility users, and people under 65 that are not DSS users); or
- only link to DSS for people under 65 years old (this would exclude some people with impairments that do not meet DSS criteria).

Who: Option (a) would fundamentally change the purpose of Total Mobility to only support people with non-age-related impairments. This would exclude most people over 65 and mean that age-related impairments would not be covered by the scheme. While over 65s are eligible for free public transport through the SuperGold card, this does not help those unable to use public transport. If you wanted to pursue this option, you would need to decide whether something else would take its place for age-related impairments, through the health system, NZ Super or a bespoke scheme.

Option (b) would exclude some people under 65 that have impairments that are not DSS eligible. This would focus support away from certain types of impairments, such as mobility or physical impairments as result of long-term chronic health conditions, or people who live independently without using DSS.

Impact: Option (a) would have a substantial impact on cost pressures by removing 75% of users. Option (b) is unlikely to have much impact on cost pressures overall, as it would only tighten eligibility for less than 25% of users. There will be an expectation from the disability sector of extensive engagement as part of the Total Mobility Review prior to implementing such changes.

Next steps: MSD and Ministry of Disabled People do not support linking eligibility to DSS. Depending on ministerial preferences, next steps would include working with MSD on what linking with DSS could look like, such as streamlining the assessment process for Total Mobility for DSS users.

Other options: We considered but are not proposing options such as changing to bulk funding of PTAs (which would place a firm cap on Crown support, but would not address PTA funding sustainability); reducing the Crown subsidy but increasing NLTF share (given existing pressures on the NLTF); and direct transfers to users to manage their own transport budgets (as this would be an intervention better suited to the welfare system than the transport system).

There may be a case to further consider whether new, separate schemes could be developed for the under 65 and over 65 groups. For the latter, this could consider any linkages to other entitlements for this group. If so, we suggest that this could be led by social development agencies.

Progress
further
work:

Yes / No

Preferred
option:

(a)

OR

(b)

We recommend further work on means testing and tightening eligibility criteria and assessments. These options would support Total Mobility being available to those with most need. More data is needed to understand the cost implications.

We consider linking eligibility to DSS would exclude many people that cannot access public transport due to an impairment. MSD and Ministry of Disabled People do not support this option.

Total Mobility Review

This page provides you with information on the scope and status of the Total Mobility Review. The Review was launched on the recommendation of Parliament’s then Transport and Industrial Relations Committee *Inquiry into the Future of New Zealand’s Mobility* in 2018 and shortly after the Community Connect subsidy was introduced.

Review timeline	
• 2018	<i>Inquiry into the Future of New Zealand’s Mobility</i> , which considered changing transport technology, and social and economic trends, and recommended a review of the Total Mobility scheme; the Government agreed to a review.
• 2022	Additional subsidy for Total Mobility users introduced under Community Connect
• Mid-2023	Review of Total Mobility launched under previous government with an extensive Terms of Reference.
• Mid-2024	Terms of Reference updated to focus the review on government priorities. Some consultation with the Disabled People’s Organisations Coalition (DPO). The purpose of the review remained the same.
• Late 2024	Draft public discussion document and Cabinet paper provided to Minister Brown (previous Minister of Transport) for consideration. Officials proposed consulting on the scheme’s purpose, eligibility settings and specific operational matters. Funding excluded from public consultation.
• 2025	Priority through 2025 has been addressing funding pressures, over other elements of the Total Mobility review.

2022 – PTAs signalled to Government cost implications of Community Connect subsidy to local share, additional \$1m allowed initially to enable PTAs to adapt.

2023 – Community Connect subsidy made permanent.

Early 2025 – Auckland Transport (largest proportion of Total Mobility users in NZ) signals cost pressure on Auckland local share, considers opting out of Crown subsidy.

Early 2025 – To manage increased costs, \$12m p.a. funding moved within Community Connect appropriation from Community Services Card concession to Total Mobility.

What is the Total Mobility review?

The purpose of reviewing the Total Mobility scheme is to consider how it can be improved to create better outcomes for disabled people. The review also seeks to support the human rights of disabled people, as outlined in New Zealand’s commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Terms of Reference for the review covers four areas:

Review area	Key findings so far	What needs to happen next
1. The purpose of Total Mobility	Purpose of Total Mobility is broad and was never formally agreed by Government. Applies the social definition of disability. Important for the interpretation of eligibility criteria. Other countries have very specific intent.	A clear purpose is needed and should link with eligibility settings. Engagement on this is recommended.
2. How Total Mobility could reach more disabled people	Eligibility and assessment tightly linked. NZTA provides guidance to PTAs on eligibility. Inconsistent across NZ.	Tightly linked with purpose of the scheme, eligibility settings give effect to the scheme purpose, and engagement on this is recommended. Options on page 4 would impact this.
3. How aspects of Total Mobility’s operations could be improved	There are some aspects of Total Mobility operations that could be improved, such as availability of Total Mobility providers (e.g. taxis and ride-hail services), how people are assessed to enter Total Mobility, and increasing the number of wheelchair hoist vehicles.	NZTA and PTAs can make some operational changes now. E.g. NZTA are updating their guidelines to PTAs, to include improved assessment of eligibility. Consultation not necessarily needed.
4. Sustainable funding mechanisms for Total Mobility	Cost pressure on the Crown and PTAs has increased since the review started.	Current focus. Options on page 3 and 4 of these A3s could address funding issues.

Engagement on the Total Mobility review so far

Sector engagement has been limited to date. We engaged with the Disabled People’s Organisations Coalition early in the review as well as when the Terms of Reference were updated in mid-2024.

Officials prepared a public discussion document and Cabinet paper to consult on purpose, eligibility and some operational aspects (Terms of Reference items 1-3) in late-2024.

What we have learnt so far from correspondence from disabled people, the media, and some targeted conversations, is:

- disabled people value Total Mobility highly
- most people use Total Mobility responsibly and as they need it
- almost all people who interact with Total Mobility (ie funders, assessors, Total Mobility users) are concerned about growing demand for the scheme and its sustainability, citing an ageing population and age-related impairments, and general heightened awareness and use of the scheme
- People are feeling increasingly anxious about what will happen with Total Mobility, likening these concerns with changes made to Disability Support Services in March 2024. The disability community want to be consulted if any changes are proposed to Total Mobility.

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Tuesday, 9 September 2025 6:45 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament); Ministers Office
Cc: Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Siobhan Routledge; OCU
Subject: ATTN Emma: Additional Total Mobility information
Attachments: Total Mobility phasing scenarios (1).docx

Hi Emma

As requested at the officials meeting on Monday, please find attached some cost estimates of phasing down the Total Mobility subsidy level to 65% that we worked out with NZTA. We have provided the impact on the Crown, NLFT and PTAs individually. The scenarios we have looked at are:

1. **No phasing:** We have also included a scenario with no phasing, ie, decreasing to **65% on 1 July 2026**. We have combined this with a 10% reduction in regional fares caps.
2. **Phasing over 2 years:** Keeping the 75% subsidy until 30 June 2026; then decreasing it to **70% on 1 July 2026** and to **65% on 1 July 2027**. We have combined this with a 10% reduction in regional fares caps.
3. **Phasing over 3 years:** Keeping the 75% subsidy until 30 June 2027; then decreasing it to **70% on 1 July 2027** and to **65% on 1 July 2028**. We have combined this with a 10% reduction in regional fares caps.

As with the A3 material, the cost modelling makes some key assumptions, for example 0.7 elasticity (although a couple of other elasticities were also considered by NZTA) and that the regional fare caps would be decreased by 10% across the board (in practice, we would work with PTAs to get the same overall outcome).

As mentioned over the phone, David Shephard from NZTA had a chat late in the day with AT and GWRC, and I understand he will provide some feedback from that conversation to the office tomorrow.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))
 Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser

Scenario 1: No phasing

2026/27 onward: Reduce to 65%, with 10% reductions in regional fares caps

Funder	Total forecast cost (2025-2030)	Total funding shortfall (2025-2030)	Combined NLTF- PTA shortfall
Crown	64,025	(57,650)	
NLTF	151,832	27,520	45,866
PTAs	101,221	18,346	

Scenario 2: Phasing over 2 years

2025/26-2026/27 at 75%; 2026/27 at 70%; 2027/28 onward at 65%, with 10% reductions in regional fares caps

Funder	Total forecast cost (2025-2030)	Total funding shortfall (2025-2030)	Combined NLTF- PTA shortfall
Crown	84,577	(37,098)	
NLTF	169,296	44,984	74,974
PTAs	112,864	29,989	

Scenario 3: Phasing over 3 years

2025/26-2026/27 at 75% subsidy; 2027/28 at 70%; 2027/28 onward at 65%, with 10% reductions in regional fares caps

Funder	Total forecast cost (2025-2030)	Total funding shortfall (2025-2030)	Combined NLTF- PTA shortfall
Crown	109,796	(11,879)	
NLTF	202,412	78,100	130,167
PTAs	134,942	52,067	

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Tuesday, 23 September 2025 11:12 am
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament); Ministers Office
Cc: Marian Willberg; Natasha Rave; Michelle Dawson; Teresa Lundon
Subject: Note on regional Total Mobility coordinators meeting

Hi Emma

We noted that the Minister of Transport asked how the meeting with the regional Total Mobility coordinators went last Wednesday. Total Mobility coordinators from all the regional councils meet every two months. We joined their regular meeting (rather than setting one up ourselves) to provide a brief update on the Total Mobility Review.

Our update focused more on process than the substance of the advice that we are preparing for the upcoming Cabinet paper. We shared that:

- the Ministry has been focussing on providing advice on the funding aspect of the Total Mobility review, and specifically managing the cost pressures on *all* funders (not just the Crown)
- We shared that Minister Bishop and Minister Upston had met to discuss the funding pressures and directed officials to progress work on a package of options to stabilise cost pressure, and to complete the Total Mobility review.
- We did not provide details of what was in the package of options but noted previous advice had look at both eligibility issues and funding levels (including the Crown subsidy, regional fare caps and trips caps - areas they have already discussed among themselves).
- We said we want to test some of these options with PTAs. We hoped that Ministers could announce something by the end of the year and were conscious of the funding pressures on PTAs.

The PTA coordinators seemed pleased overall to get an update - MOT had not attended that meeting for several months. They said:

- raised they wanted to be consulted on options

- the way regional fare caps were set in each region was complex (given the mix of urban and rural areas) and they expected to retain ability to manage their own fare caps
- suggested talking to ACC and NZ Health, as the PTAs considered that some people were using Total Mobility that could be using other more-specific services (we have reached out to the Ministry of Health).

Next steps

MOT, NZTA, Whaikaha and MSD are drafting the Cabinet paper, discussion document, and engagement plan to give effect to the directions from the Ministers joint meeting - aiming to send to the Minister's office during the week of 6 October.

Cheers

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser

Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

Harry Atkins

From: Whitney Adam
Sent: Friday, 10 October 2025 10:45 am
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: Siobhan Routledge; Danny Eyre; Marian Willberg; Dmitry Mitenkoff
Subject: Total Mobility - stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation - for feedback

Attachments: OC250839 Draft Cabinet paper Total Mobility Discussion Document - Briefing.pdf; Annex 1 Draft Cabinet paper_Total Mobility_Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation.docx; Annex 2 Total Mobility Discussion Document.docx; Annex 3 High level engagement plan.docx

Cabinet paper released in document 10

Kia ora Emma,

Annex 2 is refused as is publicly available on the Ministry's website here:
<https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Consultation/Total-Mobility/Total-Mobility-Discussion-Documents-Final.pdf>

Re Total Mobility - stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation.

Please find attached for feedback from Minister Bishop and Minister Upston before ministerial consultation:

- Cover briefing, signed by the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry for Disabled People
- Draft Cabinet paper (Annex 1)
- Draft Discussion Document (Annex 2)
- 2-page summary of the proposed engagement plan (Annex 3)

Please let us know if you have any questions or need anything further.

Ngā mihi,

Whitney

Whitney Adam ([she/her](#))
 Senior Adviser | Maritime, Freight and Access
 Auckland Policy Office
Ministry of Transport Te Manatū Waka

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) E: W.Adam@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT
 TE MANATŪ WAKA



10 October 2025

OC250839 / REP/WHK/25/10/068

Hon Chris Bishop

Action required by:

Minister of Transport

Monday, 20 October 2025

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Disability Issues

DRAFT CABINET PAPER - TOTAL MOBILITY: STABILISING COST PRESSURES AND APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Purpose

Provide a draft Cabinet paper and discussion document on the Total Mobility scheme for your feedback, before ministerial consultation.

Key points

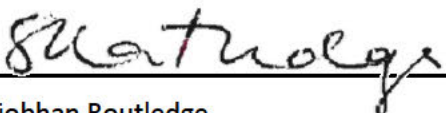
- At your meeting on 10 September 2025, you agreed on a package of funding changes to stabilise Total Mobility's cost pressures, and instructed officials to develop proposals for public consultation that would improve national consistency and greater targeting of the scheme to need.
- Officials from the Ministry of Transport, Ministry for Disabled People – Whaikaha, Ministry of Social Development and the NZ Transport Agency have drafted a Cabinet paper and discussion document to give effect to these directions to:
 - reduce the Total Mobility fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent)
 - work with public transport authorities to reduce the Total Mobility fare caps by around 10 percent in each region
 - use Crown savings from these changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.

- These funding changes are expected to substantially but not completely address cost pressures to all funders over 2025-2030.
- The Ministry of Transport engaged with three public transport authorities to gauge whether this package would be sufficient to prevent them from withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy contribution. Overall, there was comfort that the changes would likely be sufficient for councils, provided the changes affecting them were communicated early enough (i.e., this year). We propose in the draft Cabinet paper that the decision to provide some funding support to public transport authorities be announced once Cabinet has taken decisions so that public transport authorities are informed as soon as possible.
- The draft Cabinet paper also seeks agreement to release a Total Mobility discussion document with proposals that are consistent with your direction for ensuring fairer, more consistent and more targeted access to services for people with the greatest need. These proposals are framed around:
 - clarifying Total Mobility's purpose and introducing requirements to make assessment fairer and more consistent
 - introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users
 - promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered.
- You both indicated your preference for public consultation on the discussion document to commence before the end of 2025. Minister Upston also requested the public consultation use alternate formats that would facilitate participation by the disability community.
- The Ministry of Disabled People notes that best practice for consultation is to have alternate format documents (for example, braille, Sign Language and Easy read) ready from the beginning of consultation, but that these take 6-7 weeks to produce. Given we are aiming to take proposals to the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee on 19 November 2025, we recommend starting consultation in early 2026 when alternate formats will be available.
- Once we have your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper and discussion document, departmental and ministerial consultation can begin.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

		Minister of Transport	Minister for Disability Issues
1	agree to seek the funding changes set out in this briefing and draft Cabinet paper	Yes / No	Yes / No
2	agree that, in order to ensure alternate formats are available, public consultation on the Total Mobility Discussion Document should commence in early 2026	Yes / No	Yes / No
3	provide feedback on the draft Cabinet paper and Total Mobility discussion document, including whether there are any proposals you do not want included	Yes / No	Yes / No
4	agree, subject to your feedback being addressed, to commence departmental and Ministerial consultation on the draft Cabinet paper and draft discussion document.	Yes / No	Yes / No


 Siobhan Routledge
 Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Group
 Ministry of Transport

9 / October / 2025

Hon Minister Chris Bishop
 Minister of Transport

..... / /


 Rebecca Elvy
 Deputy Chief Executive, Outreach and Innovation
 Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha
 10 / 10 / 2025
 / /

Hon Louise Upston
 Minister for Disability Issues

..... / /

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved☐ Declined☐ Seen by Minister☐ Not seen by Minister☐ Overtaken by events

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Marian Willberg, Manager Maritime, Freight and Access, Ministry of Transport	s 9(2)(a)	
Danny Eyre, Principal Adviser, Ministry of Transport		✓
Suzanne Cookson, Director Outreach, Outreach & Innovation Group, Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha		

DRAFT CABINET PAPER - TOTAL MOBILITY: STABILISING COST PRESSURES AND APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

We have prepared a draft Cabinet paper and draft discussion document

- 1 At your meeting on 10 September 2025, you agreed on a package of funding changes intended to stabilise Total Mobility's cost pressures and achieve zero funding shortfall for all funders by 2030. This would be achieved by:
 - 1.1 reducing the fare subsidy level from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent)
 - 1.2 working with public transport authorities to reduce regional fare caps by a national equivalent of 10 percent
 - 1.3 using Crown savings from the changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.
- 2 You also instructed officials to develop proposals for public consultation that would improve Total Mobility, with a focus on national consistency and greater targeting of the scheme to need. Officials from the Ministry of Transport, Ministry for Disabled People – Whaikaha, Ministry of Social Development and the NZ Transport Agency have drafted a Cabinet paper and discussion document to give effect to these directions.
- 3 Annex 1 contains a draft Cabinet paper to the Social Outcomes Cabinet Committee for you to consider. It seeks Cabinet decisions on the package of funding changes, and agreement to public consultation on the Total Mobility Discussion Document (in Annex 2). We note this paper should be more concise and we will continue to sharpen it following your feedback.
- 4 Cabinet decisions on the package of funding changes would not be consulted on but would be announced and referenced in the discussion document as context on decisions the Government has already taken.

The Ministry of Transport corrected the cost forecasts of your preferred phased approach

- 5 The Ministry of Transport has corrected the cost forecasts of reducing the user subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026, due to an error in the phasing (the subsidy reduction was incorrectly applied from 1 July 2025). The updated figures show an overall shortfall of \$25m over 2025-2030, instead of an overall surplus of \$12m. This means the Crown surplus from reducing the subsidy would not wholly cover the National Land Transport (NLTF)-public transport authority shortfall. The surplus is still expected to be sufficient to cover the public transport authority shortfall.

For the period 2025-2030	Crown cost	Crown shortfall	NLTF-PTA cost	NLTF-PTA shortfall	Overall shortfall
Forecast from 10 September 2025	64,000	(58,000)	253,000	46,000	(12,000)
Current forecast	79,000	(43,000)	316,000	68,000	25,000

- 6 Nonetheless, we recommend continuing with the level and timing of the subsidy change in paragraph 1. Agencies will monitor the impact of the funding changes on demand and cost against forecasts, which will give time to assess whether further changes are necessary. While reducing the subsidy further or faster could ensure an overall funding surplus, this would impact Total Mobility users more through higher cost or reduced notice.
- 7 The proposals in the Total Mobility Discussion Document should also contribute to addressing the residual funding shortfall by ensuring fairer, consistent and more sustainable access to services for people with the greatest need.

Targeted stakeholder engagement has been completed with public transport authorities

- 8 The Ministry of Transport met with officials from Auckland Transport, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Otago Regional Council to gauge whether this package would be sufficient to deter councils from withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy contribution. They were highly interested in the specifics of the proposals and modelling and how it would affect their regions, but overall felt that the changes would likely be sufficient for their councils to agree to continue in the scheme, as long as the additional support being provided was communicated early enough (i.e., this year).
- 9 The public transport authorities' shortfall in 2024/25 was around \$4m. We do not know the forecast shortfall for all public transport authorities this financial year, although expect it will be higher. We did not commit to covering all of their funding shortfall from this year. Public transport authorities did not present this as being a deal breaker, provided there was a clear pathway to stabilise demand over the medium term.

We propose the NZ Transport Agency is empowered to determine how recycled funding is allocated between public transport authorities, limited to surplus after accounting for the Crown's costs

- 10 We have drafted financial recommendations in the Cabinet paper to create a new category within the existing Public Transport Concessions Multi-Category-Appropriation to be used for the local share funding shortfall. We propose an initial allocation of \$10 m for that category from a combination of last year's underspend carried forward (\$5.2m) to 2025/26 and bringing forward forecast underspend from 2026/27 once subsidy fare changes take effect.
- 11 This is not guaranteed to cover all the public transport authorities' shortfall for 2025/26 but provides clarity on the funding available to support their shortfall. For subsequent years, the NZ Transport Agency will be empowered to determine how funding will be allocated to public transport authorities, limited to surplus funding after meeting the Crown's costs.
- 12 Once Cabinet has taken decisions this year, we recommend writing to public transport authorities to inform them that some additional funding will be available. This should give early notice of the additional support being provided.

