

**Final**

# **Tasman Regional Public Transport Plan**

**2015-2018**



## Executive Summary

Tasman District Council provides a subsidy to Nelson City Council for the operation of their contracted bus service between Nelson City and Richmond. The Council also subsidises the Total Mobility scheme for those who have serious mobility constraints.

Tasman District Council provides \$83,673 per year between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2018 for the bus service between Richmond and Nelson and the Late Late Bus. The Council also provides Total Mobility with \$82,241 per year for the same period.

This Plan has been prepared using the new requirements from the Land Transport Management Act 2003. The Plan deals with all matters introduced in that legislation. This Plan replaces the previous Plan that was adopted in January 2012.

This Plan has dealt with the increasing desire for greater collaboration between Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council regarding their shared services especially those that have cross-boundary interaction such as the bus service and Total Mobility. Over the next three years it is hoped that Tasman District Council can continue their good relationship with Nelson City Council and potentially investigate the expansion of the bus service in the Richmond area, as Richmond is currently experiencing considerable growth.

The policies in this Plan align with Tasman's Regional Land Transport Plan 2015-2021 and Tasman's Long Term Plan 2015-2025.

Both these documents can be viewed online at <http://www.tasman.govt.nz/>.

## Introduction

Tasman District Council is required under the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA) to prepare a *Regional Public Transport Plan* (the Plan). The LTMA sets out the requirements regarding the Plan's content and the consultation process required in preparing the Plan.

This Plan updates the 2012 Plan to ensure it meets the requirements of the 2013 changes to the LTMA (which governs the administration of public transport in New Zealand). The 2013 changes to the LTMA included the introduction of a new operating model for public transport in New Zealand, with regional public transport plans being the cornerstone of the new operating model.

Matters that must be addressed in the Plan include:

- How the Council will work with bus operators to ensure services meet the needs of passengers;
- How the bus services that the Council intends to provide will be arranged into units; and
- How bus fares will be reviewed and set.

## Purpose

This Plan sets out the Council's intentions and policies regarding public transport in the Tasman district in the next three years. The Plan takes into account all relevant national and local policies, and the public transport funding from the New Zealand Transport Agency (the Agency) likely to be available to the Council.

The LTMA states that the purpose of a Plan is to provide:

- A means of encouraging the Council and public transport operators to work together in developing public transport services and infrastructure; and
- An instrument in engaging with the public in the city on the design and operation of the public transport network; and
- A statement of:
  - The public transport services that are integral to the public transport network; and
  - The policies and procedures that apply to those services; and
  - The information and infrastructure that support those services.

## Public Transport

The 'public transport' that is referred to in this Plan is the subsidised bus service that runs between Nelson City and Richmond, and the Total Mobility service that operates in Nelson City and Tasman District.

It does not include long-distance bus services, Ministry of Education funded bus services, privately funded bus services or taxi services (other than those that relate to Total Mobility).

Public transport services currently available in the Tasman district include:

- The Late Late Bus – operated by SBL Group Ltd and administered by Nelson City Council;
- NBus – operated by SBL Group Ltd and administered by Nelson City Council;
- The SBL Group Ltd also run additional services to the Tasman region including Abel Tasman and Golden Bay;
- The Total Mobility scheme;
- Community run transport services eg, the Wrinklies bus in Golden Bay;
- Charter services eg, Wadsworth Coachlines.

More detail on each of these schemes will be discussed later in the Plan.

### Nelson City

The focus of this Plan is on services in the Tasman district. However, the Council would like to acknowledge the administrative role of Nelson City Council in these services and as the contract lead for NBus, The Late Late Bus and Total Mobility.

### Funding

Tasman District Council contributes to both the bus service between Richmond and Nelson as well as Total Mobility. This funding receives a co-investment rate from the New Zealand Transport Agency through the Council's application to the National Land Transport Fund. Tasman District Council's funding to both activities is outlined in Table 1.

