

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Draft Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 Feedback form

Unique ID

RPTP-0083

Contact details

Name:

Thomas Firth

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

No

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:

You have missed out on the main advantage to the community of public transport- more liveable cities and towns for both transport AND non-transport users. Viable public transport encourages public health through encouraging more exercise (even if it is just walking to the bus stop) and greater community as there is more social interaction when not isolated in cars. It also frees up our roads for pedestrians, cycling, and drastically decreases road congestion during peak periods and reduces the blight of parked cars on streets. This also reduces wear and tear on road infrastructure. The current priorities reflect a lack of integration of public transport into the broader community appearing like a disconnected and inadequate addendum (which is holding it back).

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:

My own experience with regional buses is that, in order to serve the community, they need to take not much longer than driving a car otherwise they are not viable alternatively. Some regional buses take much longer as they are not taking a direct route in order to go in and out of different regional towns. This could be addressed by breaking trips into the direct versus connecting services.

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:

I think that fares should be low but it is not necessary for all fares to be so low. For fully employed adults, a fare below \$10 would be suitable but bear in mind that keeping rates below the competing car park rates is a good idea as we want to make buses more attractive than driving a car. You do need to generate enough revenue to maintain and upgrade services but public transport serves a public good and is not a business. Revenue should be calculated on the true cost to the community - every passenger is 1 less car on the road, representing a saving of funds toward road infrastructure wear-and-tear, congestion, and the cost of providing parking spaces. It also encourages community health benefits which also has a cost-saving over time. Has the health, infrastructure, social, and environment benefits been included as part of the budget? Because if not, it should be.

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?

Should Council charge more for longer trips?

Yes

Tell us more:

I'm not in possession of the facts here - do a cost-benefit analysis. Will it raise revenue significantly? As I wrote above, I suspect some fares are too low anyway but if increased fares will make people prefer to drive, then it best to keep them low.

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?

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

No

Tell us more:

If you must, charge for children but keep the fares low.

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

Yes

Tell us more:

This sounds reasonable.

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.

Viable public transport makes the streets more attractive for pedestrians, cyclists, AND motor vehicles too (less congestion, more alternatives). Make transport more viable by:

- ensuring buses are frequent, on time and coordinated
- preventing buses getting caught in traffic - this can be done by installing more bus-only lanes on busy roads, giving buses priority at traffic lights, - for very congested streets, considering closing the road to all cars excepts buses and delivery vehicles.

The funding/budget issue: transport needs to be funded within a wider context. 1 passenger on the bus = 1 less car on the roads for all the advantages to environment, health, community, and infrastructure that brings. Fund bus services through health, environment, business, and community initiatives (and get funding from these areas if the central govt is not supporting public transport directly) as buses encourage more walking, a healthier environment, walkable shopping districts with greater business access and exposure, stronger social cohesion through greater community interactions. All these benefits need to be monetised for their value to the community rather than narrowly looking at fare revenue only. If buses were a viable non-govt business then they would be private businesses. They aren't and only someone totally ignorant in basic economics would treat them as such. PS - can you hurry up and get the traffic exemption to put the bike racks back on the buses please? This is totally impractical in a hilly place like Dunedin not to have bike racks on the buses!