The Total Mobility Discussion Document contains six proposals

- 13 We have prepared six proposals for public consultation as set out in the table below, which would all be in addition to the funding changes above. These proposals are high-level and the discussion document seeks a range of feedback from Total Mobility users, public transport authorities, and transport providers on the proposals.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Proposal seeking feedback</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Clarifying Total Mobility's purpose and introducing requirements to make assessment fairer and more consistent	1. Set a clear purpose statement	Setting a clear purpose was recommended by the 2005 review of Total Mobility but never acted on. The proposed purpose largely confirms the existing description of the scheme.
	2. Make Total Mobility assessment fairer and more consistent by: - introducing evidence requirements as part of the assessment process - introducing requirements for periodic reassessments	There is no national requirement for either of these proposals. They would add rigour to the assessment process but also increase the compliance and financial cost to Total Mobility users. For example, requiring doctor's certificate or letter may have its own challenges, given General Practitioner availability. Periodic reassessments may also be perceived as pointless for people with permanent disabilities, however, the assessment should also consider developments in accessible public transport, such as more kneeling buses.
Introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users	3. Introduce tiered entitlements based on level of need through: - a flat trip cap for all Total Mobility users, or - a base allocation of trips per user, with additional trips available for individuals based on personal circumstances (work, study, health appointments, etc)	This proposal is likely to have the largest impact on Total Mobility users and be the most sensitive. Two options have been put forward: a flat trip cap for all users or a base allocation for all users that could be increased based on specific transport needs (for example, employment, education, health appointments, etc). Both options would add new constraints on how many trips people could take under Total Mobility. The flat cap would apply to all users but is likely to impact more regular users of Total Mobility (who we expect also have higher transport needs). The base allocation approach is more targeted and provides more trips for people based on trip purposes. This is likely to be less impactful for people with higher transport needs but will come with greater complexity and administration. For example, the allocation could change as an individual's circumstances change. This approach could dovetail well with introducing periodic reassessments.
	4. Further incentivise Total Mobility providers to provide more wheelchair accessible vehicle trips	This proposal discusses how existing funding for wheelchair accessible vehicles could be more effectively used to increase the number of these vehicles, and the trips they provide.
Promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered	5. Supporting new Total Mobility service providers to enter the scheme, such as ride-hail services like Uber, or on-demand public transport	This proposal focuses on what safeguards would be needed for Total Mobility users if ride-hail and other service providers were included in the scheme. There are requirements for taxi companies, such as in-vehicle camera and labour hours, that do not currently apply to ride-hail services.
	6. Introduce a national public transport concession for people with disabilities	This proposal discusses creating a national concession for people with disabilities that would be wider in scope than Total Mobility. This is currently only available in some regions, creating national inconsistency. We have heard that some public transport authorities use Total Mobility eligibility as a proxy for being eligible for this concession. This creates an incentive to apply for Total Mobility just to receive a locally available public transport concession. This concession would need to be funded, although if effective in reducing demand from Total Mobility it would shift costs from a higher overall to a lower overall cost form of transport services, given there would be marginal additional cost to existing public transport services.

We recommend starting public consultation in early 2026 to ensure alternate formats of the Total Mobility Discussion Document are available

- 14 At the meeting on 10 September 2025, you indicated your preference for public consultation to start this year, and that alternative formats are used to support engagement by the disability community.
- 15 The Ministry for Disabled People advises preparing accessible materials normally takes 6-7 weeks. The Ministry for Disabled People has also noted that the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the New Zealand Sign Language Strategy will be released in late November and early December 2025, reducing capacity from their providers.
- 16 If Cabinet approves the Total Mobility discussion document in mid-November, it will not be possible to launch consultation before Christmas with alternate formats available from the outset. The lack of alternate formats is likely to be heavily criticised by the disability community because it will limit their capacity to contribute to the development of policies that directly affect their access to critical services.
- 17 Given this, we recommend starting public consultation in February 2026 with alternate formats available from the outset. This will mitigate the risk of public consultation being criticised by the disability community. We could commence public consultation by the end of the year without the alternate formats if you prefer.
- 18 Attached as annex 3 is a high-level engagement plan that proposed a six-week consultation period and engagement with the disability sector, PTAs, and service providers. We will refine this further with your office, as necessary.

Next steps

- 19 After addressing your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper, we propose the below timeline. We consider that the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee is most appropriate committee.

Timeframe	Milestone
20 October 2025	Provide your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper to incorporate into the draft for Ministerial consultation
29 October 2025	Ministerial consultation begins on the Cabinet paper and discussion document
11 November 2025	Ministerial consultation ends
13 November 2025	Lodge finalised Cabinet paper and discussion document
19 November 2025	Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee (SOU)
24 November 2025	Cabinet meeting
December 2025	Announce decision to support public transport authorities funding shortfall
February 2026	Commence public consultation on the Total Mobility Discussion Document

**ANNEX 1: DRAFT CABINET PAPER: TOTAL MOBILITY: STABILISING COST
PRESSURES AND APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The final Cabinet paper is released in document 10.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

ANNEX 2: TOTAL MOBILITY DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Annex 2 is refused under section 18(d) as it is publicly available on the Ministry's website here:
<https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Consultation/Total-Mobility/Total-Mobility-Discussion-Document-Final.pdf>

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

ANNEX 3: HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT PLAN

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility Scheme Review – Engagement Plan (Summary) October 2025

1. Context

The Ministry of Transport supported by the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha will undertake public consultation to seek feedback on proposals to strengthen Total Mobility, as well as to communicate changes to stabilise Total Mobility funding. A detailed engagement plan has been prepared by the Ministry of Transport with support from Whaikaha.

A discussion document has been prepared by Ministry of Transport, with input from Whaikaha, the Ministry of Social Development and the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) to support the consultation. It contains six proposals and questions about possible changes to Total Mobility for people to respond to.

The timing of consultation is to be confirmed by Ministers. One option is to start consultation in November 2025 (without accessible consultation material) or in February 2026 (with accessible consultation material). We strongly recommend starting consultation in February 2026 to allow a “do it once and do it right first time” approach for accessible formats of consultation material (6-8 weeks on average is how long the alternate formats process can take, which will also need to allow for a summer shutdown period).

2. Communications and Engagement Objectives

- **Clear communication:** Ensure people understand how to participate
 - **Accessibility:** Provide information and feedback channels that are easy for everyone to use
 - **Active participation:** Encourage disabled people to contribute and ensure they are aware of the consultation. Communicate how feedback will be used
 - **Consistent messaging:** Maintain clarity and consistency across all communications
 - **Inform policy:** Use feedback to shape policy development
-

3. Audience

The main audience will be the disability community and older people who use Total Mobility (Total Mobility users). The consultation will also be aimed at the Disabled Peoples Organisations Coalition, tangata whaikaha Māori, public transport authorities (councils), Total Mobility providers, supporters, whānau, carers, disability community groups, and older people's organisations.

Audiences are grouped as Total Mobility users and other disabled people (may need more support/resources in accessible formats) and supporting agencies/providers and supporters/whānau/carers (likely able to access most formats).

4. Approach

The Ministry of Transport will lead the consultation, supported by Whaikaha.

- **Engagement channels:** A range of engagement channels are required to support people from the disability community to provide feedback. Channels include a discussion document in accessible alternate formats, online and in-person workshops, email, and phone line (including relay service).
- **Targeted support:** All consultation material will be provided in alternate accessible formats (Easy Read, Braille, audio, large print, NZ Sign Language).
- **Workshops:** About six in-person engagements (two each in Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch), plus online sessions. Debriefs with other agencies to be held after each workshop.

5. Action Plan

Date/Timeframe	Action
Oct–Nov 2025	Draft initial email, discussion document, organise sessions, prepare promotional material, build stakeholder list
December 2025	Announcements following Cabinet decisions: - letters to public transport authorities on additional funding support, as soon as possible - announcements on the subsidy change and public consultation may happen at the same time, or be delayed until 2026 if consultation takes place later
Commencement Day (TBC)	Consultation goes live, distribute paper info, email stakeholders, send PR
Consultation Launch (TBC, 6 weeks)	Online and in-person engagement, physical resources, information sessions
Consultation Close (TBC)	Consultation closes

6. Collateral

- PowerPoint presentations and discussion document (Plain English and Easy Read).
- Accessible formats for consultation resources: Easy Read, Braille, audio, large print, NZ Sign Language.
- Promotional posters, flyers, online content (website, social media, stakeholder channels).

7. Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Notifying PTAs about changes to funding settings subsidy may mean the information reaches the disability community indirectly	Inform disability community shortly after public transport authorities and also signal when consultation will commence.
Short formal consultation period may limit participation and feedback quality	Engage closely with Whaikaha/MSD/NZTA, prioritise quality engagement; meaningful opportunities for input. Prioritise quality over quantity—ensure meaningful opportunities for input. Consider extending the consultation period if possible.
Perception the Government is not running a meaningful or genuine engagement	Emphasise the intent to genuinely understand stakeholder concerns. Provide accessible materials in all required formats and ensure multiple channels for engagement. Promote the consultation early and transparently via social media, posters, and sector networks.
Expectations from disabled people and the disability sector are not met	Clearly communicate what is feasible in the near term and the constraints of the funding environment. Use plain language.
Insufficient time to translate consultation documents into alternate formats	Begin translation processes as soon as possible, ideally as soon as content is finalised. If needed, delay the consultation start to ensure accessibility. Maintain close contact with translation providers and Whaikaha. 6-10 weeks needed to be complete.
Limited access to technology	Share paper-based info via post and public spaces. Clearly communicate all available participation options, including in-person sessions and support services

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Thursday, 23 October 2025 6:55 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament); Ministers Office
Cc: Siobhan Routledge; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; OCU; Rory Sedgley; Jenny Smith
Subject: ATTN Emma: Total Mobility Cabinet paper and Discussion Document for ministerial consultation
Attachments: Total Mobility Discussion Document - Ministerial consultation.docx; Draft Cabinet paper_Total Mobility_Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation - Ministerial consultation.docx

Refer to document 6 for treatment of attachments

Hi Emma

Following tonight's meeting, please find attached the draft Total Mobility Cabinet paper and Discussion document to circulate for ministerial consultation. As agreed by Minister Bishop, we have updated the Cabinet paper to reflect his decisions to commence public consultation in February 2026 once alternate formats are available, but to announce this and the other funding decisions in December 2025. No changes have been made to the Total Mobility Discussion Document.

For the Cabinet paper, I note that we are seeking the Minister of Finance to agree to create a new category in the Public Transport Concessions Multi-Category-Appropriation (MCA). This is found in paragraph 44 and recommendation 5 (we have added an editorial note above each of these references). When circulating the paper to MOF's office, please highlight that we are seeking agreement from MOF to creating this category through this process. If agreement is received during this ministerial consultation, then we will update the paper ahead of lodging. (Jenny should be able to help if you have any questions on this point).

We have drafted below an email that you could use as a basis for ministerial consultation. I note that Marian, Whitney and I are all on leave tomorrow, but we will commence departmental consultation on Tuesday.

Warm regards

Danny

Please see attached the Cabinet paper *Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals* and the associated Total Mobility Discussion Document. Please provide any comments by **7 November 2025**, noting this paper is intended for SOU Committee consideration on 19 November 2025.

The Total Mobility scheme (Total Mobility) subsidises taxi fares for people with disabilities that prevent them from using public transport independently. Total Mobility's costs have been escalating

unsustainably for the Crown, public transport authorities and the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) since changes in 2022 increased the fare subsidy from 50 percent to its current 75 percent.

This Cabinet paper seeks agreement to the following funding changes:

1. reducing the Total Mobility subsidy level from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent);
2. working with public transport authorities to reduce the Total Mobility fare caps by around 10 percent in each region; and
3. using Crown savings from these changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.

These funding changes will substantially stabilise costs over 2025-2030 and aim to strike a balance between ensuring that the scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders (across the Crown, public transport authorities and the NLTF) and minimising the impact on Total Mobility users. The scheme's sustainability and continuity are important for users who rely on the transport services it provides to undertake the activities of their everyday lives.

This Cabinet paper also seek agreement to release the Total Mobility Discussion Document for public consultation in February 2026. The Discussion Document includes proposals that could make better use of the Government's resources by ensuring fairer, more consistent and more targeted access to services for people with the greatest need.

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser

Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz

My working days are Monday-Thursday.



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Tuesday, 28 October 2025 1:50 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: Ministers Office; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Jenny Smith; OCU
Subject: ATTN EMMA: Letter from Minister Bishop to Minister Willis to approve a new category "Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall"
Attachments: Total Mobility letter to Minister of Finance re new category.docx

Hi Emma

Please find attached a letter from Minister Bishop to Minister Willis seeking joint approval to create a new category, "Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall", within the existing Public Transport Concessions MCA. This letter is to support ministerial consultation on the Total Mobility Cabinet paper and discussion document. We note that this draft has been shared with Treasury officials, who are comfortable with it.

Happy to chat if you have any questions.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
 Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz

My working days are Monday-Thursday.



TE MANATŪ WAKA
 MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
 Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

28 October 2025

Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance

Parliament Buildings

WELLINGTON

Agreement to add a category to the “Public Transport Concessions MCA”

Total Mobility subsidises taxi fares for people with disabilities that prevent them from using public transport independently. The attached Cabinet paper “Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals” seeks agreement to changes to the funding settings for the Total Mobility Scheme. These changes aim to stabilise escalating costs and support the ongoing sustainability of Total Mobility.

The changes to funding settings are expected to generate savings for the Crown. To support funding sustainability across all funding partners, I am seeking Cabinet agreement to utilise Crown savings to reduce the shortfall for Public Transport Authorities facing difficulties meeting their local share.

The attached Cabinet paper provides direction to the NZ Transport Agency when determining the appropriate amount and distribution of any funding set aside to reduce local share shortfalls. This is necessary given that the local share shortfalls will differ between regions and across years given that the scheme’s costs is demand-driven.

I propose we establish a new category within the existing “Public Transport Concessions MCA” to enable the Crown savings to be used in this way.

I agree and recommend that you:

- 1. **note** that there is a multi-category appropriation “Public Transport Concessions” in Vote Transport with a single overarching purpose to operate public transport concessions and the following existing categories:

Title	Type	Scope
Administration of Public Transport Concessions	Non-Departmental Output Expense	This category is limited to administration costs incurred in providing public transport concessions.
Community Connect Programme Public Transport Concessions	Non-Departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing public transport concessions through the Community Connect programme.

Total Mobility Services Concessions	Non-Departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing Total Mobility services concessions through the Community Connect Programme.
SuperGold Card Public Transport Concessions	Non-Departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing enhanced public transport concessions for SuperGold cardholders.

2. **agree** to add the following category to the multi-category appropriation “Public Transport Concessions”:

Title	Type	Scope
Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall	Non-departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing Crown funding to Public Transport Authorities to reduce local share funding shortfall to deliver the Total Mobility scheme.

3. **note** that expenses associated with the new category will be met in a fiscally neutral manner from within the existing amount of the MCA

Yours sincerely,

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Friday, 7 November 2025 12:06 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: OCU; Ministers Office; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Matthew Winthrop; Siobhan Routledge
Subject: Total Mobility - Draft Cabinet committee talking points and press release
Attachments: Draft press release on Total Mobility (2).docx; Cabinet talking points on Total Mobility (2).docx

Final press release available here:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/changes-ensure-continued-access-transport-subsidy-disability-community>

Hi Emma

Please find attached a draft Cabinet Committee talking points and Q&A for the Social Outcomes Committee meeting next week. We have also attached a draft press release for the office to consider. The draft PR includes input from NZTA and Whaikaha.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
 Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz

My working days are Monday-Thursday.



TE MANATŪ WAKA
 MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
 Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

**Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport**

**Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Disability Issues**



1 December 2025 – TBC

Ensuring continued access to transport subsidy for disability community

The Government will make changes to ensure the continued viability of a scheme that helps people travel when they cannot access public transport on their own, Transport Minister Chris Bishop announced today.

“Total Mobility provides subsidised taxi fares for people with disabilities that prevent them from using buses, trains or ferries independently. The subsidy is split between the Government and public transport authorities – local councils and the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) – and provides an important lifeline for the people who use the scheme.

“However, Total Mobility’s costs have been escalating unsustainably since changes in 2022 increased the fare subsidy from 50 percent to its current 75 percent. This undermines the scheme’s continued viability, putting users’ access to a vital service at risk.

“Today, the Government is announcing decisions to provide certainty that Total Mobility will continue to support the disability community in a financially sustainable way, for all funding partners,” Chris Bishop says.

The Government has decided:

- the fare subsidy level will reduce from the current 75 percent down to 65 percent from 1 July 2026
- NZTA will work with public transport authorities to lower the fare caps and the maximum subsidy by approximately 10 percent
- reduced costs to the Crown from these changes will be recycled to public transport authorities to reduce their shortfall over 2025 to 2030.

“We appreciate these decisions will mean fares will increase for Total Mobility users, but they will still be lower than they were before 2022,” Louise Upston says.

“The changes also provide certainty that those who need the service will have continued access to it.

“Public transport authorities are key partners in funding and delivering Total Mobility. In response to increasing cost pressures on ratepayers, several public transport authorities have been considering reducing the discount to 50 percent in their region.

“Disabled people should receive the same Crown support wherever they live in New Zealand. That’s why we want to solve Total Mobility’s funding pressures in a way that ensures financial sustainability, consistency in how the service is delivered, and fairness across New Zealand,” Louise Upston says.

“As part of these changes, the Government will provide \$10 million to NZTA to help reduce public transport authorities’ funding shortfalls,” Chris Bishop says.

“This will ensure quick relief to public transport authorities until the subsidy changes take effect from the next financial year.”

“Beyond ensuring the scheme’s financial viability, the Government is also taking the opportunity to consider changes to help shape a system that works better for disabled people,” Louise Upston says.

“We are releasing a Total Mobility Discussion document to consult on proposals to strengthen Total Mobility to ensure fairer, consistent and more sustainable access to services for people with the greatest need.

“As demand grows, we need to make sure the scheme reaches those who need it most. The Government aims, as part of consultation, to look at increasing choice of services to better suit the customer’s needs, examining other potential options such as community transport.”

“Total Mobility provides a lifeline for many people in the disabled community and we want it to continue to serve them well for years to come. The changes we are making will ensure that happens,” Louise Upston says.

ENDS

Notes to editor:

- Prior to 2022, Total Mobility users received a 50 percent fare subsidy. In 2022, that was increased to a 75 percent fare subsidy.
- The higher subsidy has seen registered users increase from 108,000 in 2022 to 120,000 in 2024/25.
- Total Mobility trips have also increased from 1.8 million trips in 2018 to three million in 2024/25.

- Under current settings, costs are forecast to exceed funding available for all funders by \$236 million over the period 2025-2030.
- The Government has decided to:
 - reduce the Total Mobility subsidy level from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent)
 - work with public transport authorities to reduce the Total Mobility fare caps by around 10 percent in each region
 - use Crown savings from these changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.
- The Government is allocating \$10 million from existing funding to reduce public transport authorities funding shortfalls this financial year.
- NZTA will be empowered to determine how this funding will be allocated to public transport authorities.
- The Government is also consulting on the Total Mobility Discussion Document, which contains proposals to strengthen the scheme. Consultation material is available on the Ministry of Transport website. Alternate formats will be released as these are available.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982



Cabinet Committee Background Information and Talking Points

Date and Time:	<i>Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee, 10.30am, 12 November 2025</i>
Paper Title:	<i>Total Mobility: Stabilising Cost Pressures and Approval to Undertake Public Consultation</i>
Portfolio:	<i>Transport, Disability Issues</i>
Attendees:	<i>Siobhan Routledge, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Group Danny Eyre, Principal Adviser, Maritime, Freight & Access</i>

This paper seeks agreement on proposals to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability and fairness of the Total Mobility scheme.

- Total Mobility subsidises transport for people with disabilities, including age-related impairments who cannot use public transport independently.
- Currently, Total Mobility covers 75 percent of taxi fares for eligible users, up to a regional cap.
- The Crown funds 25 percent of the fare subsidy, and 50 percent of the subsidy comes from the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) and local public transport authorities.

We need to address the escalating costs of Total Mobility

- Since the Labour Government increased the subsidy from 50 percent to 75 percent in 2022, demand and costs have risen sharply. The scheme's funding gap is projected to reach \$236 million over 2025–2030 if no actions are taken.
- Most of this gap will be felt by public transport authorities and the NLTF. Some public transport authorities are considering withdrawing from the scheme or reverting to lower subsidies.
- This would increase costs for users in that region, create inequities across regions and threaten the scheme's continuity.

This paper has two sets of proposals

Changes to funding settings

- We propose to stabilise Total Mobility costs by:
 - reducing the fare subsidy from 75% to 65% from 1 July 2026

- working with public transport authorities to reduce their regional fare caps by around 10 percent
 - using Crown savings from these changes to help reduce local funding shortfalls.
- These changes are projected to reduce the overall funding shortfall from \$236 million down to \$26 million for 2025-2030, while still providing a higher subsidy than before 2022.
- We propose to change the subsidy from July next year, so that Total Mobility users receive adequate notice of the cost increase.
- We recognise that most users are on fixed incomes, so fare increases will be felt, and there will be concerns about this impacting the mobility of people with disabilities. However, these proposals are designed to avoid further subsidy reductions or regional disparities that could arise if the scheme becomes unsustainable.
- We have also proposed to provide up to \$10 million in quick relief to public transport authorities this financial year to keep them fully in the scheme, until the reduced subsidy takes effect from July next year.
- This will be funded half from carry-forward from last year and half from expected savings from the subsidy change. This is a fiscally neutral approach.
- The New Zealand Transport Agency will be tasked with determining how to divvy up this funding among public transport authorities.

Proposals to strengthen the scheme will be consulted on next year

- We also intend to release a discussion document to seek feedback on proposals to target services to people with the greatest need, promote innovation, and address longer-term funding challenges.
- The proposals focus on:
 - Clarifying the scheme's purpose and making eligibility assessments fairer and more consistent
 - Introducing trip caps and targeted support, such as more incentives for wheelchair-accessible vehicles
 - Promoting innovation, including new service providers and a national public transport concession for disabled people.

