

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

## Draft Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 Feedback form

Unique ID

RPTP-0314

### Contact details

Name:

Andrew Whiley

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:

As per attached.

### 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:

Working more closely with the DCC

## 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:

Fares will have to increase unless the ORC takes a different approach. Frequency and technology are important to give residence more confidence in using the bus service.

## 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:

Fares will have to increase unless the ORC takes a different approach. Frequency and technology are important to give residence more confidence in using the bus service.

## 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:

Fares will have to increase unless the ORC takes a different approach. Frequency and technology are

important to give residence more confidence in using the bus service.

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

Yes

## 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.**

As per my attached submission

RPTP Submissions  
Otago Regional Council  
Private Bag 1954  
Dunedin 9054  
23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025

Re Submission on the Draft Otago Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035

In 2021 I presented to the ORC Hearings Panel on the "Future of the Bus Service in Dunedin".

When I reviewed the current submission process, I looked back at what I had previously submitted and where are we at as a city. In my position as a Dunedin City Councillor, I am very focused on how we can have a better bus service for our residents here in Dunedin City.

My views haven't changed so I am presenting this ODT Opinion piece that I wrote on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021 as my submission for this consultation.

I also fully support the DCC's Submission.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature block]

#### A BETTER BUS SERVICE

I was glad to read (ODT 27.08.21) that the \$2 city bus fares would remain for the foreseeable future. With Generation Zero calling for \$1 fares, I would have to agree with the quote from ORC Cr Deaker, that cheaper fares are not the "be all and end all" with regards to increasing patronage. He also commented on the financial implications of the \$2 flat fare, calling it a "bleeding wound" and a "burden". ORC Council staff stated that the \$2 fare was producing a loss of about \$98,000 per month, or \$1.174million annually, from lost patronage revenue. I am concerned about such a loss and who makes up the shortfall. More importantly, how can Dunedin have a better bus service that at least breaks even?

Back in May 2021, I made a personal submission to the ORC hearings panel, focused on the future of the bus service in Dunedin. This opinion piece covers off many of the key points I made to the panel about how Dunedin could have an effective bus service that is essentially "user pay". Personally, I do not want to see a bus service that is underwritten by Dunedin ratepayers; rather I believe that we need to get creative and work on solutions to get more guaranteed patrons on the buses.

So, who are the biggest potential bus users in Dunedin? It is the workers and students. Focusing on the students first, I believe the University and Polytechnic students are major players, but we don't have a service that is attractive to them. In talking with many students, they are keen to use the buses, but they are not keen on paying 'as you go' as they are often on a fixed income, and they don't feel the service is fit for purpose. However, if the University and Polytechnic collected \$120 from each student built into their student fees for an annual bus pass, this could create \$3m revenue upfront (based on 25,000 students). With this revenue, bus company contracts could be funded to increase the frequency of student-friendly schedules and widen the route networks. This could also solve issue of the hundreds of cars that students bring to town because they feel they need them at their flats. Many of these vehicles are parked Monday to Friday and only moved occasionally on the weekends. With this 'pre-paid bus service entitlement' for every student, we should see many students actively taking the bus to class, doing their shopping and visiting other parts of the city (perhaps even knowing that their transport costs are covered and with an expanded service – including study-friendly efficient routes- we might even see them being able to live outside the current student 'zone').

From my discussions, students want a bus service they can use like Uber and the ORC have responded with real-time tracking with the Transit App which was introduced at the end of April. This gives everyone the ability to track a bus and determine how far it is away from their stop. It has been a definite improvement, but unfortunately, many students do not realise this app exists as they aren't using the buses regularly. Many have given up as the schedules don't work for them.

My submission also talked about engaging with all major employers in the city, such as the SDHB, University, Polytechnic, DCC, ORC, MSD and ACC to encourage them to provide all staff with this type of bus pass. A pass could cost \$200 per annum per staff employee and be either fully funded (or even 50%) by the employer. I believe offering this bulk arrangement would not only increase bus patronage, but also encourage a modal shift and assist in funding a more efficient and effective bus service. However, it's the convenience and efficiency of the service that is critical. So there needs to be engagement with the major employers to review bus timetables to ensure that they are suitable and coordinated to work in with hours for shift changes and shift start times at the hospital and other businesses, in order to make it attractive and practical.

Based on these additional revenue streams, I would like to see this result in a Free Ride Service around the CBD, to be used by anyone. For example, the area would be from Jervois Street to the South (Salvation Army Store to Spotlight) through to Albany Street to the North (Rob Roy Diary), across to Logan Park and the Stadium, Anzac Avenue, to Cumberland Street to the east and Princes Street, George Street and up to Moana Pool (thus including Otago Boys, Otago Girls and Kavanagh). This would encourage more people to use the bus and work as an efficient mechanism to navigate a large part of the city and could be modelled on the Free Tram service in Melbourne. Locations like Otago Museum, the Train Station and Toitu Museum could be easily accessed through this enhanced inner-city network. As an example, I can envisage workers at John Wickliffe House, hopping on a 'free' bus and going to shop at Meridian Mall, and then grabbing some lunch before taking the free bus back to work. This could work, especially if the St Clair to Normanby route was modified to travel through the centre of town along Princess Street, the Octagon and George Street. Ideally, this

would be a regular service, travelling every 10-minutes, which would remove the need for the DCC to further proceed with a Loop Bus service.

Other bus services/routes could be offered, such as providing after school services to locations like the Edgar Centre and Logan Park, which would reduce the afterschool sport traffic dilemma faced by many parents. For the hundreds of workers in the wharf area, a regular loop service leaving from the Bus Hub and moving through this industrial area, dropping-off and picking-up workers could benefit many.

I also suggested that we could provide an enhanced Mosgiel Express Service but include a stop at the Sunnyvale Sports Ground for parking, which could negate having to build a separate "Park'n'ride" facility at Burnside. I believe Sunnyvale has lots of available parking Monday to Friday and offers a more seamless service, as it would be more convenient for buses to get on and off the motorway.

In consideration of the governance of the bus service, I suggest there should be joint governance between the ORC and DCC, to ensure that the service meets the demands of our city's residents. These and other creative funding options would not require it to be underwritten by ratepayers if we can get the support from the employer and education entities. Ultimately, we need to have a bus service that we are all proud of and that everyone enjoys using and the only way to do this is to make our current service better. And that means enticing and supporting more people to get on those buses.