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# What are Council's aspirations for Community Transport?

10 February 2026

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## Workshop purpose

- To understand Councils aspirations and directions in relation to community transport
- Provide an overview of the community transport landscape and possible options available to Council.
- Strong intent was made through the RPTP that Council would:  
“support non-profit ‘community transport’ services to increase access to essential services in our rural communities”



# What is community transport?





- Operates outside conventional public and private transport services run by Council or commercial operators
- Is primarily a social service
- Services are established, designed and **operated by community entities** (usually charitable trusts)
- Meet the unique transport needs in communities where public transport does not exist
- Donation model - heavy reliance on volunteers, grants, donations and fundraising



Community transport is a **potential transport solution** that presents **excellent value for money** and could significantly increase the connectivity of people living in Otago's smaller towns and rural communities.



# Where does community transport fit in with PT?

|  | 1. Fixed-route buses  | 2. On-demand buses  | 3. Total Mobility   | 4. Community transport  |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |               |                          |    |
| <b>What is it?</b>                     | Contracted buses travelling along a fixed route and timetable                     | Contracted buses travelling within a designated area that can be booked through an app or phone | Subsidised door-to-door transport service run by commercial operators                                       | Non-profit organisations, bespoke services operated by volunteer. Typically, door-to-door   |
| <b>Where do we have this in Otago?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dunedin</li> <li>Queenstown</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mosgiel</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dunedin, Oamaru, Queenstown, Wanaka, Balclutha, Alexandra</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~15-20 organisations throughout Otago (e.g. Wanaka, Balclutha, Oamaru, Alexandra)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Who is this best for?</b>           | Urban areas with high population density  | Suburban areas with medium population density   | Only for eligible people with long-term impairments   | Rural areas and small communities with low populations  |
| <b>Supported by ORC?</b>               | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ?   |



# RPTP community transport actions

## Community transport actions | The council will:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>CT A1</b> | Develop a framework for identifying and prioritising a community transport programme that supplements our core public transport network.   |
| <b>CT A2</b> | Collaborate with our partner agencies and community organisations to develop a shared vision for community transport, applying data-driven approaches and community engagement to identify challenges and opportunities and co-design solutions. |
| <b>CT A3</b> | Trial a community transport service in a selected area with the intention to scale up the service based on the trial's outcomes and community needs.   |
| <b>CT A4</b> | Develop a framework to fund and support a robust community transport system in Otago in alignment with policies CT P1 and CT P2.   |
| <b>CT A5</b> | Prepare community transport projects for inclusion in future annual plans, long-term plans, regional public transport plans, regional land transport plans and relevant business cases.  |



## Questions to try and answer today

1. How would Council like to progress with community transport?
2. What community transport model should we develop for Otago?
3. What will ORC provide to support this model?
4. What is the desired timing and scale of a community transport programme?
5. What are Council's critical success factors for community transport?



# Why is community transport important?

- Helps address regional connectivity challenges
- Changing environment with aging population and increasing pressure on Total Mobility
- Supports community well being and economic prosperity
- Delivers significant social benefits:
  - reduced social isolation
  - increased access to health care and essential services
  - community participation
  - independence
- Helps people living in rural or small towns to remain independent and living in their communities
- Fulfilment of Land Transport Management Act; Section 35 – Consideration of needs of the transport disadvantaged



# Why is community transport important?

*Community Transport has the potential to “fill the gap” where limited or no public transport facilities exist...We continually receive feedback from disabled people across Otago (including Dunedin) who are struggling to attend health and other essential appointments...*

*We note that the ORC does not currently provide Community Transport providers with funding and recommend that the Council develops a funding mechanism to support rural transport providers.*