Project Name	Project Description	Project estimate over 6 years	Project Driver	Year 1 2015-2016	Year 2 2016-2017	Year 3 2017-2018
NBus Services	Funding contribution to Nelson City Council for the NBus services	\$ 557,142	100% O&M	\$83,673	\$83,673	\$83,673
Total Mobility	Contribution to the service that is administered by Nelson City Council	\$493,446	100% O&M	\$82,241	\$82,241	\$82,241

Table 1 – Tasman District Council's funding with NZTA's co-investment funding (NBus service 51%; Total Mobility 60%) for public transport 2015-2018 (uninflated)

### New Public Transport Operating Model

The LTMA changes in 2013 altered the administration of public transport in New Zealand by introducing a new "public transport operating model" (known as PTOM). PTOM is designed

to encourage collaboration and partnering between the funders of public transport and the provider of the bus service in order to grow patronage with less reliance on subsidies.

The Nelson City Council's Regional Public Transport Plan addressed those new requirements and their plan can be viewed online at <http://www.ncc.govt.nz/>.

In summary, many of the new requirements will be introduced as and when the new contract is tendered. This is currently many years away.

### **Services provided by Nelson City Council and available in the Tasman District**

#### **Service between Richmond and Nelson**

Nelson City Council provides the bus service between Nelson city and Richmond by means of a subsidised contract, currently held by local bus operator SBL Group Ltd. The contract specifies which services are to be provided and includes details on routes, timetables and fare levels.

The current contract for this service runs until 2018 but contains provisions for an extension of a further four years should certain performance criteria be met.

The current service operates on two routes between Richmond and Nelson City. One route runs via Bishopdale and Stoke; the other runs via Tahunanui and Stoke. Both run along Main Road, Stoke and Salisbury Road, Richmond. The first service commences at 6.45am with the last service at 7:00pm. A bus departs Richmond and Nelson every 15 minutes at peak times, and every 30 minutes at non-peak times. On Saturdays there are six services in each direction and on Sundays there are five.

The current routes, fare zones and timetables are shown in Attachments 1, 2 and 3.

The service between Nelson city and Richmond is provided by a fleet of modern buses which provide a fully wheelchair accessible service and has additional features such as bike racks.

Information about the service is readily available through a variety of formats, with shelter and timetable information provided at popular bus-stops.

Nelson City Council as the administrator of the service and of the contract with SBL Group Ltd closely monitors the service to ensure that the service between Nelson City and Richmond continues to meet the needs of the two communities. Minor adjustments will be made as necessary. These adjustments, in accordance with their significance policy, may be made without any formal or publicly notified amendment to their and this Plan. As a financial contributor to the contract, Tasman District Council would be able to comment on any adjustments to the Richmond service, as this would directly affect their community.

The current bus service contract was let prior to the LTMA changes and the introduction of the new public transport operating model. This new operating model which was introduced by the 2013 amendment to the LTMA will have little impact on the current contract arrangements (as the current contract came into being in 2012) but future contracts will have to be consistent with the new operating model.

### **Late Late Bus**

The Late Late Bus service is subsidised and contracted by Nelson City Council and is operated by the SBL Group Ltd. Until 30 June 2015, Tasman District Council supported this service through a Community Development grant. It is now funded through the Engineering Services department and is included in the funding for the service between Richmond and Nelson City. This allows Tasman District Council to claim a subsidy from the New Zealand Transport Agency which will provide a better service to those who reside in Richmond.

The service currently runs between Nelson and Richmond on Friday and Saturday nights. The service operates hourly from 10.00pm and the last trip departs at 3.10am – see Attachment 3. The purpose of the service is to provide a safer way of travel from late night entertainment in Nelson.

### **Total Mobility Scheme**

Most of the buses in Nelson are designed to be user friendly and are wheelchair accessible. However, some users because of their disability are either unable to use the buses or can only use them at certain times of the day.

Tasman District Council provides financial support (along with Nelson City Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency) for the Total Mobility Scheme which operates in the Nelson-Tasman region. Nelson City Council administers the scheme on behalf of Tasman District Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency. They distribute vouchers for use on the taxis and make payments to the taxi companies as part of this role.

