

Monday, May 12, 2025

Draft Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 Feedback form

Unique ID

RPTP-0549

Contact details

Name:

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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?

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?

Kia Ora,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Plan.

I commend the work ORC have done over the years in enhancing the bus service and growing patronage over recent years. (And this appears to be in contrast with the overall trend in Aotearoa according to figure 5a of the draft plan.)

However, I note there are immediate, existential global challenges facing us. For example, I'm concerned about estimates that 20% of terrestrial vertebrate species and up to half of Earth's higher lifeforms could be extinct by 2100, fueled in part by climate change. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocene_extinction).

Through the Paris agreement, countries aim to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, but to do so we would have to emit no more than 6 years of co2 at 2022 rates from 2023 (i.e. all the budget used up by 2028,) for an even chance of staying below 1.5°C. (<https://ourworldindata.org/how-much-co2-can-the-world-emit-while-keeping-warming-below-15c-and-2c>) However, since then we have instead increased the rate of output rather than reducing it. And scientists are increasingly concerned we may have already passed the 1.5°C warming mark. (<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2467521-have-we-already-breached-the-1-5c-global-warming-target/>)

The truth of the matter is that the goals of the Paris Agreement hang in the balance. If we continue on the current track, we will fail.

I am deeply concerned that these global trends will have a catastrophic effect on life around the world, and that the Otago region will not be safe from those effects.

Given the urgency of this problem, we need to do our part to eliminate transport-related co2 emissions in Otago over the next 5 years. We rely also on every sector and every region in the world to achieve the same goal of eliminating carbon emissions. However unlikely that may be, I want to see Otago doing what it takes and being among the leaders.

The level of ambition in this plan is woefully inadequate. The plan should have the following main changes:

1. Acknowledge the climate crisis as the key driver for transport policy in Otago.
2. Acknowledge that the key goal is to eliminate as many fossil-fueled vehicles, and as many fossil-powered vehicle-kilometers from our roads as possible. The goal should include a measure of the reduction of fossil fuel use by Otago's transport sector. (e.g. 90% over 5 years.)
3. A target to grow public transport mode-share by 30% per annum.

Note the mode-share (of PT proportion of total commuting trips) that could be achieved would then look like:

7% in 2024
9% in 2025
12% in 2026
15% in 2027
20% in 2028
26% in 2029

This would be a minimum, since we are aiming to eliminate almost all commuting in fossil-powered cars. The balance of 74% in 2029 would be some share by electric cars, but a majority by walking and electric and regular bike. If people are reluctant to use active modes, then the required PT shares would be even higher.

To achieve these goals, the public transport system will have to work in conjunction with other policies, such as carbon taxes, fuel supply limits, parking and wider transport plans. The Otago Regional Council should engage with other agencies to enable these supportive measures.

Specifically, I'd like to see the following changes to the plan:

- On page 9, (I acknowledge that other plans such as the LTP may not yet align, but regardless,) strengthen goal 2 to state the substantial elimination of fossil fuel use in Otago within 5 years as an explicit goal.
- On Page 17
 - Focus area 1 should be re-framed from "useful public transport services" to "the dominant supplier of transport services beyond walking and cycling" for all of Otago's residents.
 - The mention of providing service for transport-disadvantaged people should be re-framed as either providing service for "all Otago's residents including the transport-disadvantaged", or the transport-disadvantaged point should be moved to it's own separate objective.
 - Focus area 3 should be re-focused as "a public transport system that is key to eliminating all fossil fuel usage and carbon emissions in Otago."
- On Page 30
 - In SQ A1, adhering to a repeating "clockface" schedule as much as practical should be de-emphasized to being a minor goal; and only done if it results in very minor cost (such as waiting times and service frequency.)
 - For frequent service routes no timing/timetable should be offered during the times of day when a 15 minute frequency is promised; rather the services should operate without delays and be monitored to keep to the 15 minute maximum wait at all stops.
 - In SQ A1, remove the bullet point on the use intermediate timing points.
- On Page 36
 - Add TM A6: Allow a hybrid Total Mobility system where a passenger is taken to/from a bus stop and assisted on/off the bus by the Total Mobility provider
- On Page 40
 - Re-frame EQ A3: "Prioritize public transport investments and policies that enable a patronage-focused network. A sub-priority is to increase patronage for transport-disadvantaged people."
- On Page 48
 - A new policy should be introduced as DC P1, with the existing policies re-numbered. "The public transport service should be designed to displace carbon emissions from the existing transport as quickly as possible, and to enable a complete decarbonization of the transport sector in Otago."
- On Pages 60 and 61
 - Shorten the time-frames for regional expansion. (There is no point in planning 30 years ahead unless we have already eliminated all fossil fuels within the next 5 years or so, since societal collapse is likely withing 30 years unless we eliminate fossil fuel use.)

- Re-frame "subject to funding and further study" and "speculative" to "obtain necessary funding to establish..."
- On Page 71
 - Remove the language around "choice" and replace it with a discussion of appropriate modes: active modes for shorter trips for those who are able, and public transport for the longest trips and for those unable to access other modes.
- On Pages 84/85
 - in F P2: add "off-peak use incentive" to the list of fare structure elements
 - in F P3: increase the discount for youth fares to 50% (from 40%)
- On Page 93
 - Set targets for Mode share for each of the next 6 years as above (7% in 2024/2025 through 26% for 2029/2030)
 - In On-time Performance, change the occurrences of "between 1 minute early and 5 minutes late" to "between the timetabled time and 5 minutes late" (buses should never leave earlier than a timetabled time.)
- On Page 95
 - Within Non-significant variations, "Fare level and structure changes" should be replaced by "Fare level and structure changes such that, for each journey on the network, the fare amounts to either no more than a 10% increase on the year prior, or no more than 20% on 2 years prior, after allowing for inflation in both cases."
 - The intention is that public consultation would be needed before raising fares significantly (e.g. beyond about 25%). If zones are introduced and it was desired to charge a higher price for some zones, the pricing changes should happen over a number of years (e.g. at 10% per year) rather than being done in one hit. This is part of keeping trust with passengers.
- On Page 108
 - Under Density in the table, there should not be a distinction between the core and the periphery, all new developments should require "... services within a 15-minute walk of residential and commercial opportunities".
- On Page 127
 - 25% (private share for 2025/2026) and 30% (for 2026/2027) are ambitious but should be targeted without a significant rise in the average fare (i.e. by lifting patronage by ~ 30% per year)

In conclusion, I thank you again for the opportunity to comment on your plans for public transport. I don't want much, just a reasonable chance for my children and grand-children.

I would like to speak in support of my submission, should there be an opportunity.