**-CCS Disability Action submission on the Otago RPTP 2025-2035**

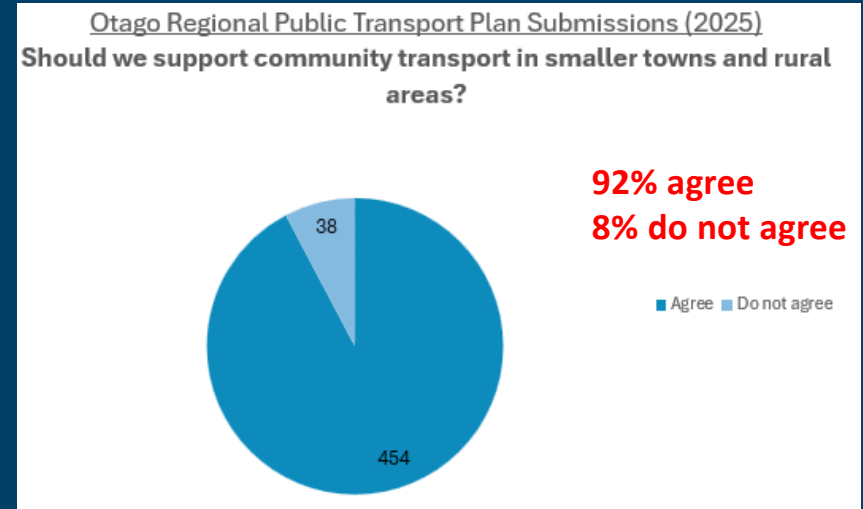


**ccs**  
**disability action**  
Including all people



# Community support for community transport

- Community sentiment toward ORC supporting community transport is **overwhelmingly positive**.
- Four RPTP submitters spoke passionately on the need for community transport in their communities.
- Key themes included high level of transport disadvantage, pressure on existing volunteer driver services, commitment to fill gaps and partner with community trusts
- Well-supported by Territorial Authorities--QLDC, DCC, CDC and WDC (CODC did not make a submission).





# Total Mobility and Community Transport

## Total Mobility

- Small Passenger Services (taxis)
- Subsidy applied per trip
- Only exists where a contracted operator exists and is wanting to be contracted for the provision of Total Mobility
- More viable to have wheelchair hoist vehicles (WAVs)