Next Steps

- We intend to announce Cabinet's decisions in early December.
- This will give local authorities certainty and quick relief this financial year, and Total Mobility users advance notice of changes that will affect them.
- After consultation, we will report back to Cabinet with any further recommendations.

Questions and answers

How much is the overall Total Mobility shortfall, and how did it come about?

- Total Mobility is funded by the Crown, the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and public transport authorities (PTAs). Current Crown funding for 2025-2030 is \$122 million.
- The total projected shortfall over 2025-2030 is \$236 million. The Crown shortfall would be \$43 million, while the PTA and NLTF shortfall would be \$193 million.
- This shortfall is caused by significant increases in demand following the Labour Government halving Total Mobility prices in 2022 (by introducing a Crown subsidy of 25 percent on top of the existing 50 percent).
- Costs have been growing about 8 percent per annum. Without change, costs are expected to continue growing and outstrip funding.

What is the expected shortfall under the proposal changes?

- The proposed changes are expected to reduce costs to all Total Mobility funders.
- For the Crown, this is expected to result in a \$42 million surplus for the current appropriation.
- For the NLTF and PTAs, the shortfall is expected to reduce to \$68m million.
- The proposal to recycle Crown savings to the NLTF and PTAs would reduce the net shortfall to \$26 million over 2025-2030.
- If adopted, the proposals in the Discussion Document are expected to further close the funding gap over the longer term.

What are public transport authorities doing?

- Most PTAs are experiencing cost pressures with several already facing funding shortfalls.
- PTAs have been actively trying to manage their own costs, but some are now publicly considering refusing the Crown subsidy to reduce their own costs. This would result in a nationally inconsistent scheme.
- We're proposing to provide \$10 million relief to PTAs this financial year. This will be funded half from carry-forward from last year and half from expected savings from the subsidy change.
- NZTA will determine how this funding is allocated between PTAs, taking into account factors such as the Total Mobility use in the region, forecast shortfall and any changes public transport authorities have made to their own budget allocation

Who uses Total Mobility?

- In 2024/25, there were 120,000 registered Total Mobility users.
- Around 25 percent are under 65 and with varied impairments. These include physical and sensory disabilities (vision or hearing impairments) and neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or developmental conditions, such as Down syndrome, epilepsy, and schizophrenia.

- The remaining 75 percent are over 65 years old, and include people with age-related impairments that prevent them from using public transport independently.
- Around 1,600 Total Mobility users are under 16 years.

What is Total Mobility used for? Will there be health impacts?

- There are currently no restrictions on the purpose of Total Mobility trips, and data is not collected on the purpose of individual trips. It is used for accessing work, shopping, healthcare, social occasions and education.
- Total Mobility is not inherently a health service. Its purpose is broader than health. Decreasing the subsidy may increase the costs for trips used for health visits, but this is part of broader trade-offs to ensure the scheme continues to operate in a financially sustainable manner.
- The Discussion Document includes a proposal that would cap the number of trips a person could take. One option for this would see more trips provided to, for example, people with higher health needs – allowing it to be more targeted to health, if necessary.

Why announce the decisions months before the public consultation?

- We're proposing to announce Cabinet's decisions in December. This timing is chosen to:
 - give local authorities certainty and quick relief this financial year so that they don't withdraw from the Crown subsidy and leave it uneven across the country
 - give Total Mobility users 6 months' notice of increased costs to a service they rely on.
- Alternate formats of the Discussion Document will be released as they become available to better support the disability community to engage.

What are the key proposals in the Discussion Document?

- There are six proposals in the Discussion Document. The proposals focus on making the scheme stronger for users and funders in the long term.
- The first theme is about clarifying Total Mobility's purpose and making assessment to enter the scheme fairer. We will not change who can get Total Mobility, but we want a clearer purpose statement, and for the process to enter the scheme to be stronger – strengthening evidence requirements and more regular checks that people still qualify for the scheme.
- The second theme is about introducing allocations that are more targeted to need. It looks at ways to increase wheelchair accessible trips and options to limit the number of subsidised trips a user can take:
 - the same number of subsidised trips for everyone, or
 - a lower initial number of subsidised trips that is increased depending on individual need: like work, health or education
- The third theme promotes innovation in how the scheme is delivered. This is about making it easier for ride-hailing like Uber and other forms of transport to meet the needs of Total Mobility users.

Budget Sensitive

Office of the Minister of Transport

Office of the Minister for Disability Issues

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement for changes to the funding of the Total Mobility scheme that subsidises mobility services for people with impairments. These changes include reducing fare subsidies for users from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 to stabilise escalating costs and ensure the ongoing sustainability of the scheme.
- 2 This paper also seeks agreement to release a Total Mobility Discussion Document with proposals to target services to people with the greatest need, promote innovation, and address longer-term funding challenges.

Relation to government priorities

- 3 Relevant priorities are better public services, fiscal responsibility, and ensuring fairer, consistent and more sustainable access to services for people with the greatest need.

Executive Summary

- 4 The Total Mobility scheme (Total Mobility) subsidises taxi fares for people with disabilities that prevent them from using public transport independently. Total Mobility is an important part of our Government's support for better outcomes for disabled people, and for older people with age-related impairments. The scheme is managed by public transport authorities and is funded by the Crown, the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and public transport authorities.¹ Users of the scheme can receive a subsidy of 75 percent on taxi fares.
- 5 Total Mobility's costs have been escalating unsustainably for the Crown, public transport authorities and the NLTF since changes in 2022 increased the fare subsidy from 50 percent to its current 75 percent. The scheme is demand driven, so the higher subsidy and greater use undermine the financial sustainability of the scheme. There is now a risk that some public transport authorities will reject the Crown funding for the scheme, thereby reducing the subsidy rate in their region. This would reduce outcomes for Total Mobility users and create inequitable access across New Zealand.
- 6 We are seeking Cabinet agreement to changes to Total Mobility funding that will substantially stabilise costs over 2025-2030 and aim to strike a balance between ensuring that the scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders (across the

¹ Most public transport authorities are regional councils, but this term also includes some unitary councils with responsibility for public transport, as in Auckland.

Crown, public transport authorities and the NLTF) and minimising the impact on Total Mobility users. The scheme's sustainability and continuity are important for users who rely on the transport services it provides to undertake the activities of their everyday lives.

- 7 The funding changes we propose are to:
 - 7.1 reduce the Total Mobility subsidy level from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent);
 - 7.2 work with public transport authorities to reduce the Total Mobility fare caps by around 10 percent in each region;² and
 - 7.3 use Crown savings from these changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.
- 8 We expect these changes will substantially, although not completely, balance costs and funding over the 2025-2030 period. The changes are expected to reduce the combined funding shortfall from \$236 million to \$26 million. While reducing the subsidy further or earlier would balance costs for all funders, this would have a greater impact on Total Mobility users and provide little notice of changes that would affect disabled people and older people with age-related impairments.
- 9 We also acknowledge that the funding changes will have some impact on Total Mobility users, many of whom are on low or fixed incomes. It will also shift some costs to other government agencies who fund transport-related support.
- 10 We have also identified proposals that could make better use of the Government's resources by ensuring fairer, more consistent and more targeted access to services for people with the greatest need, consistent with Cabinet's approach to stabilise Disability Support Services [SOU-25-MIN-0088 refers].
- 11 We want to consult with the disability community on these proposals and therefore are seeking Cabinet approval to release a Total Mobility Discussion Document on:
 - 11.1 clarifying Total Mobility's purpose and introducing requirements to make assessments fairer and more consistent;
 - 11.2 introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users through capping trips and increasing incentives for wheelchair accessible vehicles; and
 - 11.3 promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered.
- 12 Following analysis of submissions, we will report back to Cabinet in the second half of 2026, including for any additional policy approvals. This timing allows us to take into account the cost impact of the funding changes in paragraph 7 before seeking any further decisions.

² Each region sets its own regional fare caps for Total Mobility subsidies. A Total Mobility user currently pays 25 percent of the fare up to the cap, and then the full amount over that cap.

Background

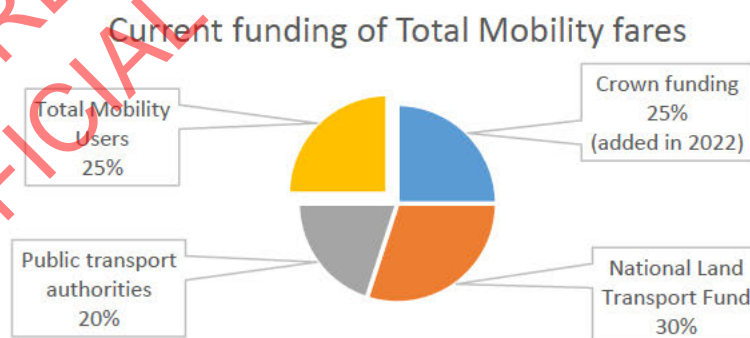
Total Mobility provides subsidised taxi fares for people with disabilities and older people with age-related impairments who cannot use public transport independently

- 13 Total Mobility is a subsidised transport scheme for people who cannot use public transport independently due to an impairment. Under the scheme, eligible users can use taxis with the fare subsidised by 75 percent, up to a regionally set fare cap. Total Mobility is managed by public transport authorities, but the scheme's cost is funded by the Crown, the NLTF and public transport authorities.
- 14 Total Mobility's costs are driven by demand. Once a person is assessed as eligible for Total Mobility, they can use the scheme as much as they want, for whatever purpose they choose, provided they also contribute their portion of the fare. This differs from several other forms of government-funded disability-related transport.³
- 15 There were 120,000 registered Total Mobility users in 2024/25. 25 percent of Total Mobility users are under 65 years old, with varied impairments. These include physical and sensory disabilities (such as vision or hearing impairments) and neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or developmental conditions, such as Down syndrome, epilepsy, and schizophrenia. The remaining 75 percent of Total Mobility users are over 65 years old and include people with mostly age-related impairments.

Total Mobility subsidies were increased from 50 percent to 75 percent in 2022

- 16 Prior to 2022, Total Mobility was funded by the NLTF and public transport authorities and users received a maximum fare subsidy of 50 percent. In 2022, the then Government increased Total Mobility fare subsidies from 50 percent to 75 percent with the addition of Crown funding as a cost of living support. Now, Total Mobility fares are paid 25 percent by the Crown (from general taxation), 30 percent by the NLTF (from fuel excise duty and road user charges), 20 percent by public transport authorities (primarily from rates) and 25 percent by users (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Current funding of Total Mobility fares



³ For example, the Ministry of Social Development's Job and Training Support Fund supports people with disabilities to access work and training and the National Travel Assistance scheme administered by HealthNZ provides assistance for people who travel long distance or travel frequently to attend government-funded specialist appointments.

- 17 Fare subsidies are also limited by regional fare caps set by each public transport authority. A Total Mobility user pays any fare amount over the regional cap. Fare caps range from \$12 in Gisborne to \$80 in Auckland.

Total Mobility costs are escalating unsustainably, risking public transport authorities withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy

- 18 Since the fare subsidy increased from 50 percent to 75 percent, demand for Total Mobility has increased substantially. The higher subsidy has led to both an increase in registered users (increasing from 108,000 in 2022 to 120,000 in 2024/25) and more trips being taken (from 1.8 million trips in 2018 to 3.0 million in 2024/25).
- 19 This has led to costs escalating unsustainably, especially for public transport authorities and the NLTF. Under current settings, costs are forecast to exceed funding available for all funders by \$236 million over the period 2025-2030 (Table 1).

Table 1: Forecast cost and shortfall for Total Mobility funders over 2025-2030

Funder	Forecast cost (\$m)	Funding shortfall (\$m)	NLTF-PTA shortfall (\$m)
Crown contribution	166	43	
National Land Transport Fund	240	116	
Public transport authorities	160	77	193
Total	\$566	\$236	

Some public transport authorities already face substantial cost pressures and are considering fundamental changes to the scheme in their region

- 20 Several public transport authorities exceeded their budgets in the 2024/25 financial year, with more expected to be in this position in the 2025/26 financial year. Many are already exploring options to manage costs within the current settings. Some have asked the Government to return the fare subsidy to 50 percent or are considering not accepting it so they could revert to a 50 percent fare subsidy for their region.
- 21 While this could manage local cost pressures, it would have substantial impacts on Total Mobility users and would create uneven subsidy levels across New Zealand.

Total Mobility funding settings need to ensure financial sustainability, consistency of implementation, and fairness across New Zealand

- 22 Disabled people should receive substantially the same Crown support wherever they live. That is why we want to solve Total Mobility's funding pressures in a way that ensures financial sustainability, consistency of implementation, and fairness across New Zealand (rather than a patchwork of subsidy levels).⁴

⁴ Regional fare caps set by public transport authorities create some differences across the country. These fare caps are the main tool available to public transport authorities to manage costs in their region, and reflect different geographies, urban and rural communities.

We propose reducing the fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent, decreasing regional fare caps by 10 percent and using Crown savings to reduce funding shortfalls

- 23 We propose a combination of changes to stabilise Total Mobility funding pressures:
- 23.1 reducing the fare subsidy level from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026 (by decreasing the Crown's subsidy level from 25 percent to 15 percent);
 - 23.2 working with public transport authorities to reduce regional fare caps by a national equivalent of 10 percent; and
 - 23.3 using Crown savings from the changes in 23.1 and 23.2 to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.
- 24 We expect this combination of changes to substantially, although not completely, balance costs and funding over the 2025-2030 period, reducing the combined funding shortfall from \$236 million to \$26 million (see Table 2).

Table 2: Forecast cost and shortfall for Total Mobility funders over 2025-2030 under proposed changes

Funder	Forecast cost (\$m)	Funding shortfall (\$m)	NLTF-PTA shortfall (\$m)
Crown contribution	79	(42)	
National Land Transport Fund	165	41	68
Public transport authorities	110	27	
Total	354	26	

- 25 While these changes will increase fares for Total Mobility users, they will still receive a 65 percent subsidy, higher than the 50 percent fare subsidy before 2022. Crucially, this will also provide certainty that Total Mobility will continue in a financially sustainable and nationally consistent manner, which we have also heard is important to the disability community.
- 26 While reducing the fare subsidy rate further or earlier would balance costs to all funders, this would have a greater impact on Total Mobility users and, if reduced earlier, provide little notice of changes that would significantly affect disabled people and older people with age-related impairments.
- 27 We do not propose these changes as a cost saving measure for the Crown. Instead, we propose that the reduced Crown expenditure on fare subsidies is used to reduce public transport authorities' shortfalls. We propose an initial allocation of \$10 million be made available for 2025/26, composed of approximately \$5 million underspend carried forward from 2024/25 and bringing forward forecast underspend from 2026/27 from when the subsidy fare changes have taken effect.
- 28 This support to public transport authorities will be implemented in the 2025/26 financial year, which will ensure quick relief to public transport authorities until the subsidy changes take effect from next financial year.

We consider Total Mobility can be improved by greater national consistency, more targeted support, and greater innovation in transport services provided

We propose to consult on proposals to improve the Total Mobility scheme

- 29 While the above decisions will substantially stabilise costs pressures for Total Mobility, we also believe Total Mobility can be improved to ensure fairer, consistent and more sustainable access to services for people with the greatest need. We propose to release a Total Mobility Discussion Document to seek views on proposals to improve the scheme under three themes.
- 30 Theme 1 is ‘Clarifying Total Mobility’s purpose and introducing requirements to make assessments fairer and more consistent’. Under this theme, we will consult on proposals that would:
- 30.1 set a clear purpose for Total Mobility;
 - 30.2 increase evidence requirements as part of Total Mobility assessments; and
 - 30.3 introduce periodic reassessments.
- 31 Theme 2 is ‘Introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users’. Under this theme, we will consult on proposals that would:
- 31.1 introduce trip number entitlements; and
 - 31.2 increase incentives for wheelchair hoist vehicles and trips.
- 32 Introducing trip number entitlements would change the demand-driven model of Total Mobility and create a new constraint on the support being provided by the Government. We are proposing to consult on either introducing a flat cap that would apply to all Total Mobility users or alternatively a base trip allocation for all users supplemented by more trips based on need (employment, education, health, etc).
- 33 While introducing trip number entitlements is likely to have the greatest impact on users of Total Mobility, we consider this is an appropriate change to consult on as it reflects that there are limits to what it is reasonable for the Government to fund while being fiscally responsible and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the scheme.
- 34 Theme 3 is ‘Promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered’. Under this theme, we will consult on proposals that would:
- 34.1 enable new Total Mobility service providers to enter the scheme; and
 - 34.2 introduce a national public transport concession for disabled people.
- 35 The way Total Mobility has provided transport services has remained largely the same since the scheme began in the 1980s, despite innovations such as ride-hail services and successful trials of on-demand public transport. It is important, however, that these services remain safe and dignified for Total Mobility users and the consultation will focus on what is necessary to achieve this.

- 36 Currently, a public transport concession for disabled people is only available in some regions. This both creates national inconsistency in support available for disabled people, and we have heard contributes to greater demand for Total Mobility that could actually be served by public transport. This would need to be funded, but, if effective, would shift costs to more cost efficient, existing public transport services.

Implementation

- 37 The funding proposals in this paper will be implemented in the following stages:
- 37.1 a new category will be established in the Public Transport Concessions multi-category appropriation for “Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall” in the 2025/26 financial year. The NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) will be responsible for determining how best to allocate this funding among public transport authorities in this financial year, taking into account factors such as the Total Mobility use in the region, forecast shortfall and any changes public transport authorities have made to their own budget allocations; and
- 37.2 from 1 July 2026, the fare subsidy will be reduced from 75 percent to 65 percent. NZTA will also work with public transport authorities to reduce regional fare caps by 10 percent by that date.
- 38 Following public consultation on the proposals in the Total Mobility Discussion Document, we will report back to Cabinet by the middle of 2026, including for any additional policy approvals depending on the feedback received. This timing allows us to take into account the cost impact of the funding changes before taking any further policy decisions.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 39 Most Total Mobility users rely on some form of government financial support as their primary source of income, particularly New Zealand Superannuation, meaning they have limited transport budgets.
- 40 From 1 July 2026, Total Mobility users will face increased fares when the fare subsidy decreases from 75 percent to 65 percent and regional fare caps decrease. For example, under current settings a Total Mobility user would pay \$10 out of a \$40 taxi fare (with the Crown, NLTF and public transport authorities paying \$30). Under the new settings, a Total Mobility user would pay \$14 and the other funders \$26.

Financial Implications

- 41 The Crown subsidy for Total Mobility comes from a larger budget provided for the wider Community Connect programme (which includes half-price fares for Community Services cardholders). Following changes to the programme in 2024, the Community Connect programme has ongoing funding of \$36.547 million per annum. This funding is provided via the Public Transport Concessions Multi-Category Appropriation (MCA) in Vote Transport and is currently allocated across programme components per the table overleaf.

Public Transport Concessions MCA	\$ millions
Administration	0.212
Community Service cardholders	12.000
Total Mobility	24.000
Total	36.547

- 42 Funding for the programme in 2025/26 is higher – \$41.760 million – due to additional funding carried forward from 2024/25 to manage cost pressures, including adjustments submitted as part of the October Baseline Update.
- 43 Under current settings, this ongoing funding is not likely to be sufficient to meet the Crown's obligations for the programme out to 2030. This Cabinet paper proposes changes to reduce the expected cost of the Crown's contribution to Total Mobility. With these changes, surplus funding of \$43 million is expected for Total Mobility within the MCA across 2025-2030. After 2029/30, further changes may be required.
- 44 These changes will also reduce costs for funding partners – the NLTF and public transport authorities – bringing their cumulative forecast funding gap to 2029/30 down from \$193 million to \$68 million. This should be sufficient to address the local share shortfall and any cost pressures relating to the Community Services card concession which is also within the MCA. To ensure funding sustainability for Total Mobility, this paper proposes to enable NZTA to use surplus funding within the MCA to support public transport authorities facing acute cost pressures.
- 45 The Minister of Transport has consulted the Minister of Finance on the addition of a new category to the MCA – “Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall” – to enable this. NZTA will be delegated authority to allocate funding under this category provided that the Crown's obligations under the Community Connect programme (inclusive of local fare shortfall if any) do not exceed funding available for this purpose within the *Public Transport Concessions MCA*.
- 46 The reduction in the fare subsidy will create some cost shifting from Total Mobility to other Government support, for example, greater demand for transport-related support and funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development, as a result.

Legislative Implications

- 47 There are no legislative implications from this paper.

Impact Analysis

- 48 A Regulatory Impact Statement and a Climate Implications of Policy Assessment are not required for the proposals in this paper.

Population Implications

- 49 Eligible Total Mobility users will be impacted by this paper's proposals. Reducing the fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent and decreasing regional fare caps will increase fares for Total Mobility users. Disabled people tend to earn less than non-disabled people so the increase in Total Mobility fares will have a substantial

financial effect on disabled people. However, these changes will provide certainty on the financial sustainability and therefore continuity of Total Mobility. They will also avoid public transport authorities withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy, which would increase fares more than our proposals and create regional differences.

