

Friday, May 2, 2025

# Draft Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 Feedback form

Unique ID

RPTP-0481

## Contact details

Name:

Victoria Crockford

Organisation (if applicable):

QLDC Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group

Do you wish to speak to your submission at a public hearing?

Yes

## Topic 1: Are we focusing on the right things in the plan?

## Topic 2: Should we support community transport services in smaller towns and rural areas?

**Our proposal:** we are considering the establishment of a subsidised community transport programme providing support for transport services in Otago's smaller towns and rural areas.

**What do you think about this proposal?**

**Do you agree with ORC having a role in supporting community transport services?**

Yes

## Topic 3: Should we increase our passenger fares?

**Our proposal:** we are considering increasing the base fare for adult Bee Card passengers from \$2 to \$2.50. This would effectively increase bus fares for all passengers using Bee Cards by 25%.

**What do you think about this proposal?**

## Topic 4: Should we charge more for longer trips?

**Our proposal:** we are considering introducing a zone fare system to our bus networks in Dunedin and Queenstown. Under this system, passengers travelling further distances across multiple zones will pay a higher fare than those travelling short distances within one zone.

**What do you think about this proposal?**

## Topic 5: Should we keep our free fares for children (5-12 years)?

**Our proposal:**

- A. Retain free fares (100% discount) for children (5-12 years), **AND**
- B. Standardise our concession discount for youth (13-18 years) to 40% across both the Dunedin and Queenstown networks. For example, if the adult fare is \$2, youth pay \$1.20, or if the adult fare is \$2.50, youth pay \$1.50.

**What do you think about this proposal?**

## Any other comments?

**Let us know if you have any other comments or ideas on the topics discussed in the Draft Regional Public Transport Plan.**

Please see our attached submission.

# Submission to the Otago Regional Council on the Draft Otago Regional Public Transport Plan

**From:** Queenstown Lakes District Council's Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group

## Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Draft Otago Regional Public Transport Plan (the Draft Plan). [The Queenstown Lakes District Council's Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group](#) appreciates the Council's efforts to develop a public transport framework for our region during these challenging fiscal times.

As outlined in our previous submission to the ORC's Long Term Plan 2024-2034, our group consists of experts in local government, Te Ao Māori, climate and environmental science, climate finance, energy, ecology, archaeology, waste reduction, transport, and housing. We take our role as stewards or kaitiaki of the Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan extremely seriously, and it is in this capacity that we make this submission.

## Acknowledgement of context

The Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group acknowledges:

- That the Draft Plan was originally developed with dependency on NZTA funding to ensure a coordinated approach with the Queenstown Lakes District Spatial Plan.
- That the new Government Policy Statement on Transport has significantly altered the funding landscape, making many of the originally planned initiatives impossible to implement as previously conceived and undermining the efforts to align our locally agreed urban development goals with congestion and climate goals.
- As we noted in our previous submission, we are mindful of the fiscal constraints that nearly every Territorial Authority around the country faces. In writing this submission, we are not immune to the importance of the question, "Who pays?" We must however also consider "What is the cost of inaction?" - particularly regarding climate change impacts and the long-term sustainability of our communities.

## Key Concerns

Despite these constraints, the Draft Plan demonstrates commitment to a more integrated, lower carbon transport future, which we commend. However, the Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group has concerns about the direction of the Draft Plan from the perspective of our District's emissions targets, low-carbon and nature-positive urban development practice, and equity:

1. **Reduced service to Upper Clutha:** We note that the business case for Upper Clutha Public Transport has been withdrawn, despite reports from QLDC that show the success of the trial<sup>1</sup>. The proposed cutbacks to public transport services in the Upper Clutha area severely limit the ability of these communities to develop in a low-emissions manner. These communities need reliable public transport options to reduce private vehicle dependency, particularly in relation to the households living in new affordable housing developments in Wānaka and Lake Hāwea.
2. **Mode shift commitments:** QLDC's current Climate and Biodiversity Plan explicitly commits to "*developing compact settlements that reduce the requirement for new infrastructure, and the associated embodied carbon in construction. Encouraging mode shift to public transport to reduce emissions*". The current Draft Transport Plan, with its reduced services, does not provide the infrastructure required to support this. We do acknowledge that *Section 5.3: "Multi-modal access" (page 71)*, demonstrates the ORC's commitment to integrate cycling with public transport and improve walking and cycling connections to public transport. We commend this commitment but these are high-level commitments with few concrete targets. Our "burning platform" on transport is now, and without clear targets, we are unsure how meaningful integration can be achieved.
3. **Equity considerations:** Without affordable, reliable public transport, we disadvantage those who cannot drive or afford private vehicles, including youth, elderly residents, disabled residents, and lower-income households. This includes a range of households living in new developments in the Upper Clutha catchment, including senior housing and Longview at Lake Hāwea.
4. **Transport emissions impact:** As highlighted in our previous submission, transport emissions account for 40 percent of our District's total greenhouse gas emissions profile (excluding aviation), compared to the national average of 18 percent. This underscores the critical importance of investing in public transport solutions specific

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<sup>1</sup> QLDC part-funded a second Community Shuttle Trial by Community Networks/LINK Upper Clutha between 29 May and 18 September 2023, in response to market research which showed the need for more affordable low carbon transport options.

For the full report see here:

<https://www.communitylink.nz/shuttle-trial>

And a summary on our website:

<https://climateaction.qldc.govt.nz/upper-clutha-community-shuttle-trial/#:~:text=The%20aim%20of%20the%20trial%20was%20to%20test,Shuttle%20Trial%20between%20May%20and%20September%20last%20year.>

to our region's needs. By reducing public transport services, we are directly undermining our climate action goals by increasing reliance on private vehicles, leading to higher emissions and greater infrastructure costs for road maintenance and parking.

## Recommendations

The Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group strongly recommends:

1. **Investigating alternative funding models:** That the Otago Regional Council undertakes further investigation into the appetite among communities and developers for ratepayer funding of public transport services. Our reading of the Draft Plan is that it has been developed based on the assumption that this is not an option. However, in the absence of government funding, alternative funding models must be sought. This could include:
  - Community consultation on willingness to support local targeted rates for public transport.
  - Exploration of developer contributions toward public transport infrastructure in new developments (noting the context for Inclusionary Zoning in the Queenstown Lakes District).
  - Consideration of a commercial rate based on capital value rather than the proposed 'Uniform' general rate change, which would ensure that visitors to the district contribute to the public transport services they use.
2. **Community Engagement:** That the Otago Regional Council invests in taking communities along on the journey toward reduced car dependency through:
  - Educational campaigns on the benefits of public transport.
  - Community workshops to gather input on route planning and service frequency.
  - Clear communication about how public transport supports our climate commitments.

## Conclusion

The Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group understands the funding constraints the Otago Regional Council faces. However, we believe that successful, well-integrated, low-emissions communities require accessible, affordable public transport. The current draft plan does not sufficiently support this vision, particularly for the Upper Clutha area.

We urge the Council to reconsider the proposed service reductions and instead explore innovative funding and implementation strategies that can help maintain and gradually expand public transport services. This approach would better align with our district's commitment to achieving a 40% mode shift and creating sustainable, accessible communities for all residents.

As we noted in our previous submission, *"We share Kāi Tahu's aspiration to secure the best possible future for us and our children after us."* Investing in effective public transport is a crucial part of creating that future.

Thank you for considering our submission. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further and to work collaboratively toward solutions that benefit our communities and our climate and biodiversity aspirations.

**On behalf of the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Climate and Biodiversity Reference Group**

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**2 May 2025**