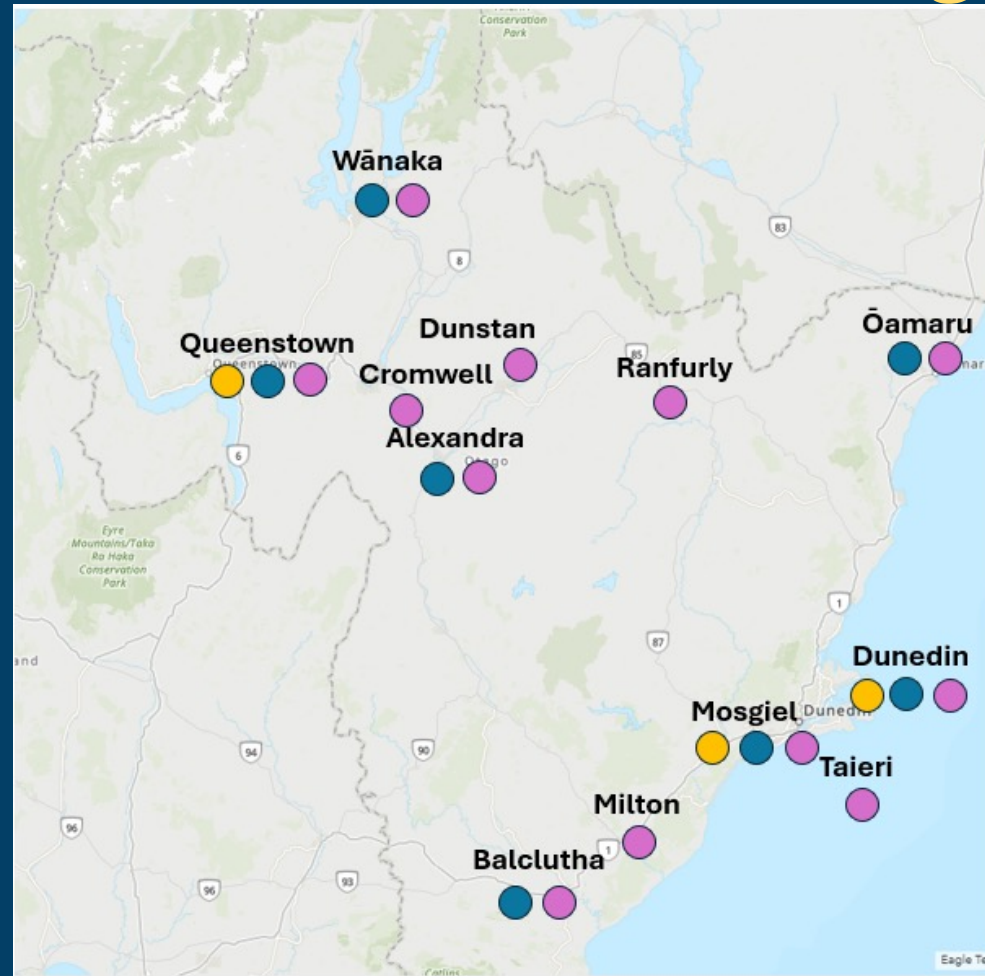
## Community Transport




- Community groups (trusts)
- Grant towards operations
- Offers more affordability for longer distance trips
- Can operate in areas that do not have the population or size for a small passenger service

- Door-to-door service
- Feasible in rural areas/smaller townships
- Suitable option for transport disadvantaged



# Current situation in Otago



| Key   | Existing Transport  |
|---|---------------------|
|  | Fixed Route Bus     |
|  | Total Mobility      |
|  | Community Transport |



# Current situation in Otago

- ~15-20 community organisations providing transport assistance – primarily for health care and community engagement (eg. Age Concern, Community Houses, St John, Cancer Society, RSA)
- Approximately half of these organisations have dedicated community vehicles, whilst volunteers use their own vehicles in other cases
- Funded locally or have sponsorship
- Many of these organisations have eligibility criteria for use of services
- ORC has no formal framework or policy to fund and support community transport
- Ōamaru-Palmerston community shuttle trial (unique situation)





## Existing driver services - views of current challenges

- Funding operational expenses. Most funders don't cover fuel, rego, WOFs etc
- Volunteers are using personal cars as can't afford to run vans.
- Marketing and advertising services and driver recruitment
- Funded locally or have sponsorship
- No clear guidance on how to set up, manage and effectively run a volunteer driver service/community vehicle trust.
- Many elderly live in isolation. Social connection from community transport should not be underestimated.



# What is ORC's current involvement in community transport?

- In late 2025, ORC approved a \$25,000 grant for a six-month community transport trial in Ōamaru

- **Trial details:**

- Run by a local Steering Committee
- November 2025 - May 2026
- Drives people between Oamaru and Palmerston 3x/week to connect with the Palmerston Orbus service
- Enables people to travel Oamaru-Dunedin-Oamaru in one day
- The grant is used for P endorsements, fuel, vehicle rental, etc.

- The Steering Committee has dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours
- Early support and feedback is generally positive, but further evaluation is needed
- Further details related to the Ōamaru trial will be presented to Council at a later date as part of a discussion on how best to serve Ōamaru





# What is happening in other regions?

## Canterbury

### Funding

- Annual Grant
- Funded from targeted rates
- 2024/25 \$200,000 total awarded in grants
- Service and support for community transport organisations considered core service delivery

### Operations

- 17 Community Vehicle Trusts
- CRC provide annual grants to each CVT  
Community Transport Advisor – 1 FTE
- Annual networking event for CVTs
- Informative website with CVT services and resources on how to set up a CVT

## Waikato

### Funding

- Contestable fund
- Originally funding with a \$1 general rate, now part of the public transport targeted rate
- Fund has grown from \$200,000 to \$500,000 over last 3 years – up to \$20,000 per application

### Operations

- Collective of over 30 community transport providers and various stakeholder organisations providing a platform to collaborate, support and share information.
- WRC - funder and 1 full time dedicated staff resource
- Waikato Community Transport Forum – administered by Waikato Regional Council
- Dedicated website for users and operators, including resources and reporting
- Pushing for national presence and coordination



# Waikato Regional Council Accountability reporting 2023/24



## Council's role

- Transport is a core function of Council
- Community transport by default falls into the PTA's eco-system
- The RPTP is the mechanism for Council to meet their LTMA obligations with respect to assisting persons who are transport-disadvantaged.
- Implement community transport policies and actions agreed through RPTP
- Support, enable and empower the community