- 50 Women are around 60 percent of Total Mobility users and around 75 percent of Total Mobility users are over 65 with age-related impairments, meaning these groups will likely be disproportionately affected by the changes in this paper. Around 1,600 Total Mobility users are under 16 years. There is insufficient data on how many Total Mobility users are Māori or Pacific People, but according to the 2023 Stats NZ Disability Survey, 21 percent of the Māori population and 16 percent of Pacific peoples are disabled, compared to 17 percent of all New Zealanders, suggesting that Māori may be disproportionately affected by the changes in this paper.

Human Rights

- 51 These proposals are not inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

52

s 9(2)(h)

53

Use of External Resources

- 54 No external resources were used in preparing this Cabinet paper. Some external resources will be used to prepare accessible versions of the Total Mobility Discussion Document to facilitate accessible public consultation with the disability community.

Consultation

- 55 The Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha prepared this paper. Agencies consulted: Accident Compensation Corporation, Department of Internal Affairs, Health New Zealand, New Zealand Transport Agency, Te Puni Kōkiri, The Treasury and the Ministries of Children, Culture and Heritage, Education, Ethnic Communities, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Health, Pacific Peoples, Primary Industries (Office for the Rural Communities), Social Development (including the Office for Seniors), Women, and Youth Development. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet was informed.
- 56 Some agencies noted this paper strikes an appropriate balance between costs to the Crown and the impact on users of Total Mobility. Some agencies also raised that the funding changes and Discussion Document proposals could negatively impact access

to health services, rural communities, specific groups of users, or restrict trips taken for social purposes that contribute to quality of life.

- 57 Targeted engagement took place with Auckland Transport, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Otago Regional Council about the proposals relating to funding, reflecting public transport authorities with high Total Mobility use or substantial funding shortfalls.

Communications

- 58 We intend to announce Cabinet's decisions in early December 2025.
- 59 Announcing the funding settings decisions in December 2025 will provide Total Mobility users at least six months' notice of changes that will affect their access to transport. It will also give public transport authorities certainty of the changes to stabilise costs and that Crown savings from the funding changes will be used to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall this financial year. This will support public transport authorities to remain in the scheme until subsidy changes take effect from 1 July 2026.
- 60 We intend to release the Total Mobility Discussion Document in parallel. We will ensure alternate formats of the Total Mobility Discussion Document are made available during the consultation period to ensure the consultation is accessible for all members of the disability sector.

Proactive Release

- 61 We intend to proactively release this paper and the relevant minutes when we commence consultation on the discussion document. Alternate formats will be published as they become available.

Recommendations

The Minister of Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues recommend that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that, since the 2023 decision to make the 75 percent subsidy for Total Mobility fares permanent [CAB-23-MIN-0009 refers], increased demand for Total Mobility has led to escalating costs, which are forecast to result in a funding shortfall for the Crown of \$43 million over 2025-2030, and for public transport authorities and the National Land Transport Fund of \$193 million;
- 2 **note** this has created a risk of some public transport authorities withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy for Total Mobility, which would result in a 50 percent subsidy for Total Mobility users in some regions;
- 3 **note** that the combination of decreasing the overall subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent along with public transport authorities reducing regional fare caps by an average of 10 percent is forecast to reduce demand and result in Crown underspend of \$42 million and reduce the funding shortfall for public transport authorities and the National Land Transport Fund to \$68 million;

- 4 **agree** to reduce the Total Mobility fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent by decreasing the Crown fare contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent;
- 5 **note** that the Minister of Finance and Minister of Transport have agreed to add the following category to the multi-category appropriation “Public Transport Concessions”:

Title	Type	Scope
Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall	Non-departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing Crown funding to Public Transport Authorities to reduce local share funding shortfall to deliver the Total Mobility scheme.

- 6 **note** that funding appropriated in the ‘Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall’ category will be used to cover a portion of funding shortfall reported by public transport authorities, to support the ongoing operation of Total Mobility;
- 7 **authorise** the New Zealand Transport Agency to determine that amount of funding to be charged to the Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall category, subject to recommendation 9 below, and how it is allocated to public transport authorities;
- 8 **agree** that the amount charged to Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall for any financial year shall be limited to surplus funding remaining after accounting for the Crown’s obligations to Total Mobility concessions and Community Service cardholders within the Community Connect programme;
- 9 **note** that, based on conservative estimates, the NZ Transport Agency is forecasting surplus Crown funding for 2025/26 of \$5 million, and for 2026/27 of \$14 million based on the proposals in this paper;
- 10 **approve** the following fiscally neutral adjustment to provide for an initial allocation of funding to public transport authorities for 2025/26 with no impact on the operating balance or net core Crown debt:

Vote Transport Minister of Transport	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/ 28	2028/29	2029/30 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Public Transport Concessions MCA					
Non-departmental Other Expense:					
Total Mobility Services Concessions	(5.000)	(5.000)	-	-	-
Non-departmental Other Expense:					
Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall	10.000				

- 11 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2025/26 above be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;

- 12 **note** that the New Zealand Transport Agency will also work with public transport authorities to achieve an overall 10 percent reduction in regional fare caps;
- 13 **note** that the intent of the decisions taken is to best manage scheme costs up to and including 2029/30, giving regard to total funding available to the Community Connect programme;
- 14 **note** that given the demand-based nature of Community Connect expenditure and the need for conservatism in allocation towards local share, it is expected that there will be unspent funding within the Public Transport Concessions MCA at the end of each financial year;
- 15 **authorise** the Minister of Finance and Minister of Transport to make changes to appropriations to adjust the profile of funding between fiscal years, including agreeing to carry forward unspent funding for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 after the completion of each financial year;
- 16 **note** that we have prepared a draft Total Mobility Discussion Document to:
- 16.1 set out Cabinet's decisions to stabilise cost pressures in recommendations 4 to 8; and
 - 16.2 seek feedback on:
 - 16.2.1 clarifying Total Mobility's purpose and introduce requirements to make assessments fairer and more consistent
 - 16.2.2 introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users through capping trips and increasing incentives for wheelchair accessible vehicles
 - 16.2.3 promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered;
- 17 **approve** release of the Total Mobility Discussion Document for public consultation;
- 18 **authorise** the Minister of Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues to approve minor changes to the discussion document arising from editing and formatting, including the preparation of accessible formats;
- 19 **note** that the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues will report back to Cabinet in the second half of 2026, including for any additional policy approvals.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Disability Issues

Annex 1: Total Mobility Discussion Document

Refer to document 6 for treatment of Annex 1

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982



Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising Cost Pressures and Approval to Undertake Public Consultation on Long-term Proposals

Portfolio Transport / Disability Issues

On 12 November 2025, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee:

- 1 **noted** that, since the 2023 decision to make the 75 percent subsidy for Total Mobility fares permanent [CAB-23-MIN-0009], increased demand for Total Mobility has led to escalating costs, which are forecast to result in a funding shortfall for the Crown of \$43 million over 2025-2030, and for public transport authorities and the National Land Transport Fund of \$193 million;
- 2 **noted** that this has created a risk of some public transport authorities withdrawing from accepting the Crown subsidy for Total Mobility, which would result in a 50 percent subsidy for Total Mobility users in some regions;
- 3 **noted** that the combination of decreasing the overall subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent along with public transport authorities reducing regional fare caps by an average of 10 percent is forecast to reduce demand and result in Crown underspend of \$42 million and reduce the funding shortfall for public transport authorities and the National Land Transport Fund to \$68 million;
- 4 **agreed** to reduce the Total Mobility fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent by decreasing the Crown fare contribution from 25 percent to 15 percent;
- 5 **noted** that the Minister of Finance and Minister of Transport have agreed to add the following category to the multi-category appropriation "Public Transport Concessions":

Title	Type	Scope
Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall	Non-departmental Other Expense	This category is limited to providing Crown funding to Public Transport Authorities to reduce local share funding shortfall to deliver the Total Mobility scheme.

- 6 **noted** that funding appropriated in the "Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall" category will be used to cover a portion of funding shortfall reported by public transport authorities, to support the ongoing operation of Total Mobility;
- 7 **authorised** the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to determine the amount of funding to be charged to the "Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall" category, subject to paragraph 9 below, and how it is allocated to public transport authorities;

- 8 **agreed** that the amount charged to “Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall” for any financial year shall be limited to surplus funding remaining after accounting for the Crown’s obligations to Total Mobility concessions and Community Service cardholders within the Community Connect programme;
- 9 **noted** that, based on conservative estimates, NZTA is forecasting surplus Crown funding for 2025/26 of \$5 million, and for 2026/27 of \$14 million based on the proposals in the paper under SOU-25-SUB-0159;
- 10 **approved** the following fiscally neutral adjustment to provide for an initial allocation of funding to public transport authorities for 2025/26, with no impact on the operating balance or net core Crown debt:

Vote Transport Minister of Transport	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Public Transport Concessions MCA					
Non-departmental Other Expense: Total Mobility Services Concessions	(5.000)	(5.000)	-	-	-
Non-departmental Other Expense: Total Mobility Scheme Local Share Funding Shortfall	10.000				

- 11 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2025/26 above be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;
- 12 **noted** that NZTA will also work with public transport authorities to achieve an overall 10 percent reduction in regional fare caps;
- 13 **noted** that the intent of the decisions taken is to best manage scheme costs up to and including 2029/30, having regard to total funding available to the Community Connect programme;
- 14 **noted** that given the demand-based nature of Community Connect expenditure and the need for conservatism in allocation towards local share, it is expected that there will be unspent funding within the Public Transport Concessions MCA at the end of each financial year;
- 15 **authorised** the Minister of Finance and Minister of Transport to make changes to appropriations to adjust the profile of funding between fiscal years, including agreeing to carry forward unspent funding for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 after the completion of each financial year;
- 16 **noted** that a draft Total Mobility Discussion Document has been prepared, attached under SOU-25-SUB-0159, to:
- 16.1 set out Cabinet’s decisions to stabilise cost pressures in paragraphs 4 to 8 above; and
- 16.2 seek feedback on:
- 16.2.1 clarifying Total Mobility’s purpose and introduce requirements to make assessments fairer and more consistent;

- 16.2.2 introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility users through capping trips and increasing incentives for wheelchair accessible vehicles;
- 16.2.3 promoting innovation in how Total Mobility is delivered;
- 17 **approved** the release of the Total Mobility Discussion Document for public consultation;
- 18 **authorised** the Minister of Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues to approve minor changes to the discussion document arising from editing and formatting, including the preparation of accessible formats;
- 19 **noted** that the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Disability Issues will report back to Cabinet in the second half of 2026, including for any additional policy approvals.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Louise Upston (Chair)
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Matt Doocey
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Karen Chhour
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Scott Simpson

Officials present from:

Office of the Minister of Health
Office of the Minister of Transport
Ministry of Transport
Officials Committee for SOU



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Report of the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee: Period Ended 14 November 2025

On 17 November 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee for the period ended 14 November 2025:

Out of Scope

SOU-25-MIN-0159

Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising Cost Pressures and Approval to Undertake Public Consultation on Long-term Proposals
Portfolios: Transport / Disability Issues

CONFIRMED

Out of Scope

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Monday, 15 December 2025 4:58 pm
To: Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam; Ministers Office
Subject: Total Mobility - Information on funding pressures provided to Whaikaha

Hi Emma

I'm passing on to you some information that we provided last Friday to Whaikaha at the request of Minister Upston. She wanted some more information about why PTAs were facing cost pressures (and what they've done about it). Happy to take any questions if you have any.

Warm regards

Danny

What has created cost pressures for public transport authorities?

- Public transport authorities (PTAs) pay 20% of Total Mobility fares in their region (the National Land Transport Fund pays 30%).
- In the period up to 2022, Total Mobility costs were rising around **2% a year**.
- In 2022, the fare subsidy increased from 50% to 75% because the Crown began paying an additional 25% subsidy.
- Since this change, Total Mobility user numbers increased, and trips increased as the scheme became more attractive.
- Costs significantly rose, increasing by around **8% per year**. This has pressured PTAs' budgets, which are primarily funded by local rates.
- PTAs are under pressure from multiple directions to limit rates increases.
- Seven PTAs were forecasted to funding shortfalls in 2024/25: Auckland, Canterbury, Wellington, Otago, Invercargill, Bay of Plenty and Marlborough. More are expected to be in this position in 2025/26.

The Total Mobility Review covers sustainable funding but has taken longer than expected

- A review of Total Mobility was started in 2023 and the scope included sustainable funding of the scheme. The Review was to be completed by March 2025 but has taken longer than expected.
- There was an expectation among some PTAs that the Total Mobility Review would have resolved their funding pressures by now.

Councils are now trying to manage costs in different ways

- The Otago Regional Council has considered reducing its regional fare cap from \$50 to \$25 (the maximum fare that can receive a subsidy) and limiting annual trips to 180 per person. On 9 December 2025, the ORC decided to wait on guidance from the Ministry of Transport before taking any actions itself.
- Invercargill City Council (ICC) has considered limiting trips to 30 trips per month per person ^{s 9(2)(ba)(i)}
- Other PTAs are also considering ways to reduce costs although we're not aware of formal steps to do so.
- Note, **PTAs are not wanting to entirely withdraw from Total Mobility** – some want to withdraw only from the Crown's additional 25% subsidy (introduced in 2022) and return to the pre-2022 fare subsidy of 50%.

Is the rates cap proposal a contributing factor?

- Rates caps are being consulted on, and no decisions have been made, so the impact on Public Transport Authorities is currently unknown.
- NZTA have advised that there have not been any specific discussions with PTAs on the recent rates caps announcement and how it aligns to Total Mobility.
- The Total Mobility public consultation will be open to PTAs. The Ministry of Transport are leading a targeted session with PTAs about the Total Mobility proposals in February 2026.

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: ^{s 9(2)(a)} | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz

My working days are Monday-Thursday.



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

Harry Atkins

From: Danny Eyre
Sent: Thursday, 26 February 2026 2:08 pm
To: Ministers Office; Emma Wardle (Parliament)
Cc: OCU; Marian Willberg; Whitney Adam
Subject: ATTN Emma: OC260048 Meeting with Blake Forbes about Total Mobility
Attachments: OC260048 Meeting with Blake Forbes about Total Mobility.pdf; OC260048 Meeting with Blake Forbes regarding Total Mobility - Briefing - Meeting.docx

Kia ora Emma

Please find attached a briefing for Minister Bishop's meeting with Blake Forbes on 5 March. Marian will attend the meeting for MOT.

Warm regards

Danny

Danny Eyre ([he / his / Mr](#))

Kaitohutohu Mātāmua | Principal Adviser
Maritime, Freight & Access

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: s 9(2)(a) | E: d.eyre@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz

My working days are Monday-Thursday.



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
Enabling New Zealanders to flourish



26 February 2026

OC260048

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport

MEETING WITH BLAKE FORBES ABOUT TOTAL MOBILITY

Snapshot

You are meeting with Blake Forbes, a disability advocate and freelance journalist, to discuss the Total Mobility scheme. Blake may be accompanied by a support person, Nick Ruane, who is also a disability advocate.

Time and date	11.00-11:30am, 5 March 2025
Venue	Minister's Office, Room 6.3, Executive Wing
Attendees	Blake Forbes (and potentially Nick Ruane, a support person)
Officials attending	Marian Willberg
Agenda	The future of the Total Mobility scheme

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Marian Willberg, Manager – Maritime, Freight and Access	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Whitney Adam, Senior Advisor – Maritime, Freight and Access		

MEETING WITH BLAKE FORBES ABOUT TOTAL MOBILITY

Key points

- You are meeting with Blake Forbes, a disability advocate and freelance journalist, to discuss the future of the Total Mobility scheme. Blake strongly supports Total Mobility and publicly criticised last year's funding changes in mainstream media. He also promoted a recent petition to Parliament calling for increased funding for the scheme.
- You could explain the Government's changes to the funding settings by noting that Total Mobility is a demand-driven scheme, with costs rising unsustainably in recent years, and some public transport authorities were increasingly considering rejecting the Crown subsidy.
- You may wish to emphasise that the Government sought to strike a balance between minimising impacts on disabled people and ensuring Total Mobility remains sustainable over the long term.
- You could also note that consultation is open until 22 March 2026 on six proposals to strengthen the Total Mobility scheme and encourage Blake to submit feedback.
- Blake may be accompanied by Nick Ruane as a support person. Nick is a disability advocate and initiated the recent petition to increase Total Mobility funding.

Blake Forbes requested to meet with you after the Total Mobility funding changes were announced last year

- 1 Blake Forbes is a Total Mobility user and has described it as a "very important lifeline to the disability community". He wants to discuss with you the future of Total Mobility, in particular the decision to reduce the subsidy for Total Mobility users. His criticisms of the Government's changes to Total Mobility funding settings were covered in media reporting last year. He is likely to advocate for more funding for Total Mobility.

Why changes to Total Mobility funding were required

- 2 You may like to underline Total Mobility is an important part of the Government's support for better outcomes for disabled people, and for older people with age-related impairments. However, for Total Mobility to continue to be a reliable support for New Zealanders into the future, it needs to be funded sustainably. The scheme was at risk due to:
 - 2.1 costs having risen rapidly since the 2022 subsidy increase from 50% to 75%
 - 2.2 public transport authorities being under increasing cost pressure, with some increasingly considering rejecting the Crown's subsidy and reverting back to a 50% subsidy in their region. This would result in different subsidy levels between regions.
- 3 This led the Government to stabilise Total Mobility's funding settings by:
 - 3.1 reducing the Total Mobility fare subsidy level from 75% to 65%, starting 1 July 2026
 - 3.2 working with public transport authorities to lower the fare caps by about 10%

- 3.3 providing up to \$10 million in quick relief to public transport authorities this financial year to keep them fully in the scheme, until the reduced subsidy takes effect from July next year.
- 4 You may like to stress that this decision sought to strike a balance between ensuring Total Mobility is affordable and sustainable for all funders, while minimising the impact on Total Mobility users. Of note, the subsidy will still be higher than pre-2022 (which was 50%) and Total Mobility users have more than six months' notice of changes to the scheme.
- 5 You may like to note that the Government recognises that most users are on fixed incomes, so fare increases will be felt, and there will be concerns about this impacting the mobility of people with disabilities. However, these proposals are designed to avoid further subsidy reductions or regional disparities that could arise if the scheme becomes unsustainable.
- 6 Blake may advocate for the Government to increase funding for Total Mobility. You may like to share that, as part of Budget 2025, the Government increased Total Mobility funding from \$12m to \$24m per annum (by reallocating funding from the Community Services Cardholders' public transport concessions, part of the same appropriation). This increase was not widely publicised, so may be news to Blake. However, the projected funding shortfall across all funders over the next five years was \$236m; a substantial amount to fund.

You may like to encourage Blake to submit on the Total Mobility public consultation

- 7 The Government is also consulting on six proposals to strengthen Total Mobility. You may like to encourage Blake to submit on this consultation which will close on 22 March 2026. Any detailed feedback should be referred to the Ministry.

Blake comments widely on disability issues and may raise broader transport issues

- 8 Blake is an active public advocate on disability issues through *The BFG Podcast* and Facebook. Blake may raise that his Facebook account was closed by Facebook in November 2025, which he has speculated was linked to his political advocacy. At the time, your office advised media that neither you nor your office were involved in the removal of his account.
- 9 Blake is also running a petition to retain the Ministry of Disabled People's current role and Enabling Good Lives model. The petition closes on 28 February 2026. In the petition, Blake raises concerns about the lack of consultation on decisions relating to Disability Support Services. In August 2024, Disability Support Services was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development.
- 10 Blake may also raise broader transport issues commonly raised by disabled people, including:
- transport costs as a barrier to accessing services and community life
 - limited availability of accessible public transport and wheelchair-accessible vehicles
 - transport workforce capability affecting accessibility
 - an inaccessible built environment making transport harder to use
 - the absence of transport as a focus area in the New Zealand Disability Strategy released in late 2025.

- 11 You could note that some of these issues are being considered through the Total Mobility consultation, including options such as a public transport concession for disabled people and incentives for wheelchair-accessible vehicles.
- 12 You could also highlight that transport is one of priority four areas under Whaikaha's accessibility work programme, informed by its Accessibility Advisory Group.

Blake may be accompanied by Nick Ruane, who is also a disability advocate

- 13 Nick Ruane is a vocal disability advocate and author of the petition to increase funding for Total Mobility. The petition received 1,891 signatures and was presented to Parliament on 9 December 2025. It has been referred to you for a response, which must be presented to the House by 12 May 2026. The Ministry will provide a draft response by 15 April 2026.

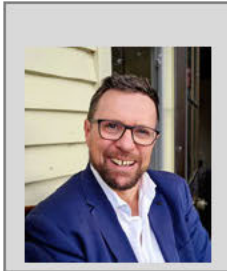
RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Biographies



Blake Forbes

Blake Forbes is a disability advocate and freelance journalist. Blake hosts the *Behind the Walls* and *The BFG* podcast, which comment on disability issues. Blake publicly identifies as part of the disability community and has spastic cerebral palsy and ADHD. He is a member of the New Zealand Labour Party.

