

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Draft Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 Feedback form

Unique ID

RPTP-0245

Contact details

Name:

Dianne Rogers

Organisation (if applicable):

Access Matters Aotearoa

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?

Do you agree that these focus areas capture Otago's public transport priorities?

No

Tell us more:

We support the overall direction of the Plan to improve public transport for the community. However, we are deeply concerned that accessibility for disabled people is not clearly addressed.

Terms like “transport disadvantaged” blur the specific and persistent barriers disabled people face—barriers that are distinct from other groups.

Insights from the Kōrero for Change – Transport webinar and recent lived experience research reveal that people are still being left behind—physically, socially, and economically—by a system that fails to meet diverse access needs.

Accessibility is not just about ramps. It includes the full journey: from a person's front door to their destination, with clear, safe, and reliable systems along the way. Trust is low. Many people report being denied access, feeling unsafe, or avoiding public transport due to fear, confusion, or unpredictability.

This matters. Around 17% of New Zealanders are disabled, and over 45% of those aged 65+ live with impairments affecting mobility, hearing, vision, or cognition (Stats NZ, 2023). In Otago, this represents thousands of people who may be systemically excluded unless transport is designed inclusively.

The New Zealand Transport Agency states that accessible transport is critical for disabled people's independence, social inclusion, and economic participation (NZTA, 2022).

New Zealand has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which obligates equal access to transport. The Plan must reflect this commitment by explicitly embedding accessibility.

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

Are there other initiatives or programmes that you think Council should be considering?

Yes

Tell us more:

Yes — but only if accessibility is guaranteed from the outset. These services must not become a “second-best” option for disabled people.

We recommend:

- Clear national standards for accessibility (as per the NZTA’s Public Transport Design Guidelines and Total Mobility Scheme Review)
- Disability-led co-design and ongoing evaluation
- Meaningful inclusion of disabled voices in governance and development processes
- Examples from international best practice:
 - Australia’s Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT) are a national framework ensuring public transport is accessible and inclusive. These standards were established under Australia’s federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), meaning they carry legal force. In effect, all public transport operators must ensure their services are accessible – it’s a legal obligation aimed at eliminating discrimination (tmr.qld.gov.au; infrastructure.gov.au). Access Matters Aotearoa is continuing to campaign for New Zealand to adopt a similar approach in New Zealand as the DSAPT standards recognize that accessible transport allows people with disabilities, their families, and carers to participate fully in community life, and also benefits others (such as seniors and parents with prams) by making travel easier
 - In Canada, Toronto’s Transit Commission established an Accessibility Advisory Committee composed of disabled riders and community leaders to guide all future service changes. This has led to increased ridership and improved trust.

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?

Should Council increase the adult Bee Card fare?

Yes

Tell us more:

Yes.

We strongly urge the Council to co-develop an Accessibility Action Plan for public transport in Otago, with the disability community. This should include:

- Mandatory staff training, especially for drivers and frontline staff
- Accessible communication, including real-time audio and visual updates, Easy Read formats, and NZSL interpretation
- Infrastructure investment — e.g., tactile surfaces, accessible bus stops, wayfinding, shelter design, and auditory cues
- Safety measures tailored for disabled passengers

Local precedent:

The Greater Wellington Regional Council's Accessibility Charter and work with Blind Citizens NZ show that when local government partners with the disability community, access outcomes improve significantly.

This is not just a policy preference — it is a human rights obligation under the UNCPRD and a commitment embedded in the NZ Disability Strategy and NZ Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) reforms.

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:

- Retain free fares (100% discount) for children (5-12 years), **AND**
- 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?

Should Council retain free fares (100% discount) for children (5-12 years)?

Yes

Tell us more:

Yes.

This supports families, reduces congestion, and enables young disabled people to learn how to use public transport independently, especially when they cannot rely on a parent to drive.

Should Council standardise our concession discount for youth (13-18 years) to 40% across both the Dunedin and Queenstown networks?

Yes

Tell us more:

Yes.

This promotes consistency and supports disabled teenagers — many of whom cannot access a driver's license — to participate in education, employment, and community life.

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.

We want to see a transport system that works for everyone. That requires:

- Co-designing services with disabled people, not just for them
- Rebuilding trust through consistently accessible and safe service
- Treating accessibility as a non-negotiable requirement — not a future aspiration

We urge the Otago Regional Council to show national leadership by embedding accessibility in all levels of public transport planning, procurement, and delivery and consider supporting the Access Matters Aotearoa call to adopt Australia's Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT) as a national framework ensuring public transport is accessible and inclusive.

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