# RPTP community transport actions

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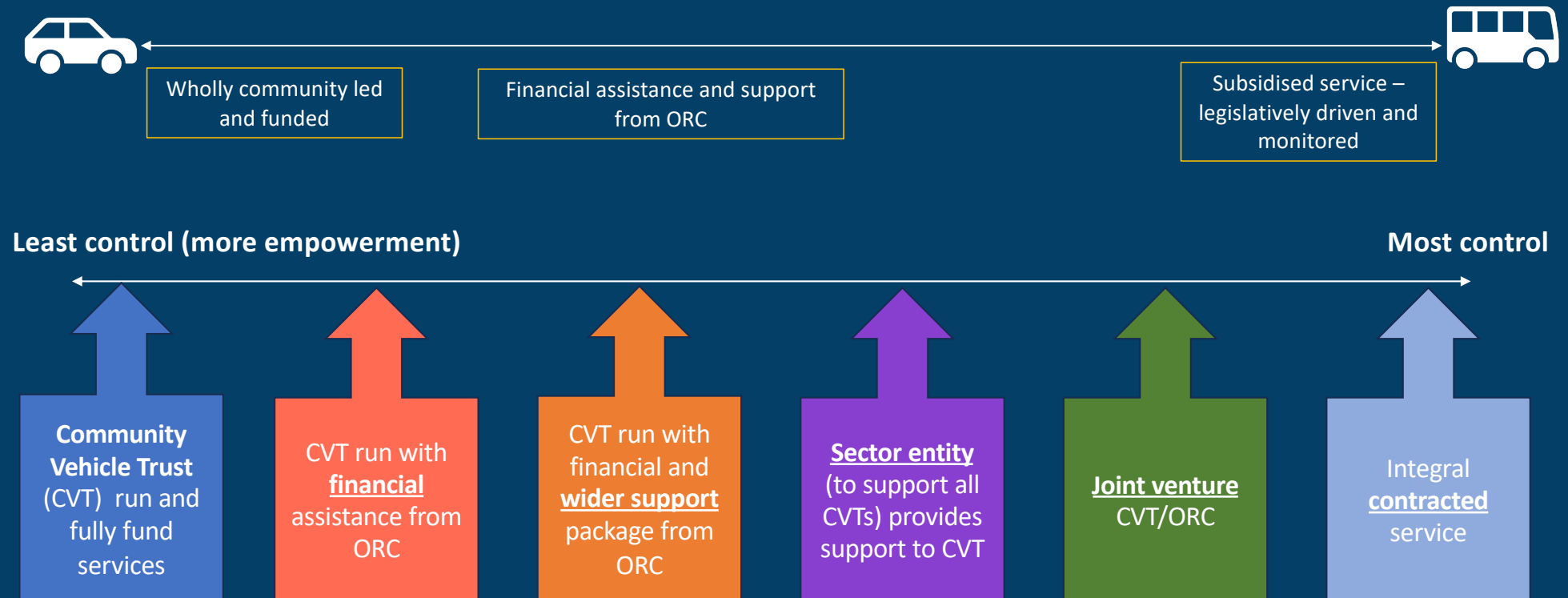