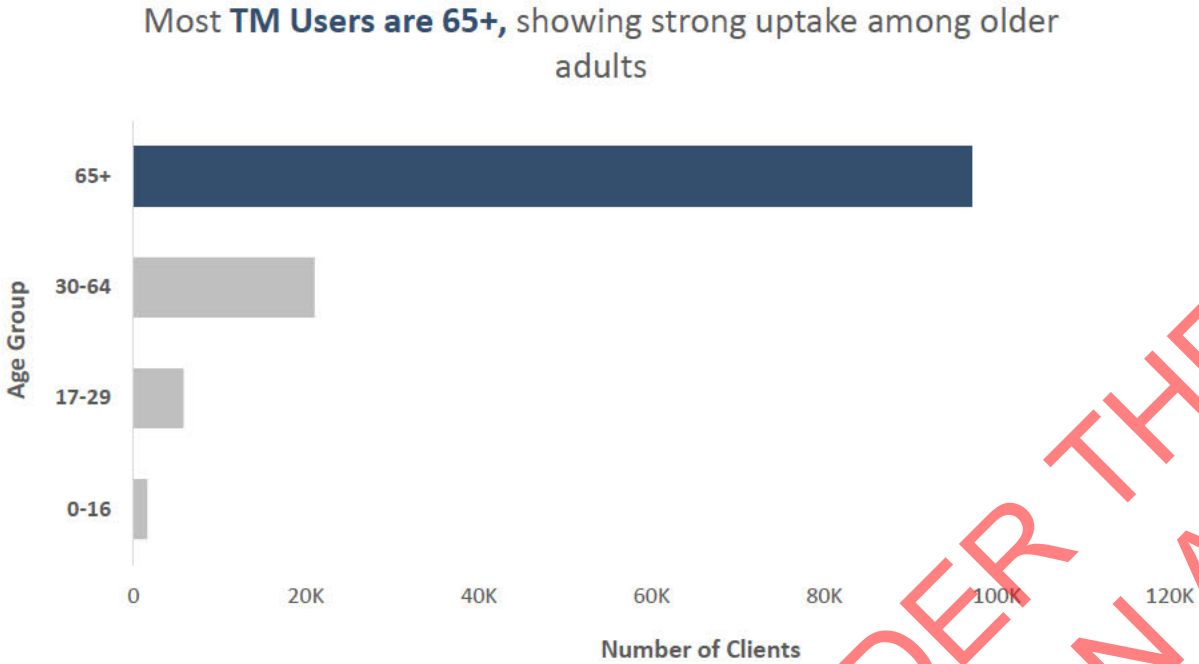


Nick Ruane (support person)

Nick Ruane is a disability advocate and a member of the National Executive Committee for the Disabled Persons Assembly. He is chair of Whaikaha's Accessibility Advisory Group and a board member of the New Zealand Riding for the Disabled Association. Nick is a member of the New Zealand Labour Party and was a Labour Party list candidate for the 2023 General Election.

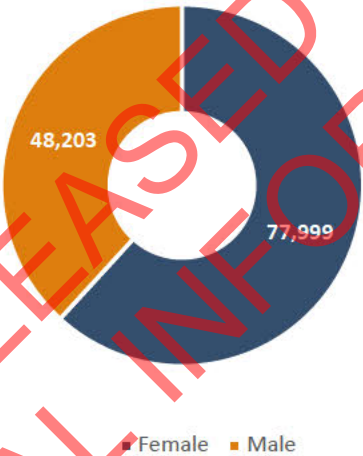
RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Age Group	Clients
0-16	1,608
17-29	5,836
30-64	21,011
65+	97,126



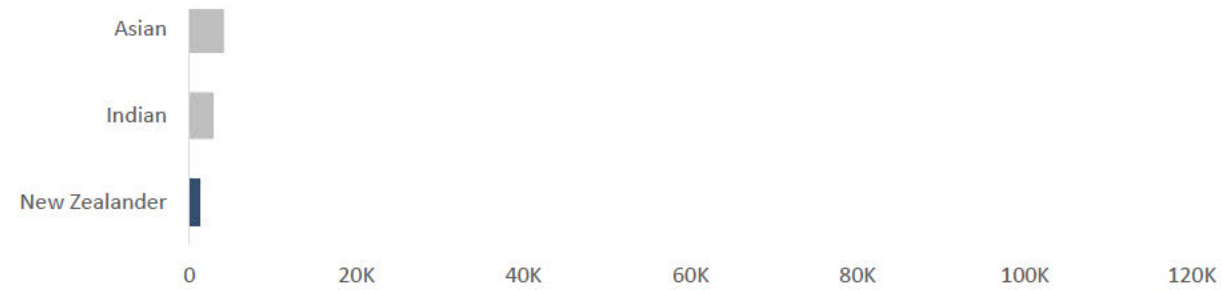
Gender	Clients
Female	77,999
Male	48,203

Females make up the majority of Total Mobility users



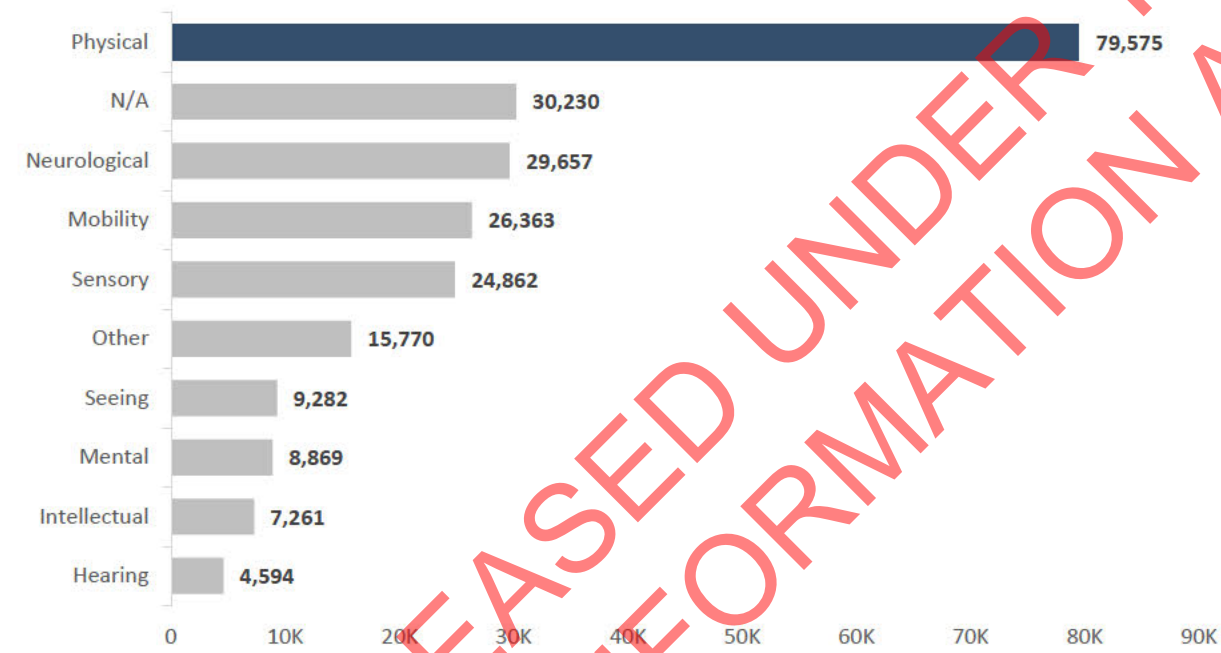
Ethnicity	Clients
New Zealander	1,300
Indian	2,880
Asian	4,158
Maori	8,527
Other	113,425





Impairment	Clients
Hearing	4,594
Intellectual	7,261
Mental	8,869
Seeing	9,282
Other	15,770
Sensory	24,862
Mobility	26,363
Neurological	29,657
N/A	30,230
Physical	79,575

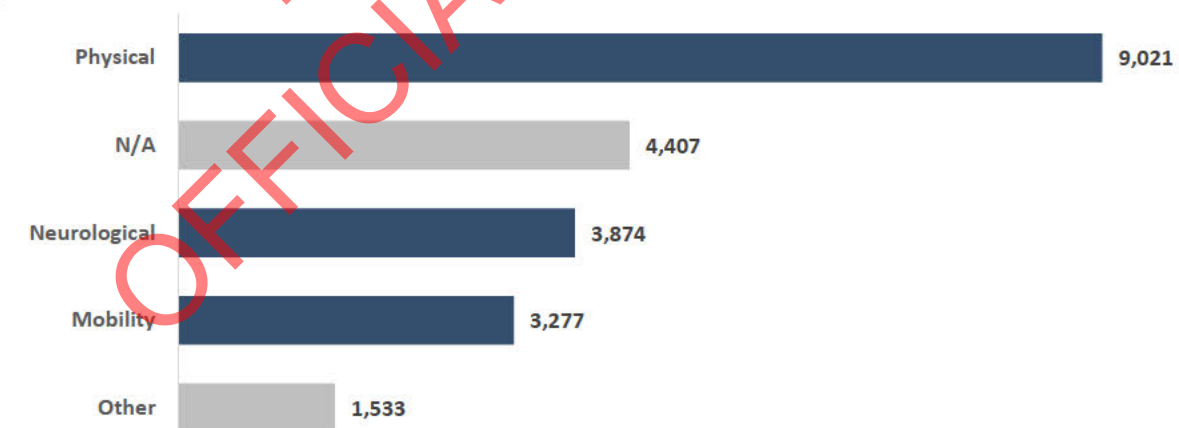
Physical Impairments are the most commonly reported among TM users



WAV Required	Yes
--------------	-----

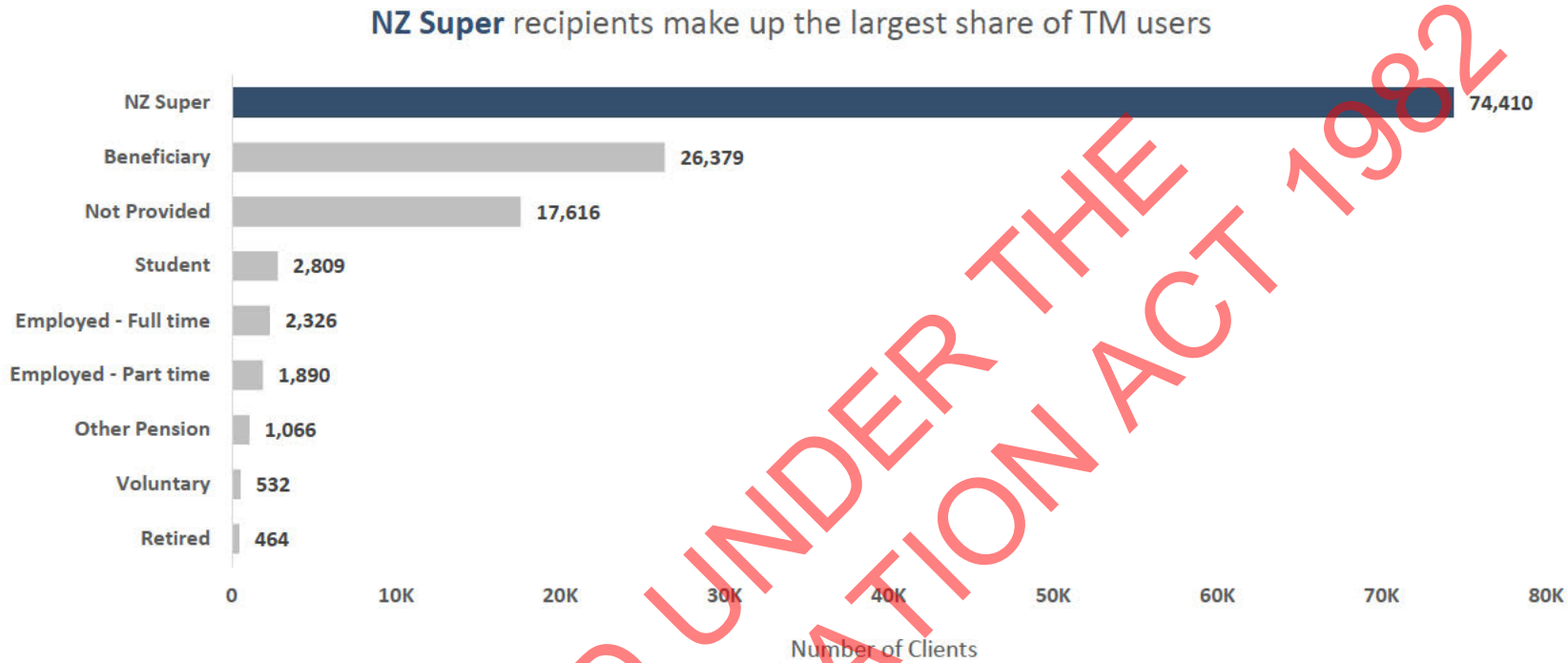
Impairment	Clients
Other	1,533
Mobility	3,277
Neurological	3,874
N/A	4,407
Physical	9,021

Clients with physical, neurological, or mobility impairments are the most likely to require a wheelchair-accessible vehicle





Income Source	Clients
Retired	464
Voluntary	532
Other Pension	1,066
Employed - Part time	1,890
Employed - Full time	2,326
Student	2,809
Not Provided	17,616
Beneficiary	26,379
NZ Super	74,410



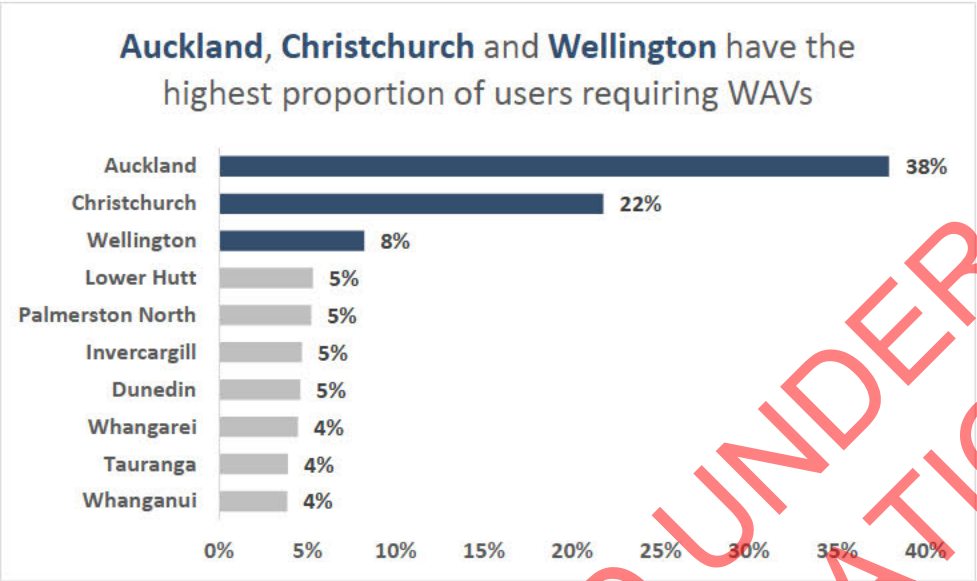
Impairment patterns vary significantly by age group. Older adults (65+) predominantly report conditions like dementia, hearing loss, Parkinson's, and physical impairments. In contrast, younger adults (30-64) show higher proportions of neurological conditions such as schizophrenia, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis. Among younger clients, intellectual and developmental conditions like Down syndrome, Willi syndrome, and dyslexia are more common.

Distinct Count of Index Impairments	Age Groups			
	0-16	17-29	30-64	65+
Mobility	0.6%	1.5%	13.8%	84.1%
Neurological	1.8%	6.3%	21.8%	70.1%
Physical	0.9%	2.4%	16.2%	80.6%
Sensory	1.8%	4.8%	14.5%	78.9%
Anxiety	2.8%	11.0%	29.3%	56.9%
Dementia	0.0%	0.1%	4.8%	95.1%
Down Syndrome	16.1%	44.8%	36.8%	2.3%
Dyslexia	18.3%	33.3%	26.7%	21.7%
Epilepsy	3.7%	24.1%	50.9%	21.3%
Fragilex	1.3%	3.6%	14.7%	80.4%
Hearing	0.6%	2.0%	6.3%	91.2%
Intellectual	12.1%	37.6%	33.7%	16.7%
Mental	2.6%	10.9%	35.8%	50.7%

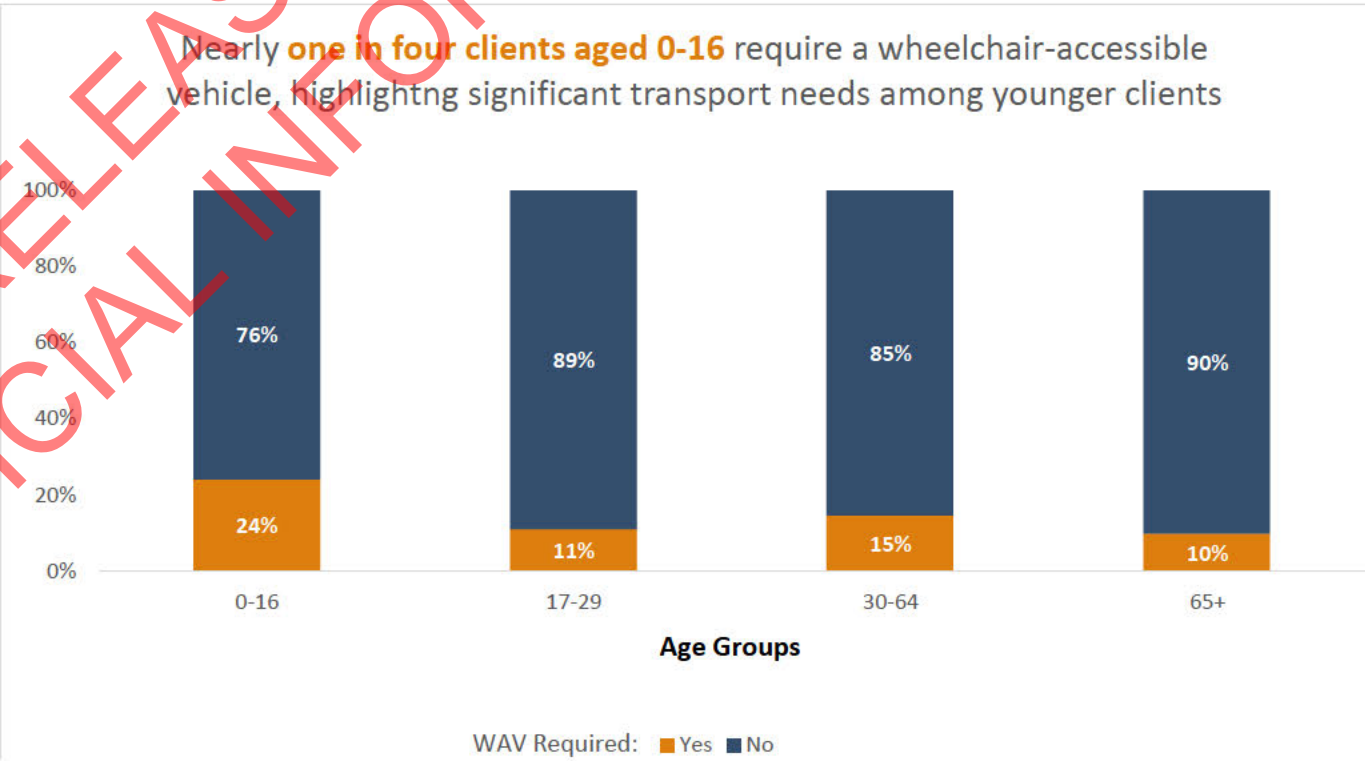
Multiple Sclerosis	0.0%	2.6%	54.0%	43.5%
Parkinson	0.0%	0.1%	8.7%	91.2%
Schizophrenia	0.0%	6.2%	66.8%	27.0%
Seeing	0.9%	2.2%	12.4%	84.4%
Stroke	0.2%	0.4%	20.1%	79.3%
Willi Syndrome	11.1%	55.6%	33.3%	0.0%