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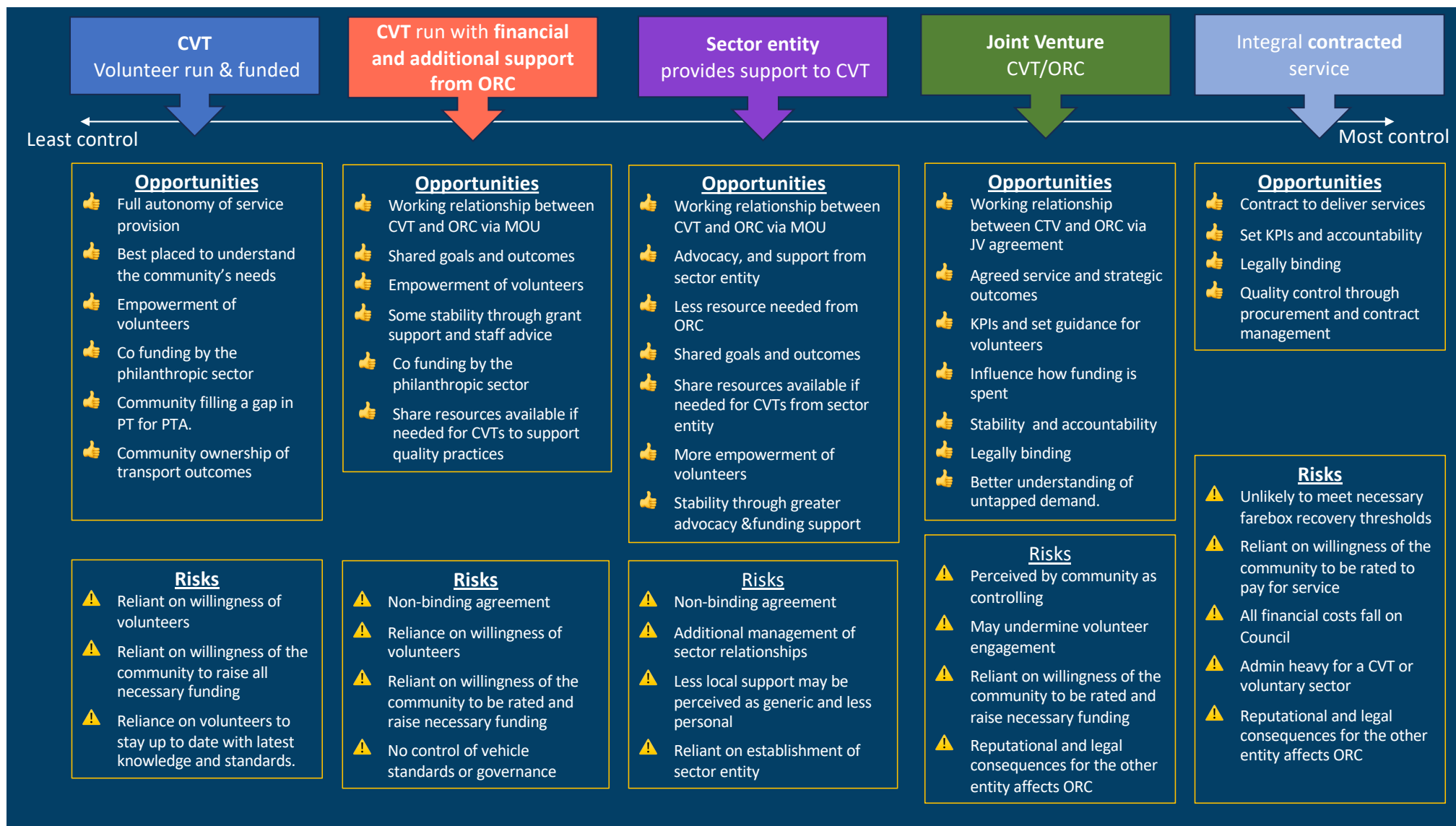
**What community transport model should  
we develop for Otago?**