WAV Required	Yes
--------------	-----

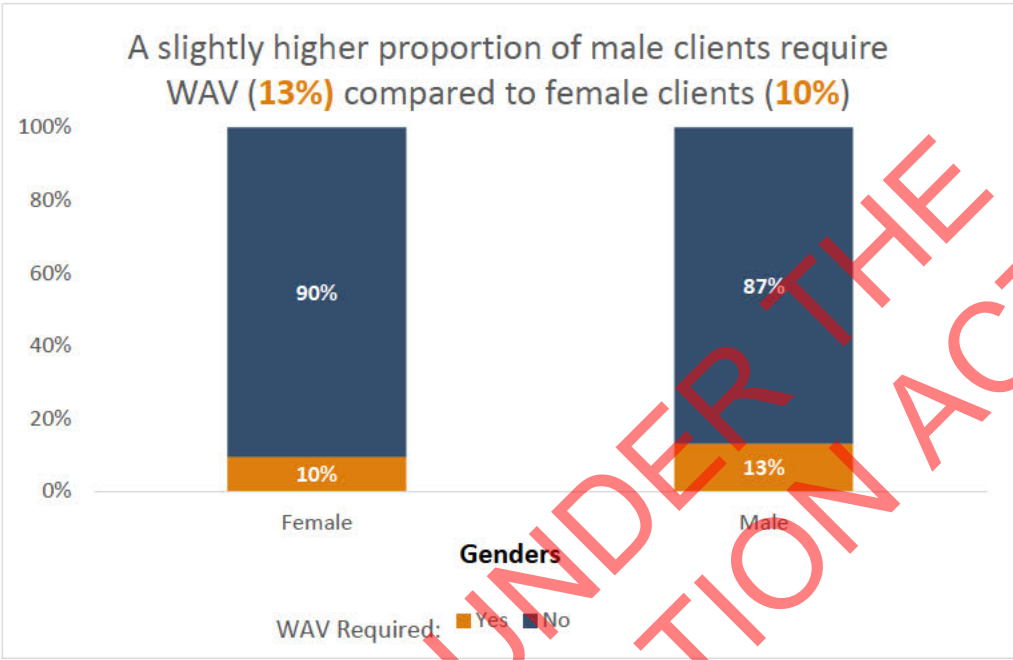
Region	WAV Required
Whanganui	4%
Tauranga	4%
Whangarei	4%
Dunedin	5%
Invercargill	5%
Palmerston North	5%
Lower Hutt	5%
Wellington	8%
Christchurch	22%
Auckland	38%



Age Group	WAV required?	
	Yes	No
0-16	24%	76%
17-29	11%	89%
30-64	15%	85%
65+	10%	90%



Distinct Count of Index Gender	WAV required?	
	Yes	No
Female	10%	90%
Male	13%	87%



Clients with physical, neurological, and mobility-related impairments are the most likely to require a wheelchair accessible vehicle

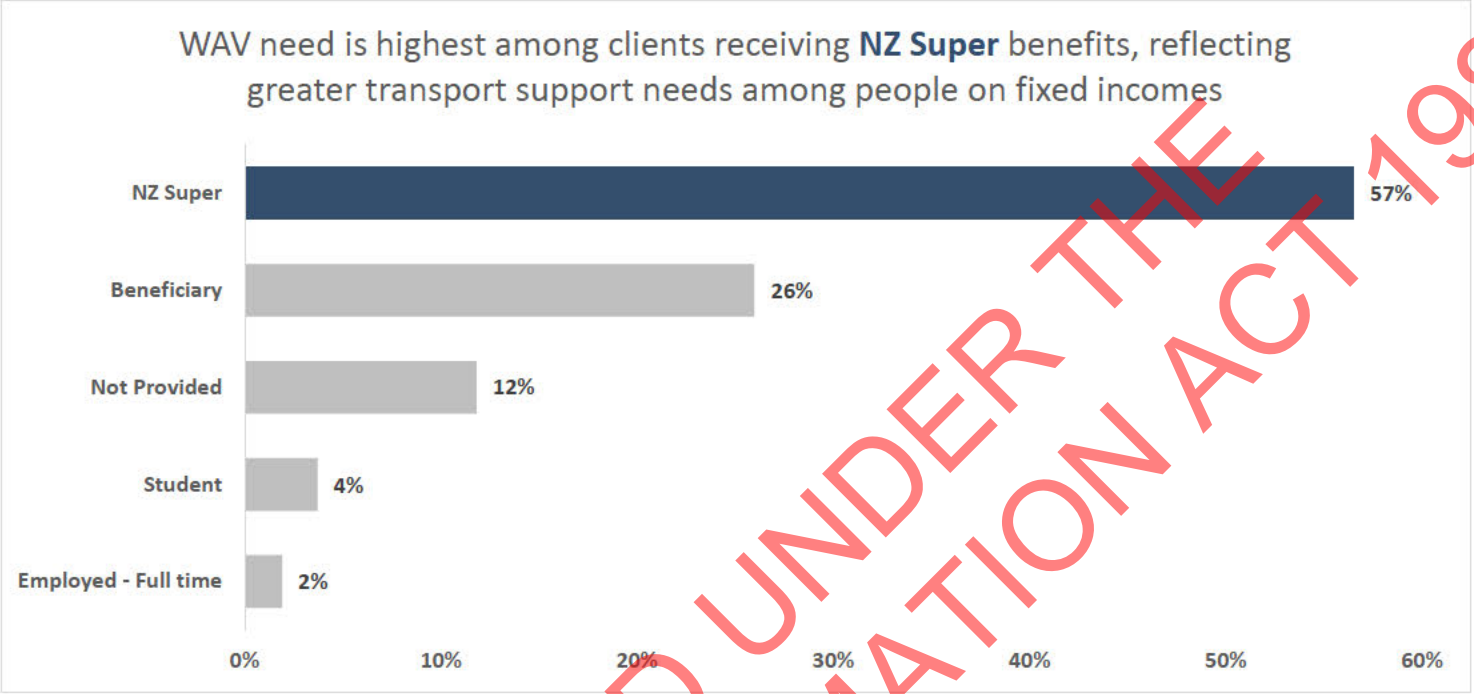
WAV Required	Yes
--------------	-----

Impariment	WAV Required
Anxiety	3%
Dementia	4%
Down Syndrome	0%
Dyslexia	0%
Epilepsy	1%
Fragilex	1%
Hearing	4%
Intellectual	8%
Mental	5%
Mobility	33%
Multiple Sclerosis	1%
Neurological	39%
Parkinson	2%
Physical	91%
Schizophrenia	0%
Seeing	6%
Sensory	15%

Stroke	7%
Willi Syndrome	0%

WAV Required	Yes
--------------	-----

Income Source	Clients
Employed - Full time	1.91%
Student	3.71%
Not Provided	11.82%
Beneficiary	26.01%
NZ Super	56.54%



Total Mobility Dataset Description, Scope and Limitations

Data source

1. The Total Mobility (TM) dataset was provided to Ministry staff by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). NZTA did not directly collect the data. The dataset was sourced from a third party platform called Ridewise, which is a platform used to manage Total Mobility transactions. The dataset appears include all records ever collected by Ridewise across various regions. However, it is not possible to filter or segment the data by time period, which limits the Ministry's ability to analyse changes and trends over time.
2. It is recommended, if possible, NZTA provide further clarifications regarding the dataset, including:
 - a. the role of ESL in the data collection or extraction process
 - b. the year Ridewise was first implemented/enabled to record the data and which regions started doing so first (to help estimate the data coverage period)
 - c. the method and effort involved in extracting this dataset from the Ridewise system.

Dataset structure and content

3. The raw TM dataset contains approximately 131,710 records and 12 columns, with each row representing a unique client. All variables are categorical in nature, with several fields containing inconsistencies or formatting issues that limit immediate analysis.
4. Key columns include:
 - a. Impairment Category 1 and 2: these two fields capture impairment types. Both columns are text columns and often contain multiple impairments within the same cell, separated by commas. While Category 1 is more consistently populated has fewer blanks, Category 2 contains significantly more blanks. The distinction between the two categories is not clear, with some records containing multiple impairments across both columns.
 - b. WAV Required: a binary (yes/no) field that indicates whether the client requires a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV).
 - c. ACC / WINZ / Workbridge / Other Financial Assistance: four binary (yes/no) fields indicating whether the client was receiving financial support from these sources at the time of the client's assessment for TM eligibility. These values appear to be self-reported and drawn from client assessment forms.

- d. Gender: includes “male”, “female”, “gender diverse”, “prefer not to say”, and blank values. Some inconsistencies and missing data are present.
 - e. Ethnicity: the field appears to be self-reported and often problematic. Some respondents entered their legal or residency status (eg, “NZ citizen” or “NZ residence”) rather than ethnicity. Others reported multiple ethnicities in one cell. The data lacks standardisation, contains spelling errors, and may need to be re-classified to align with recognised ethnicity groupings used by, eg, Stats NZ.
 - f. Income source: this field is inconsistent as it includes a wide variety of descriptions with inconsistent spelling and formatting (eg, ACC vs A.C.C. vs Acc, etc.)
 - g. Clients City: this field is currently a mix of towns, cities, villages, and in some cases full addresses. It lacks standardisation and like needs to be redefined as a “Region” field to record accepted geographic boundaries and anonymise the clients’ data.
5. In its raw form, the TM dataset is wide, with several fields containing multiple values within a single cell. To enable reliable analysis (eg, frequency counts or cross-tabulations) these fields should be transformed into long format, with one record per client-impairment combination.

Recommendations

6. Although the dataset has its limitations, the dataset offers valuable insights into TM users and has potential to inform the currently ongoing TM review and future policy options and Ministerial decisions. However the following steps are suggested as the next steps (mid-term, 4-8 weeks):
- a. Data cleaning and standardisation: especially for the *Ethnicity*, *Income Support*, and *Clients City* fields.
 - b. A cross agency discussion is needed to determine how to handle multi-category fields. Eg, should Ethnicity be categorised in line with Stats NZ groupings (eg: Māori, European, Pacific, Asian, Other), or should original diversity be preserved with only minor inconsistencies and errors corrected (eg, leave Ethnicities as reported by correct spelling errors and use standardised versions: eg Indian Fijian for all clients who reported this as “Indian and Fijian”/“Fijian-Indian”, etc...).
 - c. The main next step is for these policy decisions to inform future configuration of data collection systems such as Ridewise. This may include requiring Ridewise or other platforms to standardise reporting by including drop-down options, enforcing field validation, and improving field definitions.

Data limitations and quality considerations

7. The TM dataset is operational in nature but contains important information relevant to policy development. However, its application is currently constrained by several limitations:
 - a. Lack of transparency in accessing and updating the dataset: there is no clear process for how policy staff at the Ministry of Transport can access the dataset on a regular basis. Although the dataset has strong potential to inform policy development, monitoring, and Ministerial advice, there is no known schedule (eg six- / 12-month) for refreshing or distributing the data.
 - b. Unclear data field definitions and inconsistent standards: many fields lack clear definitions or documentation. It is not always clear what each field is intended to capture. A consistent data dictionary or standard is required to improve data usefulness and compatibility across the country.
 - c. Unclear data compilation process: it is not known whether the dataset was compiled centrally from the Ridewise system or assembled from separate regional submissions. Further clarification is needed to understand how this dataset was constructed.
 - d. Inability to track changes/trends over time: the dataset does not include date fields, which prevents any time-based analysis. This means it is not possible to track trends, assess the impact of policy changes, or understand how user needs have evolved.
 - e. Potential for under-representation and self-reporting bias: several key fields (Income Source, Ethnicity, Impairments) are self-reported or derived from the client assessment forms. These may be inconsistently recorded across regions, and in some cases these fields could have been misinterpreted by users or assessors (given the current variety of responses). This issue limits the accuracy of subgroup analysis (eg, analysis of male clients on certain income types), which may lead to under- or over-estimation of certain client types/categories.

Suitability of the dataset for policy use

8. In its current form, the dataset provides a solid foundation for developing a general profile of TM users. Eg, it allows exploration of:
 - a. demographic characteristics, such as age groups, gender, and income sources
 - b. the prevalence of different impairment types, including how these vary age, gender, or region
 - c. the proportion of users requiring wheelchair accessible vehicles and how this varies across regions.
9. The above points make the dataset especially useful for identifying typical user types and understanding the relative mix of needs across the TM client base.

10. This significant limitation is the lack of time-based information, which prevents more granular analysis of, eg:
- a. How user profiles have changes over time (eg, pre- vs post-Covid)
 - b. The potential impact of policy interventions such as Crown's 25% subsidy increase
 - c. Trends in access, uptake, or emerging gaps in service provision.
11. With no access to this longitudinal view, the dataset supports only exploratory analysis and policy framing, but is limited in its ability to support impact evaluation or the identification of unmet needs across time and policy periods.

Recommendations

12. As NZTA progresses with its procurement of Ridewise or a successor software as a service provider, it is important that future data needs are embedded into system design and NZTA's contract requirements. Based on the analysis of the current dataset, the following improvements would significantly improve the value of TM data for informing policy:
- a. Inclusion of time stamps: each client record should include a date field to enable time-series analysis, policy impact evaluation, and identification of trends.
 - b. Standardisation of key fields: dropdowns, lookup tables, and / or validation rules should be implemented for fields such as Ethnicity, Income Support, Location to reduce inconsistencies and errors.
 - c. Clear data definitions: a country wide data dictionary should be developed and maintained to ensure consistency and that same fields are used in different regions by different assessors and providers.
 - d. Regular data extraction for policy staff: a schedule for data delivery to the Ministry should be established (eg, quarterly or six-monthly). This would allow policy teams to support the Minister in making policy decisions.

Community Connect appropriation

Current appropriated funding for the CC is as follows:

	\$ millions			
	2025/26*	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29 (& outyears)
Administration	0.213	0.212	0.212	0.212
Total Mobility Programme Concessions	24.335	24.335	24.335	24.335
Community Services Cardholders	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000
Total	36.548	36.547	36.547	36.547

This funding is held in an MCA which allows funding to be moved across categories (subject to any restrictions in funding agreements or Cabinet/Ministerial decisions that restrict movement).

*As you may be aware, through Budget 2025, Cabinet agreed in principle to the carry forward of 2024/25 underspends to 2025/26, with the actual carry-forward amount to be confirmed by joint Ministers (Transport and Finance) through the October Baseline Update. Based on unaudited results there is an underspend of \$5.213 million available for transfer to 2025/26 if joint Ministers wish to do so. NZTA's audit won't be complete until 31 October so \$ may change.

	Category forecast 2024/25	Actual 2024/25 (unaudited)	Forecast less actual spend
MCA 8 Admin of Community Connect	0.208	0.645	0.437
MCA 8 PT Community Connect Concessions	12.000	10.422	(1.578)
MCA 8 Total Mobility Services Concessions	24.335	20.263	(4.072)
Total Appropriation	36.543	31.330	(5.213)

Note: PT fares increased on 1 July 2025, which will likely mean that the CSC costs increase too (although the fare increase may suppress some discretionary demand).

Each baseline update (twice a year MBU and OBU) NZTA are provided the opportunity to update their category forecasts for Community Connect.

At MBU 2025 (March 2025) Ministers approved a material re-forecast between categories. Content from our MBU Submission is below:

Transfers between categories of Multi-Category Appropriations

Community Connect Programme MCA

Community Connect Programme MCA	\$000				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<i>Community Connect Programme - Public Transport Concessions</i>					
Approved funding before MBU	24,335	24,335	24,335	24,335	24,335
Transfer to <i>Total Mobility Concessions</i>	(12,335)	(12,335)	(12,335)	(12,335)	(12,335)
Funding profile after MBU	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
<i>Total Mobility Services Concessions</i>					
Approved funding before MBU	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Transfer from <i>Community Connect Programme</i>	12,335	12,335	12,335	12,335	12,335
Funding profile after MBU	24,335	24,335	24,335	24,335	24,335

The Community Connect Concessions scheme provides half price public transport fares for Community Services Card holders, and the Crown funding for Total Mobility services. Existing category level forecasts reflect the original cost estimates for the two elements of the Community Connect MCA (adjusted for estimates of the impact of scheme changes that came into effect in May 2024). NZTA advises that Total Mobility services are facing demand pressures while demand for Community Connect concessions is forecast to be less than originally expected. As set out in Vote Transport's Performance Plan, NZTA proposes to use the surplus within the Community Connect concessions element to fund pressures within Total Mobility. This technical change between MCA categories reflects those intentions. The total appropriation amount remains unchanged.

Following this transfer between categories, a fiscally neutral adjustment is requested to transfer this funding to the newly established "Public Transport Concessions" as part of Vote Transport's appropriation restructure.

Total Mobility Scheme Public consultation | Communications & Engagement Plan

Contents

Consultation at a glance	2
Overview	2
Context	2
What the consultation will cover	3
Timing	3
Communications and Engagement objectives	3
Audiences	3
Approach	3
Key actions	5
Collateral	5
Risks and Mitigations	6
ANNEX 1: key messages and Q&As	7
Key messages	7
Q&As	8
ANNEX 2: Format of online meetings	10

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Consultation at a glance

- Consultation will run 11 December 2025 to mid-March 2026.
- Consultation will centre on six proposals in the discussion document. This will be released soon after the public announcement on 11 December. Alternate formats will be released when available.
- Six online meetings will be held with targeted groups in February 2026. Feedback will be recorded in these meetings.
- The target audience is existing Total Mobility users, representatives of the disability community and representatives of seniors (people aged 65+). Public Transport Agencies (local councils) and existing Total Mobility providers will also be targeted.
- Consultation will be led by the Ministry of Transport with support from the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha.

Overview

This plan covers the key communications and engagement activities to support public consultation on the Government's proposals for the Total Mobility Scheme.

The Total Mobility Scheme is a government programme helping disabled people travel when they cannot access or use buses, trains or ferries on their own. The Scheme pays part of the cost for taxis (and sometimes other transport).

The Scheme is managed by public transport authorities and is funded by the Crown, the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and public transport authorities. Users of the scheme currently receive a subsidy of 75 percent on taxi fares, although this will decrease to 65 percent from 1 July 2026.

There were 120,000 registered Total Mobility users in 2024/25. Around 75 percent of users are over 65 years old with mostly age-related impairments. The remaining 25 percent are under 65 years with more varied impairments.

Context

Total Mobility's costs have been escalating unsustainably for the Crown, public transport authorities (PTAs) and the NLTF since changes in 2022 increased the fare subsidy from 50 percent to its current 75 percent.

Since the fare subsidy increased, demand for Total Mobility has increased substantially – both in users (from 108,000 in 2022 to 120,000 in 2024/25) and trips taken (from 1.8 million to three million).

The higher subsidy and greater use undermine the financial sustainability of the Scheme. This created a risk that some PTAs would reject the Crown funding for the Scheme, reducing the subsidy rate in their region. This would reduce outcomes for Total Mobility users and create inequitable access across New Zealand.

Cabinet agreed on a package of funding changes to stabilise costs to the scheme, including:

- reducing the Total Mobility fare subsidy from 75 percent to 65 percent from 1 July 2026
- working with PTAs to reduce the Total Mobility fare caps by around 10 percent in each region
- using Crown savings from these changes to reduce public transport authorities' shortfall over 2025-2030.

Alongside these decisions, Cabinet agreed to consult on some proposals to strengthen Total Mobility, including to address some longer-term cost challenges.

What the consultation will cover

While funding decisions will not be part of this consultation, they have provided context and opportunity to update how Total Mobility works.

The discussion document contains proposals and some questions about possible changes to Total Mobility. Generally, the questions relate to the purpose of Total Mobility, how funding is allocated to registered Total Mobility users, and ways to support innovation in how Total Mobility operates. The proposals include:

- clarifying the purpose of the Scheme
- making assessments fair and consistent
- limiting the number of trips
- providing more wheelchair-user-accessible trips
- allowing new providers
- introducing a National Public Transport Discount.

While not available at the beginning of consultation, alternate formats are also being commissioned to support the disability community to participate in the public consultation.

Timing

The Ministry of Transport (MoT), with support from Whaikaha Ministry for Disabled People, will be undertaking the consultation. Consultation is expected to start in mid-December 2025, announced by the Transport and Disability Issues Ministers. The consultation will run until 21 March 2025. This will ensure a minimum of 6 weeks public consultation with alternate formats available, and allow for the consultation to be shared by several external promotion channels.

Communications and Engagement objectives

- Clear communication: Ensure people understand how to participate.
- Accessibility: Provide information and feedback channels that are easy for everyone to use.
- Active participation: Ensure disabled people are aware of the consultation, and encourage contributions to the online meetings.
- Inform policy: Use feedback to shape policy development. Communicate where feedback has been incorporated and where it has not. Give clear reasons for why feedback has/has not been used.

Audiences

The main audience is Total Mobility users, the disability community and seniors.

The consultation will also be aimed at national organisations representing people with disabilities such as the Disabled Peoples Organisations Coalition, tangata whaikaha Māori, supporters, whānau, carers, and disability community groups. Feedback from Public Transport Authorities and Total Mobility providers will also be important.

To ensure users of the Scheme are properly consulted, we may need to provide more support and resources so they can contribute to the consultation.

Approach

Consultation/engagement

The Ministry of Transport will lead the consultation, with support from Whaikaha and NZTA.

- Accessible survey: feedback on the proposals will primarily be sought through an online survey hosted on Accessible Surveys, enabling people to provide feedback in alternate formats. Due to timing issues, not all accessible formats will be available at the time of the launch but will be available at the earliest opportunity in the new year.
- Engagement channels: A range of engagement channels are required to support people from the disability community to provide feedback. Channels include a discussion document in alternate formats, online meetings, email, and postal submissions. Online materials will include read-aloud functionality and other accessibility features to support those with limited access to technology or the internet.
 - Some print copies of the Easy Read materials will be couriered to People First regional coordinators to facilitate consultation.
- Targeted support: All consultation material will be provided in alternate formats (Easy Read, Braille, audio, large print, NZ Sign Language).
- One session with Disabled People's Organisations Coalition
- Online meetings: Six online engagements
 - three meetings with the disability community: one focused on parents, whanau, carers; two at general members of the community
 - two meetings with seniors (one aimed at peak bodies (Age Concern, Grey Power, and bodies representing Māori and Pasifika, and one aimed at seniors generally who use Total Mobility)
 - one with PTA Total Mobility coordinators (local councils).