# Operating model options









**What will ORC provide to support this model?**



# What could financial assistance look like?

## Contestable fund

- Awarded annually and no ongoing funding guaranteed
- Grants scaled each year based on variables such as; size of trust, number of people accommodated
- Fund allocated based on an eligibility criteria developed by ORC

## Annual Grant

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Same grant value given to all CVTs each year
- Vary grant value based on size
- Sets expectations of ongoing commitment

## Funding policy considerations

- How should funding be rated? General rate or targeted rate?
- How specific does Council want to be on how the funds are used? Operating costs/Capital costs/Vehicle purchase
- Funding policy would need to include methodology for determining rating calculation, grant or fund value, criteria for reviewing fund or grant values, guidance on how inflation or changes in cost, coverage or trust operational conditions should be treated over time.



# What other support could Council provide?

## Staff resource

Community transport  
advisor role

Website with  
templates and  
shared resources

Assistance with  
comms and  
marketing

## Advocacy

-Advocate for national  
body for community  
transport

## Technology integration

- Booking system
- Trip tracking

Establish Advisory  
group

Support with grant  
application and  
funding sources

Advocate for NZTA to  
establish a  
**contestable fund or**  
similar for the CVT  
sector.



# What is the value proposition for Council?

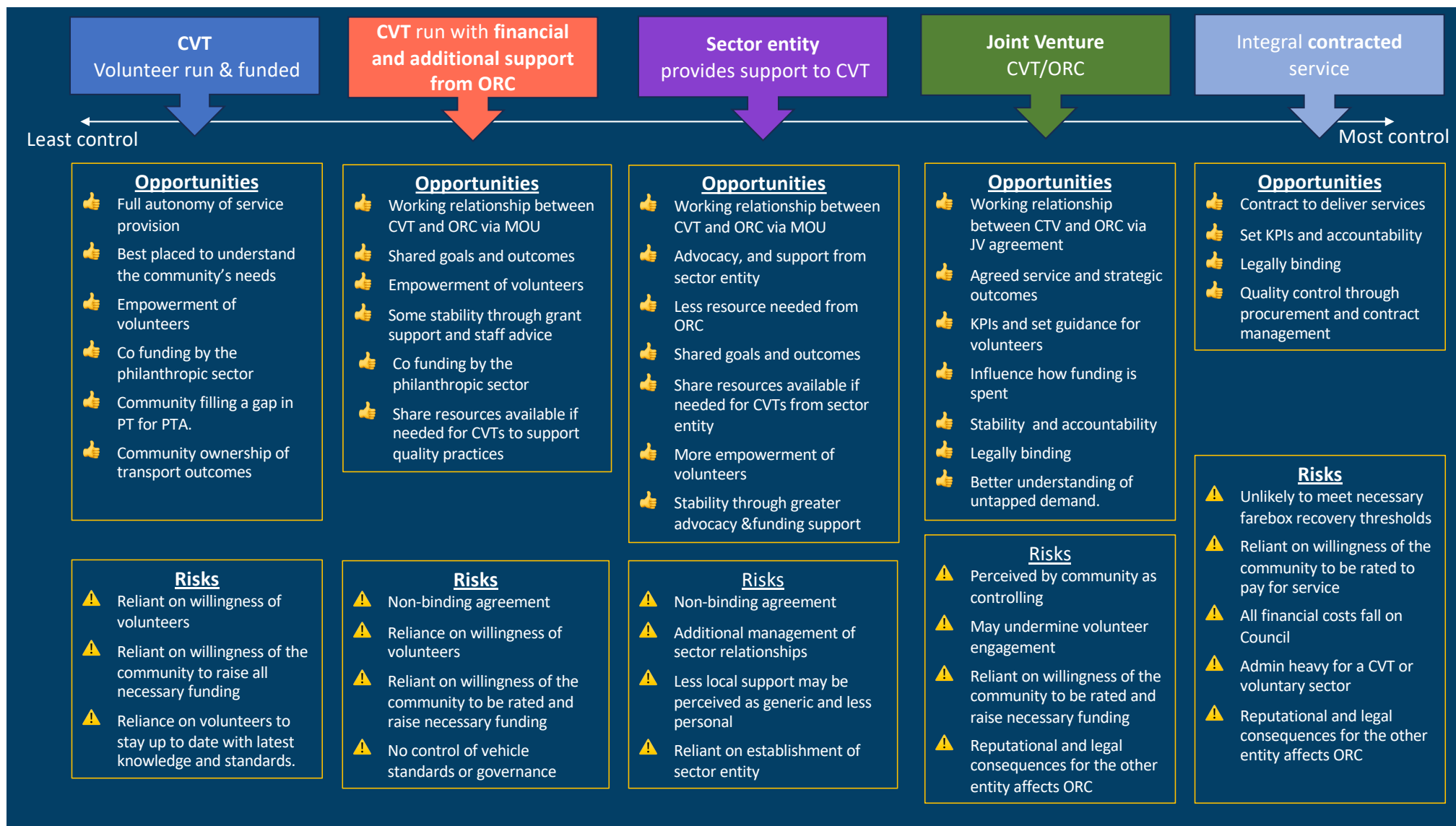
- A grant is a very **controllable** budget item
- **Community** can deliver what **contracted services can not** - For example: \$200,000 of contracted services would buy you 1 bus in 1 location, 1 return trip per day.
- High return on investment due to volume of volunteer time
- Equity of access
- Potential **trip replacement for some Total mobility trips** in some locations relieving pressure on TM
- Public transport is a core function, however extending traditional PT services into some of the regions is not feasible. **Supporting and empowering community led responses** could be a cost-effective solution.