To ensure broad awareness and participation, communications will clearly explain the purpose of the consultation and how people can get involved. Engagement activities with the disability community and seniors will be designed to be inclusive and accessible, recognising the diverse needs of communities across New Zealand.

Communications

- Ministers' joint media release first form of communication
- Following media release:
 - MoT news item to go up on website, including alternate formats
 - MoT will share on our social media channels, and through existing email stakeholder list, and ask other agencies to reshare through their social media channels
 - MoT will provide content to Whaikaha and the Office for Seniors to forward/include in their networks
 - MoT to set up initial phone meeting with DPOC
- Ask other organisations to disseminate via their channels (DPOC, Age Concern, Grey Power)
- Possible channels via Office for Seniors newsletter (February 2026)
- A two-pronged approach is likely – first communications in December, second in January following the summer break
- Use plain, clear language to describe what's happening.

Key actions

Timing is dependent on the consultation dates (TBC).

Date/Timeframe	Action
Dec 2025	Draft initial email, discussion document, organise sessions, prepare promotional material, build stakeholder list, update web content, prepare Accessible Surveys for consultation
Dec 2025	Cabinet decisions
11 Dec 2025	Consultation goes live, distribute paper info, email stakeholders, send PR
Jan 2026	Discussion document and online survey available in alternate formats
Jan-Feb 2026	Six online meetings, one meeting with DPOC (12 or 13 Feb) Other sessions as required
22 March 2026	Consultation closes

Collateral

- Discussion document and feedback form (Plain English, Easy Read, Braille, NZSL, Large Print, Audio)
- PowerPoint presentation (Plain English)
- Alternate formats for consultation resources: Easy Read, Braille, audio, large print, NZ Sign Language.
- Online content (website, social media, stakeholder channels).
- Communications material (media releases, website updates, social media posts, reactive Q&As)
- Print outs of summary/discussion document as required

Communications channels

- Joint Ministers' media release
- Accessible Surveys
- Emails to stakeholder list (from MoT to Whaikaha and Office for Seniors to distribute to their networks)
- Newsletters:
 - Whaikaha stakeholder newsletter
 - Seniors Newsletter
 - Office for Seniors stakeholder newsletter
- Social media (MoT, Whaikaha, Office for Seniors, NZTA)
- Total Mobility inbox
- Alternate formats: Easy Read, Braille, audio, large print, NZ Sign Language

Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Perception the Government is not running a meaningful or genuine engagement	• Emphasise the intent to genuinely understand stakeholder concerns. Provide accessible materials in all required formats and ensure multiple channels for engagement. Promote the consultation early and transparently via social media, posters, and sector networks. • Close the loop so participants know their input has been considered and are clear about what happens next
Perception the Government is not being genuine by not consulting on the subsidy change	Emphasise the need to make decisions now on the subsidy level to provide local authorities with certainty and quick relief this financial year.
Expectations from disabled people and the disability sector are not met	Clearly communicate what is feasible in the near term and the constraints of the funding environment.
Insufficient time to translate consultation documents into accessible formats	Begin translation processes as soon as possible, ideally as soon as content is finalised. If needed, delay the consultation start to ensure accessibility. Maintain close contact with translation providers and Whaikaha. 6-10 weeks needed to be complete.
Limited access to technology	Share paper-based info via post and public spaces. Clearly communicate all available participation options, including in-person sessions and support services
Disengagement due to consultation being held over holiday period	• Take two-pronged approach – first phase of comms in December, followed by reminders in January/February • Allow time for awareness building

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

ANNEX 1: key messages and Q&As

Key messages

General

- The Total Mobility scheme helps people with long-term impairments travel when they cannot use public transport on their own. It pays part of the cost for taxis and sometimes other transport, making it easier for users to meet daily needs and take part in their community.
- The Ministry of Transport is reviewing the Total Mobility scheme. The last review of the Scheme was in 2005.
- The Government is committed to supporting disabled people with transport assistance through Total Mobility. The review will look at how the scheme can be improved now and in the future, within current funding limits.
- There are approximately 110,000 registered Total Mobility users, up from 88,000 registered users in 2022. Over 65's are around 75 percent of users.
- Total Mobility users get a 75 percent subsidy on taxi fares, funded by the Crown, the National Land Transport Fund, and public transport authorities.
- The review will use feedback from users and providers to make practical improvements to the scheme.
- Deaf and disabled people, tangata whaikaha Māori, Turi Māori, Kapo Māori and their families, whānau and carers deserve real choice and control over their support. This consultation will help clarify the options and their opinions.
- The overall costs for Total Mobility have increased since the subsidy rose to 75 percent. We need to make sure the scheme remains affordable while still delivering good outcomes.
- There are huge opportunities to make a positive difference. This consultation invites everyone to help shape a system that works better for disabled people.
- The Government will keep funding Total Mobility, but as demand grows, we need to make sure the scheme reaches those who need it most. The review will look at short-term improvements and possible longer-term changes, keeping in mind funding is limited.
- The Government supports disabled people, tangata whaikaha Māori, and others with accessibility needs to have equitable access to services and achieve their rights. We are committed to removing barriers to participation.

Financial context

- Total Mobility's costs have increased rapidly since the fare subsidy was raised from 50% to 75% in 2022. This has led to more users and more trips, putting pressure on funding from the Crown, public transport authorities, and the National Land Transport Fund.
- The scheme is now at risk of becoming financially unsustainable. If costs continue to rise, some public transport authorities may reduce the subsidy rate in their region, which could mean less support for users and unequal access across New Zealand.
- To help manage costs, the Government plans to reduce the fare subsidy from 75% to 65% from 1 July 2026 and work with public transport authorities to lower fare caps by around 10% in each region.
- Savings from these changes will be used to help public transport authorities cover funding shortfalls between 2025 and 2030.
- Up to \$10 million will be made available this financial year. The New Zealand Transport Agency will be responsible for determining how this funding will be allocated among public transport authorities.

- While funding decisions are not part of this consultation, feedback from users and providers will help shape how Total Mobility operates in the future, making sure it remains affordable and effective.

Q&As

Subsidy

Why are you reducing the subsidy?

- The cost of running Total Mobility has increased since the fare subsidy was raised to 75%.
- More people are using the scheme and taking more trips, which means funding is under pressure. Reducing the subsidy by 10 percent will ensure it is still viable to run the scheme.

Why are you not consulting on the changes to the subsidy?

- Making decisions now on the subsidy level will provide local authorities with certainty and quick relief this financial year. Without providing that certainty there is a risk that some local authorities would pull out of the Government's subsidy contribution given cost pressures.
- There were concerns about the risk of inconsistent subsidy levels, and the potential for full or partial service withdrawal across New Zealand
- Announcing the changes now also provides six months' notice to Total Mobility users and certainty that those who need the service will have continued access to it.

How much will decreasing the subsidy increase costs for users? Have you considered the cost-of-living impacts on users?

- We are reducing the fare subsidy level from the current 75 percent down to 65 percent from 1 July 2026.
- This remains higher than the 50 percent rate that was provided up until 2022. We appreciate these decisions will mean fares will increase for Total Mobility users, but the subsidy itself will still be higher than it was before 2022.
- Reducing the subsidy by 10 percent responds to increasing cost pressures and will ensure the continued viability of the scheme.

What funding is being made to public transport authorities?

- We're aware that costs have increased significantly for public transport authorities since 2022, and this has been placing pressure on their budgets. Many have been proactively exploring ways to manage costs.
- As part of the decisions on Total Mobility, we are providing additional funding to public transport authorities to reduce their costs.
- Up to \$10 million will be made available this financial year. The New Zealand Transport Agency will be responsible for determining how this funding will be allocated among public transport authorities.

Consultation

What is the purpose of the consultation?

- Proposals in the discussion document focus on making the scheme stronger for users and funders in the long term.
- We are proposing to:
 - clarify Total Mobility's purpose and make eligibility assessments fairer. We don't want to change who can get Total Mobility, but we want a clearer purpose statement, and to strengthen the process to enter the scheme – strengthening evidence requirements and more regular checks that people still qualify for the scheme.
 - introduce allocations that are more targeted to need. It looks at ways to increase wheelchair-user accessible trips and options to limit the number of subsidised trips a

- user can take, whether that's the same number of subsidised trips for everyone, or a lower initial number of subsidised trips that is increased depending on individual need
- promote innovation in how the scheme is delivered to making it easier for ride-hailing like Uber and other forms of transport to meet the needs of Total Mobility users. We're seeking feedback on what is needed to make sure new types of providers are still safe and accessible for Total Mobility users.

Have you considered the health impacts of the proposals on Total Mobility users?

- There are currently no restrictions on the purpose of Total Mobility trips, and data is not collected about the purpose of individual trips. It is used for accessing work, shopping, healthcare, social occasions and education.
- With the reduced subsidy level. Total Mobility users will still have the flexibility to choose how and when to use the subsidised fares, within their own means. That may mean prioritising health trips over other trips, depending on the person
- The consultation includes a proposal that would cap the number of trips a person could take. One option for this would see more trips provided to, for example, people with higher health needs – allowing it to be more targeted to health, if necessary.
- While decreasing the subsidy may increase the costs for trips used for health visits, ultimately it will also ensure the scheme continues to operate in a financially sustainable manner and that people have access to it.

How will you consult with the community in a way that is accessible and that they can meaningfully engage with the proposals?

- We will provide alternate formats of the discussion document to better support the disability community to engage.
- We will also hold workshops with members of the community to get their input.

Why isn't the discussion document currently available in alternate formats?

- We are working on these currently, and alternate formats of the discussion document will be released as they become available to better support the disability community to engage.

Are you proposing to tighten eligibility?

- No – we are seeking to make Total Mobility's purpose clearer so that eligibility assessments are fairer for everyone.

General

Who uses Total Mobility?

- In 2024/25, there were 120,000 registered Total Mobility users.
- Around 25 percent are under 65 and with varied impairments. These include physical and sensory disabilities (vision or hearing impairments) and neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or developmental conditions, such as Down syndrome, epilepsy, and schizophrenia.
- The remaining 75 percent are over 65 years old, and include people with age-related impairments that prevent them from using public transport independently.
- Around 1,600 Total Mobility users are under 16 years.

ANNEX 2: Format of online meetings

- online – 2-3 hours

Agenda item	Timing
Introductions – project team and participants	20 min
Outline of intended outcomes for the meeting (assumption that material will be read prior to meeting)	15 min
Group specific questions / break out groups	60-90 min
Summary and next steps	10 min
Run over time/contingence	15 min

Detailed design of online meetings tbc. – max no of attendees, how facilitated, how feedback recorded, agenda, breaks, online meeting platform, material needed, backup presenters (unplanned sick leave etc). Advice from Whaikaha and Office for Seniors.

Group	Purpose	Material needed	Attendees/audience	MoT + other agency support	Online meeting platform
Public Transport Authorities x 1	Summarise proposals in discussion doc Gather feedback on TBC Q&As Funnel feedback online	Powerpoint slides	TBC by NZTA – all PTAs, targeted smaller group sessions	Facilitator, x2 presenters, x1 scribe	Teams
Disability group representatives x 2	Summarise proposals in discussion doc Q&As Gather feedback on TBC	Powerpoint slides Alt format/support tbc – depend on attendees	TBC by Whaikaha	Facilitator, x2 presenters, x1 scribe May require 2 NZSL interpreters, pre-book and then remove if not required	Zoom (can be teams)

Group	Purpose	Material needed	Attendees/audience	MoT + other agency support	Online meeting platform
Older people group representatives x 2	Summarise proposals in discussion doc Q&As Gather feedback on TBC	Powerpoint slides Alt format/support tbc – depend on attendees	TBC by Office for Seniors	Facilitator, x2 presenters, x1 scribe Office for Seniors attend	Teams

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Total Mobility – Subsidy changes and launch of public consultation: Q&As – November 2025

Subsidy

Why are you reducing the subsidy?

- The cost of running Total Mobility has increased since the fare subsidy was raised to 75%.
- More people are using the scheme and taking more trips, which means funding is under pressure. Reducing the subsidy by 10 percent will ensure the continued viability of the scheme.

Why are you not consulting on the changes to the subsidy?

- Making decisions now on the subsidy level will provide local authorities with certainty and quick relief this financial year. Without providing that certainty there is a risk that some local authorities would pull out of the Government's subsidy contribution given cost pressures.
- This would lead to inconsistent subsidy levels across New Zealand
- Announcing the changes now also provides 6 months notice to Total Mobility users and certainty that those who need the service will have continued access to it.

How much will decreasing the subsidy increase costs for users? Have you considered the cost-of-living impacts on users?

- We are reducing the fare subsidy level from the current 75 percent down to 65 percent from 1 July 2026.
- This is still higher than the 50 percent rate that was provided up until 2022. We appreciate these decisions will mean fares will increase for Total Mobility users, but the subsidy will still be higher than it was before 2022.
- Reducing the subsidy by 10 percent responds to increasing cost pressures and will ensure the continued viability of the scheme.

What funding is being made to public transport authorities?

- We're aware that costs have increased significantly for public transport authorities since 2022, and this has been placing pressure on their budgets. Many have been proactively exploring ways to manage costs.
- As part of the decisions on Total Mobility, we are providing additional funding to public transport authorities to reduce their costs.
- Up to \$10 million will be made available this financial year. The New Zealand Transport Agency will be responsible for determining how this funding will be allocated among public transport authorities.

Consultation

What is the purpose of the consultation?

- There are six proposals in the discussion document, focusing on making the scheme stronger for users and funders in the long term.
- We are proposing to:
 - clarify Total Mobility's purpose and make eligibility assessments fairer. We don't want to change who can get Total Mobility, but we want a clearer purpose statement, and to

strengthen the process to enter the scheme – strengthening evidence requirements and more regular checks that people still qualify for the scheme.

- introduce allocations that are more targeted to need. It looks at ways to increase wheelchair accessible trips and options to limit the number of subsidised trips a user can take, whether that's the same number of subsidised trips for everyone, or a lower initial number of subsidised trips that is increased depending on individual need
- promote innovation in how the scheme is delivered to making it easier for ride-hailing like Uber and other forms of transport to meet the needs of Total Mobility users. We're seeking feedback on what is needed to make sure new types of providers are still safe and accessible for Total Mobility users.

Have you considered the health impacts of the proposals on Total Mobility users?

- There are currently no restrictions on the purpose of Total Mobility trips, and data is not collected about the purpose of individual trips. It is used for accessing work, shopping, healthcare, social occasions and education.
- With the reduced subsidy level. Total Mobility users will still have the flexibility to choose how and when to use the subsidised fares, within their own means. That may mean prioritising health trips over other trips, depending on the person
- The consultation includes a proposal that would cap the number of trips a person could take. One option for this would see more trips provided to, for example, people with higher health needs – allowing it to be more targeted to health, if necessary
- While decreasing the subsidy may increase the costs for trips used for health visits, ultimately it will also ensure the scheme continues to operate in a financially sustainable manner and that people have access to it.

How will you consult with the community in a way that is accessible and that they can meaningfully engage with the proposals?

- We will provide alternate formats of the discussion document to better support the disability community to engage.
- We will also hold targeted workshops with members of the community to get their input.

Why isn't the discussion document currently available in alternate formats?

- We are working on these currently, and alternate formats of the discussion document will be released as they become available to better support the disability community to engage.

Are you proposing to tighten eligibility?

- No – we are seeking to make Total Mobility's purpose clearer so that eligibility assessments are fairer for everyone.

General

Who uses Total Mobility?

- In 2024/25, there were 120,000 registered Total Mobility users.
- Around 25 percent are under 65 and with varied impairments. These include physical and sensory disabilities (vision or hearing impairments) and neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or developmental conditions, such as Down syndrome, epilepsy, and schizophrenia.
- The remaining 75 percent are over 65 years old, and include people with age-related impairments that prevent them from using public transport independently.
- Around 1,600 Total Mobility users are under 16 years.

Department	Responded?
Health NZ Te Whatu Ora	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received
•Health NZ recommends exploring the below options to mitigate the concerns raised: oExploring a high-use safety net specific to health access: Before any subsidy reduction or caps, Health NZ recommends implementing a funded mechanism that automatically zero-rates or tops up Total Mobility co-pays for health-critical travel (e.g., GP, dialysis/chemo, radiation, frequent rehab, post-op, mental health). Include rapid clinician/NASC exception pathways and no-cap for life-sustaining or statutory appointments. oUtilising rural and distance weighting: Apply higher caps and/or distance multipliers for rural regions and long-haul clinical travel. oIncreasing support for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV): Increase the adequate per-trip support for hoist/modified vehicles and establish a ring-fenced WAV growth fund with regional service-level minimums (availability/response time). oEstablishing tiered caps over flat caps: If caps are pursued, use base + needs-tiers (health/education/work allocations), with real-time clinical top-ups. oDesigning assessment standards: Co-design national assessment that recognises fluctuating conditions, cognitive/mental health barriers, and is culturally safe; reduces re-assessment burden for permanent impairments. oUsing accessible comms & navigation: Require NZSL, Easy Read, audio/large-print materials, navigator support, and minimum notice well ahead of change. oEstablishing a cross-agency plan: Coordinate with MSD/Work & Income and Health to absorb flow-on transport needs if TM user costs rise.

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Department	Responded?
Ministry for Ethnic Communities	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received

Kia ora

Thank you for sending through this Cabinet paper and discussion document for consultation.

We have no comment on the Cabinet paper.

To support engagement with Ethnic Communities during the consultation process, it would be helpful to include an introduction or greeting in some of the languages spoken by these communities. This can help make the document more welcoming and inclusive. You can refer to our website for assistance with this: [Language services, support and information | Ethnic Communities](#).

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Response

No further action for Cabinet paper or discussion document. Share comment on consultation with Comms team.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Department	Responded?
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received
Malo ni, Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Cabinet paper titled Total Mobility Schemes: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals. Please see our comments for your consideration. Findings from the Ministry of Transport’s equity research highlights that Pacific peoples experience higher rates of transport disadvantage, particularly in urban areas such as South Auckland, Porirua, and parts of Waikato. Pacific peoples are more likely to •Live in multi-generational households •Have lower average incomes, and •Rely on subsidised transport for essential travel. The Ministry acknowledges that Pacific people may face barriers to accessing assessments due to language, stigma, or unfamiliarity with systems. The Ministry recommends inclusive assessment processes, including the use of translated materials and culturally appropriate engagement to ensure fair access. Consultation with Pacific Pacific communities must be actively engaged in consultation. The Ministry recommends engagement through trusted Pacific networks, churches, and disability organisations. We note that it's important to ensure materials are available in accessible and translated formats.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Response

No further action for Cabinet paper or discussion document. Share comment on consultation with Comms team.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Department	Responded?
Ministry for Women	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received

Cabinet Paper

We welcome the reference to women representing 60% of Total Mobility users in the population impact section.

We acknowledge the need to ensure that the Total Mobility scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders.

The reduction of fare caps could have a disproportionate impact on those in rural regions or outside centres with hospitals and access to specialist services (compared to those in urban centres and compared to the reduction in the subsidy rate). For example, the current fare cap for the Horizon District Council is \$15, meaning someone in Fielding would need to pay \$40-\$55 to get to a hospital or specialist medical center in Palmerston North. We recommend this impact is addressed and/or highlighted in the Cabinet paper.

Discussion document

We welcome the proposed consultation with the disability community. Our initial views are below.

Theme 1: Clarifying Total Mobility's purpose

Purpose statement

- We agree with the need to clarify a clear purpose statement for the scheme to create a nationally consistent understanding of the intent of the scheme, and acknowledge the scheme was started to help people get where they need to go when using buses, trains, ferries independently is not possible.
- However, the inclusion of "...who are unable to access public transport" in the purpose statement does not acknowledge that people may be able to access public transport in some circumstances but not in others, e.g. someone might be able to travel on public transport alone but not when travelling with children. We recommend this is changed to something along the lines of "to provide subsidized mobility services to disabled people where public transport is not an appropriate choice due to an impairment". (This point is likely to disproportionately affect women, given the higher rates of disability experienced by women, and that women are more likely to undertake unpaid caring roles.)

Assessment process

- We recommend consideration is given to how the evidence requirements for Total Mobility can draw on evidence elsewhere for government-funded services, to reduce the cost burden/barriers for users, e.g. eligibility for the supported living payment, disability allowance, child disability allowance. (We note the New Zealand Health Survey shows that more women (19%) than men (11.9%) experienced cost barriers to visiting the GP - this is for all women, not just disabled women.)

Theme 2: Introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility Users

- We would like caregiving responsibilities to be added to the list of approved trips provided in the discussion document, and encourage a process where adding more trips can be done in a timely way. Caregiving responsibilities and accessing childcare are difficult to plan in advance e.g. responding to children being sick.