## Questions to try and answer today

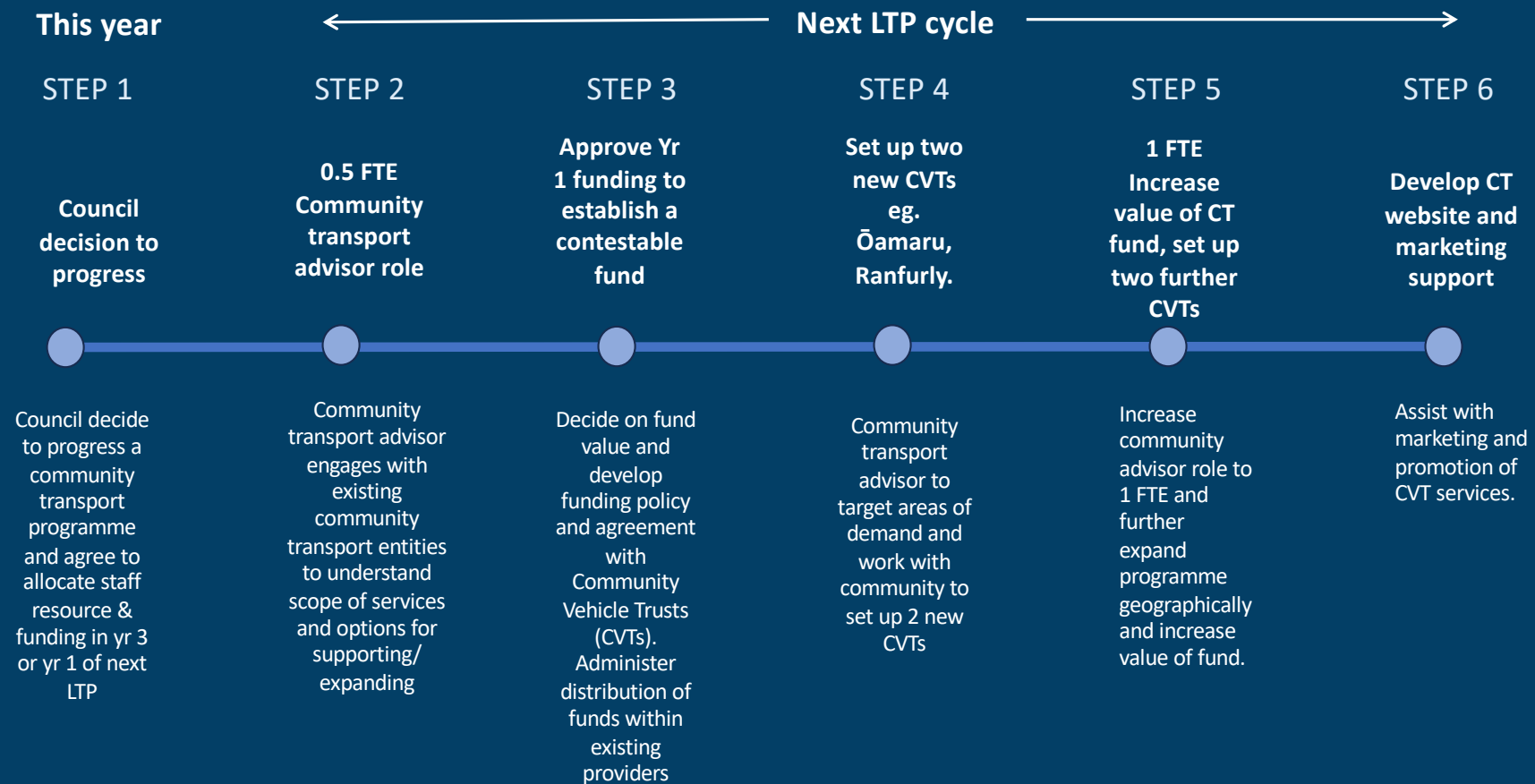
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# Possible scaling and timing of investment in CT





# What are Council's Critical Success Factors for community transport?

**Focus on community outcomes and benefits to the community.**

- Communities feel empowered
- Increased geographic coverage
- Increasing accessibility to appropriate transport services
- Affordability
- Sustainability - Operating costs verses funding and donations secured

## Evaluating success (KPIs)

- Trips taken
- Services accessed
- Volunteer hours
- Kilometres travelled



# Thank you



Otago  
Regional  
Council