Response

Cabinet Paper

We welcome the reference to women representing 60% of Total Mobility users in the population impact section. **Noted.**

We acknowledge the need to ensure that the Total Mobility scheme is affordable and sustainable for all funders. **Noted.**

The reduction of fare caps could have a disproportionate impact on those in rural regions or outside centres with hospitals and access to specialist services (compared to those in urban centres and compared to the reduction in the subsidy rate).

For example, the current fare cap for the Horizon District Council is \$15, meaning someone in Fielding would need to pay \$40-\$55 to get to a hospital or specialist medical center in Palmerston North. We recommend this impact is addressed and/or highlighted in the Cabinet paper. **Noted. We are aware of this potential impact on people in rural areas, which has also been raised by the Ministry for Primary Industries, Health NZ and Ministry of Social Development.**

Discussion document

We welcome the proposed consultation with the disability community. Our initial views are below.

Theme 1: Clarifying Total Mobility's purpose

Purpose statement

- We agree with the need to clarify a clear purpose statement for the scheme to create a nationally consistent understanding of the intent of the scheme, and acknowledge the scheme was started to help people get where they need to go when using buses, trains, ferries independently is not possible. **Noted.**
- However, the inclusion of "...who are unable to access public transport" in the purpose statement does not acknowledge that people may be able to access public transport in some circumstances but not in others, e.g. someone might be able to travel on public transport alone but not when travelling with children. We recommend this is changed to something along the lines of "to provide subsidized mobility services to disabled people where public transport is not an appropriate choice due to an impairment". (This point is likely to disproportionately affect women, given the higher rates of disability experienced by women, and that women are more likely to undertake unpaid caring roles.) **We will revisit the wording of the purpose statement at the time of public consultation.**

Assessment process

- We recommend consideration is given to how the evidence requirements for Total Mobility can draw on evidence elsewhere for government-funded services, to reduce the cost burden/barriers for users, e.g. eligibility for the supported living payment, disability allowance, child disability allowance. (We note the New Zealand Health Survey shows that more women (19%) than men (11.9%) experienced cost barriers to visiting the GP - this is for all women, not just disabled women.) **We will consider this suggestion at the time of public consultation.**

Theme 2: Introducing more targeted support allocations for Total Mobility Users

- We would like caregiving responsibilities to be added to the list of approved trips provided in the discussion document, and encourage a process where adding more trips can be done in a timely way. Caregiving responsibilities and accessing childcare are difficult to plan in advance e.g. responding to children being sick. **We will consider this suggestion at the time of public consultation, noting that there is a category in the discussion document which allows for 'other' categories if this proposal is developed further.**

Department	Responded?
Ministry of Youth Development	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received

The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi acknowledges the Government's aim to explore the long-term sustainability and possible improvements and innovations to the Total Mobility scheme.

Young people (age 12-24 years) comprise a sub-cohort of those unable to access public transport because of an impairment/disability who experience their own unique challenges to independently travel to meet their daily needs and enhance their community participation. In consulting on and implementing the proposed changes, MYD encourages the Government to consider how young people with mobility needs are supported to actively engage on the proposed changes to Total Mobility, thus ensuring they are informed by the lived experiences of the end user.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Response
No further action for Cabinet paper or discussion document. Share comment on consultation with Comms team.

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Department	Responded?
Ministry for Primary Industries	yes - asked for contact details

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received

Thank you for sharing the draft Cabinet paper 'Total Mobility Scheme: Stabilising cost pressures and approval to undertake public consultation on longer-term proposals' and the associated discussion document.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

Below are our comments and observations for your consideration:

Overall, we are comfortable with the changes proposed in the Cabinet paper, which aim to improve consistency and sustainability of the Total Mobility scheme. However, we feel there are some areas where rural considerations could be strengthened — particularly around potential impacts on affordability for elderly and disabled users, longer travel distances, and the capacity of smaller rural PTAs. The Discussion Document and review phase provide a good opportunity to highlight these issues and explore options such as tiered trip allocations, support for wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and partnerships with community transport providers to ensure equitable outcomes for rural areas.

Our key concerns are listed below:

p. 2, paras 7–9 - Reduction of subsidy from 75% to 65%

Rural residents already face higher travel costs due to long distances and limited transport options. Lowering the subsidy would further increase their out-of-pocket expenses and reduce affordability. ORC suggests, reframing the proposal to retain the 75% subsidy for rural areas, or introducing a rural differential rate, to ensure equitable access to transport support across regions.

p. 3, paras 11–14

Lowering regional fare caps by 10% and directing funding relief to Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) may disproportionately affect rural areas, where longer trips and small or absent PTAs mean users could face higher out-of-pocket costs and limited benefit from the shortfall relief. ORC suggests including flexibility or transitional support for rural areas to maintain affordability and equitable access to transport assistance.

p. 6 paras 28–30 – Trip caps being considered

The consideration of trip caps could disproportionately affect rural users, who often need to travel long distances for medical, shopping, or other essential trips. While fixed or low trip limits risk reducing accessibility, adopting tiered caps based on need could provide a fairer approach, ensuring rural users receive adequate trips to meet their requirements. ORC encourages including rural travel realities when designing these allocations.

p. 8 paras 40–41 – National PT concession for disabled people

The introduction of a national public transport concession for disabled people (p. 8, paras 40–41) offers clear equity benefits, but rural regions with limited public transport may gain little direct advantage. While the concession could encourage PTAs to expand accessible routes in rural areas, ORC recommends that rural needs to be explicitly considered in the rollout plans to ensure these communities also benefit.

p. 12 paras 57–59 – Consultation

Similarly, the proposed six-week consultation period may unintentionally exclude rural voices due to digital barriers and limited awareness of the process. This presents an opportunity to enhance engagement by targeting rural communities specifically, ensuring their perspectives are considered in shaping the Total Mobility scheme. ORC suggests proactive rural outreach to capture these insights. We can share contact details – please let us know if you'd like assistance with this.

Response
Overall, we are comfortable with the changes proposed in the Cabinet paper, which aim to improve consistency and sustainability of the Total Mobility scheme. However, we feel there are some areas where rural considerations could be strengthened — particularly around potential impacts on affordability for elderly and disabled users, longer travel distances, and the capacity of smaller rural PTAs. The Discussion Document and review phase provide a good opportunity to highlight these issues and explore options such as tiered trip allocations, support for wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and partnerships with community transport providers to ensure equitable outcomes for rural areas. Noted. Our key concerns are listed below: p. 2, paras 7–9 - Reduction of subsidy from 75% to 65% Rural residents already face higher travel costs due to long distances and limited transport options. Lowering the subsidy would further increase their out-of-pocket expenses and reduce affordability. ORC suggests, reframing the proposal to retain the 75% subsidy for rural areas, or introducing a rural differential rate, to ensure equitable access to transport support across regions. p. 3, paras 11–14 Lowering regional fare caps by 10% and directing funding relief to Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) may disproportionately affect rural areas, where longer trips and small or absent PTAs mean users could face higher out-of-pocket costs and limited benefit from the shortfall relief. ORC suggests including flexibility or transitional support for rural areas to maintain affordability and equitable access to transport assistance. p. 6 paras 28–30 – Trip caps being considered The consideration of trip caps could disproportionately affect rural users, who often need to travel long distances for medical, shopping, or other essential trips. While fixed or low trip limits risk reducing accessibility, adopting tiered caps based on need could provide a fairer approach, ensuring rural users receive adequate trips to meet their requirements. ORC encourages including rural travel realities when designing these allocations. p. 8 paras 40–41 – National PT concession for disabled people The introduction of a national public transport concession for disabled people (p. 8, paras 40–41) offers clear equity benefits, but rural regions with limited public transport may gain little direct advantage. While the concession could encourage PTAs to expand accessible routes in rural areas, ORC recommends that rural needs to be explicitly considered in the rollout plans to ensure these communities also benefit. p. 12 paras 57–59 – Consultation Similarly, the proposed six-week consultation period may unintentionally exclude rural voices due to digital barriers and limited awareness of the process. This presents an opportunity to enhance engagement by targeting rural communities specifically, ensuring their perspectives are considered in shaping the Total Mobility scheme. ORC suggests proactive rural outreach to capture these insights. We can share contact details – please let us know if you’d like assistance with this.

Department	Responded?
Ministry of Social Development (including Office for Seniors)	yes

Feedback received

Kia ora,

Thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback on this paper. Below are comments from the Office for Seniors. We have also shared these with Minister Costello's office as part of Ministerial consultation on the paper.

The Cabinet paper strikes a good balance between costs to the Crown and the impact on users of Total Mobility. The Office for Seniors supports the proposal to reduce the Govt subsidy.

Most of our comments actually relate to the discussion document, which I have set out below:

- We have concerns about the potential impacts of introducing flat cap or base trip allocations. This may impact those who need it the most, e.g. those who are travelling regularly for health appointments. There may be other impacts, such as older people saving trips for essentials such as healthcare and groceries, rather than using trips for social activities, to get to exercise classes or do other activities. This may affect older people's social connection and quality of life. It also seems that flat caps or base allocations sit oddly with the proposed purpose of the scheme. However, we acknowledge there may be misuse of the system that we aren't up to speed with - happy to discuss if that would be helpful.
 - We also have concerns about periodic reassessments. This would increase costs and administrative burden for older people. Most recipients of Total Mobility have a long-term or permanent impairment so regular reassessment is unlikely to find differences in need. We note the discussion documents mentions that access is being reassessed, not the impairment. However, it is unlikely that changes in public transport accessibility will progress sufficiently quickly to justify reassessment.
 - Anecdotally, uptake among older people for the Total Mobility Scheme is low. Talking about the scheme publicly may continue to raise awareness and increase demand among older people. While it's good that more older people make use of the scheme, it's worth considering possible implications to the Crown in relation to cost.
- I understand that the Office for Seniors has provided feedback on the engagement plan through the MSD team. We're very happy to support public consultation and raise awareness of it through our comms channels, so feel free to get in touch when you're at that stage.

Thanks,

Rosie

Response

•We have concerns about the potential impacts of introducing flat cap or base trip allocations. This may impact those who need it the most, e.g. those who are travelling regularly for health appointments. There may be other impacts, such as older people saving trips for essentials such as healthcare and groceries, rather than using trips for social activities, to get to exercise classes or do other activities. This may affect older people's social connection and quality of life. It also seems that flat caps or base allocations sit oddly with the proposed purpose of the scheme. However, we acknowledge there may be misuse of the system that we aren't up to speed with - happy to discuss if that would be helpful.

Noted. As discussed, no changes will be made to the discussion document at this stage. Comments on trip caps will be revisited at public consultation stage.

•We also have concerns about periodic reassessments. This would increase costs and administrative burden for older people. Most recipients of Total Mobility have a long-term or permanent impairment so regular reassessment is unlikely to find differences in need. We note the discussion documents mentions that access is being reassessed, not the impairment. However, it is unlikely that changes in public transport accessibility will progress sufficiently quickly to justify reassessment.

Noted. As discussed, no changes will be made to the discussion document at this stage. This will be revisited at public consultation stage.

•Anecdotally, uptake among older people for the Total Mobility Scheme is low. Talking about the scheme publicly may continue to raise awareness and increase demand among older people. While it's good that more older people make use of the scheme, it's worth considering possible implications to the Crown in relation to cost. **Noted.**

Department	Responded?
Ministry for Children Oranga Tamariki	

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Feedback received

- We would advise that public consultation occurs BEFORE any decisions are made to change any aspect of the Total Mobility Scheme, especially in relation to the subsidised amount and other factors that would impact the cost of the service to the end user.
 - o Public consultation could possibly present hidden cost pressures and barriers currently being experienced by these cohorts that may be further impacted by the introduction of these proposals, that are not currently outlined in the paper as is.
 - o These potential hidden costs would also be
- The proposed standardized capped billing process does not take into account the disparity in income, transport usage or service provision/availability across regions.
 - o This approach may disproportionately impact on disabled people living in areas where they primarily rely on this scheme to connect and engage with community, and where alternative transport options are limited or non-existent. This would create barriers to engaging with community.
 - o It also exacerbates disproportionate outcomes in terms of intersectionality, especially when considering the needs and barriers experienced by tangata whaikaha Māori, Pacific disabled peoples, parents/caregivers of disabled tamariki and rangatahi, and disabled parents.
- These proposals are being presented at a time where other financial cuts across the services and supports for disabled people are impacting on ordinary life outcomes for this community, exacerbating the negative effects already being felt by these cohorts, and disproportionately impacting on their cost of living. The paper does not reflect these potential impacts.
- The proposed increased subsidised percentage does not reflect comparatively to the rise in the cost of living and inflation experienced by New Zealand currently, or the limitations these place on options, capabilities and funding disabled people currently have available, which are already stretched due to other proposed disability service changes negatively affecting disabled people.
- It is possible that the Total Mobility Scheme may be used to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, where services that are otherwise used and more suited (like ORS to fund school transport) are inaccessible to them due to ineligibility or other reasons.
- It should be noted that the steady increase in usage may correlate with the increase in disability population over the years this scheme has been operating, as well as the overall uptake of the scheme, which indicates an overall progress toward EGL principles.
- There may be need to have more stringent application and monitoring processes to ensure this service reaches the individuals and communities it is intended for, but these processes should not themselves become inaccessible to use or navigate, and therefore be a barrier or device to prevent eligible disabled people from accessing this service.

Response

- We would advise that public consultation occurs BEFORE any decisions are made to change any aspect of the Total Mobility Scheme, especially in relation to the subsidised amount and other factors that would impact the cost of the service to the end user. **No, decisions on funding including the subsidy level are not for public consultation.**
 - oPublic consultation could possibly present hidden cost pressures and barriers currently being experienced by these cohorts that may be further impacted by the introduction of these proposals, that are not currently outlined in the paper as is.
 - oThese potential hidden costs would also be
- The proposed standardized capped billing process does not take into account the disparity in income, transport usage or service provision/availability across regions.
 - oThis approach may disproportionately impact on disabled people living in areas where they primarily rely on this scheme to connect and engage with community, and where alternative transport options are limited or non-existent. This would create barriers to engaging with community.
 - oIt also exacerbates disproportionate outcomes in terms of intersectionality, especially when considering the needs and barriers experienced by tangata whaikaha Māori, Pacific disabled peoples, parents/caregivers of disabled tamariki and rangatahi, and disabled parents. **Noted. We will consider this suggestion at the time of public consultation, however would like Oranga Tamariki to elaborate on this particular point, so that we can understand it better.**
- These proposals are being presented at a time where other financial cuts across the services and supports for disabled people are impacting on ordinary life outcomes for this community, exacerbating the negative effects already being felt by these cohorts, and disproportionately impacting on their cost of living. The paper does not reflect these potential impacts. **Noted. However, no change has been made to the Cabinet paper. Total Mobility's costs are driven by demand, and costs are escalating unsustainably. Funding changes are needed to ensure the scheme's costs and funding over the 2025-30 period are substantially stabilised.**
- The proposed increased subsidised percentage does not reflect comparatively to the rise in the cost of living and inflation experienced by New Zealand currently, or the limitations these place on options, capabilities and funding disabled people currently have available, which are already stretched due to other proposed disability service changes negatively affecting disabled people. **Total Mobility's costs are driven by demand, and costs are escalating unsustainably. Funding changes are needed to ensure the scheme's costs and funding over the 2025-30 period substantially stabilise.**
- It is possible that the Total Mobility Scheme may be used to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, where services that are otherwise used and more suited (like ORS to fund school transport) are inaccessible to them due to ineligibility or other reasons. Total Mobility
- It should be noted that the steady increase in usage may correlate with the increase in disability population over the years this scheme has been operating, as well as the overall uptake of the scheme, which indicates an overall progress toward EGL principles.
- There may be need to have more stringent application and monitoring processes to ensure this service reaches the individuals and communities it is intended for, but these processes should not themselves become inaccessible to use or navigate, and therefore be a barrier or device to prevent eligible disabled people from accessing this service.

Total Mobility Scheme: Public consultation on proposals to strengthen the scheme

16 December 2025 to 22 March 2026

Opening karakia

Tīkina tīkina te pūtake o ngā kōrero

Kia mānawatia

Kia hihiko

Kia hihiri

Kia toi te kupu

Kia toi te wānanga

Kia pūmau ki te hononga tangata

Kia tina! (tina)

Haumi ē! hui ē! tāiki ē!

Translation

Reach for the purpose of the discussions

To welcome

To be inspired

To be invigorated

To speak truth

To protect this place of learning

To solidify our enduring relationships with one another

Join, gather, unite

What does this consultation cover?

- The Total Mobility Discussion Document asks for feedback on 6 proposals
- Alternate formats are available in Easy Read, New Zealand Sign Language, Braille, Audio, Large Print
- No decisions have been made on these proposals
- Consultation runs 16 December 2025 – 22 March 2026

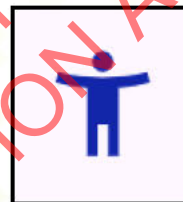
What does this consultation not cover?

What this consultation does not cover

- Government decisions already made to reduce the Total Mobility fare subsidy from 75% to 65%, from 1 July 2026 and to reduce regional fare caps by 10%
- This decision:
 - balances ensuring Total Mobility is affordable and sustainable for all funders and minimising the impact on Total Mobility users
 - provides six months' notice to Total Mobility users of subsidy decreases.

How can feedback be given?

- **Online survey** with Easy Read, New Zealand Sign Language, Audio and Large Print options
- The alternate formats can be accessed by clicking on this icon (top right):
- **Offline feedback form** (Word and PDF formats) to email or post
- **Public feedback sessions** and meetings with representative organisations

A screenshot of the 'Accessibility Settings' menu. At the top is a small green icon of a person with arms raised. The menu has a light purple header and a white body. It contains five settings: 'Activate Easyread' (Simplify the Interface) with a smiley face icon; 'Activate read aloud' (Let the application read questions) with a person and speaker icon and a checked checkbox; 'Voice speed' with a microphone icon and a slider from 'slow' to 'fast'; 'New Zealand Sign Language' (Display a SL video for each question) with a hand icon; and 'Activate Voice Assistance' (Answer questions by voice) with a microphone icon. At the bottom are two buttons: 'Reset Settings' and 'OK'.

Total Mobility proposals

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Proposals to clarify Total Mobility's purpose and make assessments more consistent

Proposal 1: Set a clear purpose statement

"...to provide subsidised mobility services to disabled people who are unable to access public transport because of an impairment, to support them to live their lives..."

Proposal 2: Make assessments more consistent

- Introduce evidence requirements as part of the assessment process
- Introduce periodic reassessments to keep receiving Total Mobility support

Proposals for more targeted support allocations

Proposal 3: Introduce trip caps based on level of need and circumstance

- Option A: Introduce a flat trips cap for all Total Mobility users
 - Everyone would get the same allocations
- Option B: Introduce a base allocation of trips, with additional trips available based on intended use
 - People would get different allocations based on their need and circumstances

Proposal 4: Incentivise more wheelchair accessible vehicle trips

Proposals to promote innovation in Total Mobility delivery

Proposal 5: Enable new service providers to enter the scheme

- Make it easier for other providers such as ride-hail services, on-demand public transport, or community transport providers
- What is needed to make these providers safe and easy to use for Total Mobility users?

Proposal 6: Introduce a national public transport concession for people with disabilities

- Make public transport accessibility concessions nationally consistent

Next steps

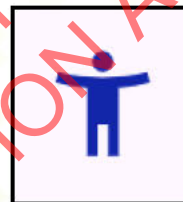
RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

How can feedback be given?

- **Online survey** with Easy Read, New Zealand Sign Language, Audio and Large Print options
- The alternate formats can be accessed by clicking on this icon (top right):
- **Offline feedback form** (Word and PDF formats) to email or post
- **Public feedback sessions** and meetings with representative organisations

A screenshot of the 'Accessibility Settings' menu. At the top is a small green icon of a person with arms raised. The menu items are: 'Activate Easyread' (Simplify the Interface) with a smiley face icon; 'Activate read aloud' (Let the application read questions) with a person and speech bubble icon and a checkmark; 'Voice speed' with a microphone icon and a slider from 'slow' to 'fast'; 'New Zealand Sign Language' (Display a SL video for each question) with a hand icon; and 'Activate Voice Assistance' (Answer questions by voice) with a microphone icon. At the bottom are 'Reset Settings' and 'OK' buttons.

Accessibility Settings

- Activate Easyread
Simplify the Interface
- Activate read aloud
Let the application read questions
- Voice speed
slow ————— fast
- New Zealand Sign Language
Display a SL video for each question
- Activate Voice Assistance
Answer questions by voice

Reset Settings OK

Next steps

- Public consultation closes: 22 March 2026
- Reading and analysing feedback: April-May 2026
- Decision on any proposals to progress: Second-half 2026

Closing karakia

Unuhia, unuhia atu rā

Te pūtake o ngā kōrero

Kia wātea te hinengaro

Kia māmā te ngākau

Kia toi te kupu

Kia toi te mana

Kia pūmau ki te hononga tangata

Kia tina! (tina)

Haumi ē! hui ē! tāiki e!

Translation

Draw out, extract

The purpose of the discussion

To be free and clear the mind

To ease hearts

To be truthful

To protect this place of learning

To solidify our enduring relationships with one another

Join, gather, unite



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Kia ora
Thank you

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982