The scheme provides transport assistance for people with serious mobility constraints through the provision of discounted taxi fares of up to a maximum subsidy of \$10 per one-way trip. Total Mobility operates in Nelson, Richmond and Motueka. Approximately 1,400 people currently use the service and on average 32,500 trips are made annually through the scheme in the region.

The annual subsidy cost from 1 July 2015 can be seen in Table 1.

The scheme also provides taxi-vans capable of carrying people in wheelchairs and provides an extra \$10 subsidy per trip for the use of these taxi-vans in recognition of the costs and time involved in carrying passengers using a wheelchair. The scheme provides assistance for the purchase and installation of new or replacement wheelchair hoists or ramps in vehicles used for the provision of Total Mobility services. The usual co-investment rate is 60% of the approved organisation's cost with the operator paying the balance (in this case Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council).

Total Mobility is a nation-wide scheme and therefore certain rules are in place to ensure consistency in how the scheme operates between the regions where it occurs. We will continue to comply with these rules and ensure that Nelson-Tasman members are able to use the scheme elsewhere in New Zealand.

Further information on Total Mobility can be viewed at:

<http://nelson.govt.nz/services/transport/roads/total-mobility-passenger-transport/>

<http://www.tasman.govt.nz/transport/walking-mobility/total-mobility/>

### **Community Transport Services**

There are a number of community-provided transport services in the Tasman district. These services provide for a range of health, recreation and social needs. Current services include the Wrinklies Express in Golden Bay, St John health shuttle and a number of shuttle services run by community groups and rest homes. Community groups are able to apply to Tasman District Council for community grants on an annual basis.

### **Super-Gold Card Scheme**

This scheme allows card holders to travel free on scheduled off peak public transport services. Off peak services are defined as operating between the hours of 9.00am and 3.00pm and from 6.30pm to the end of service on weekdays and any time on the weekends and public holidays.

New Zealanders aged 65 years or over and those under this age who receive New Zealand Superannuation or the Veterans Pension are eligible to hold a Super-Gold card. The scheme is funded by central government and operated by agreement with the Nelson City Council and the operator SBL Group Ltd. Tasman District Council supports the scheme.

In June 2015, the Government introduced a funding cap which will commence on 1 July 2016. The bulk funding model will better manage the rising costs of the scheme. Costs are rising because of the growing number of people aged 65 or over and the increased use of the scheme by Super-Gold cardholders. However, there will be no change to eligibility and entitlement to the scheme.

New services eligible for entry into the scheme must be contracted to Nelson City Council and be identified in the Top of the South Regional Land Transport Plan. They are not to be an exempt service (exempt services operate without any subsidy from the National Land Transport Fund or local government). These conditions are part of a moratorium which is to be lifted from 1 September 2015.

Further information on the Super-Gold card scheme can be viewed at <https://www.supergold.govt.nz/> .

### **Inter-regional and inter-community services**

These include:

#### ***Abel Tasman coachlines***

This service is operated by SBL Group Ltd. The bus service is aimed at tourists travelling to and from several Golden Bay destinations such as the Heaphy Track and the Abel Tasman National Park. The service runs from Nelson and stops at both Richmond and Motueka.

Further information can be viewed at <http://www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz/>.

#### ***Intercity Coachlines***

This service operates on a daily basis to both Marlborough and the West Coast. At these destinations there are connections to all parts of the South Island and the North Island via the ferry services at Picton. The route to the West Coast travels through the Tasman district.

Further information can be viewed at <http://www.intercity.co.nz/>

## School Bus Services

The Ministry of education currently contracts the school bus services throughout the Nelson and Tasman region. For further information on school bus services go to [www.schoolsupport.co.nz/school-transport](http://www.schoolsupport.co.nz/school-transport).

## Associated policies

### Future Improvements

Nelson City Council has included a number of future improvements in their Public Transport Plan. Tasman District Council is supportive of their proposed improvements in particular to the administration and management of the Total Mobility scheme.

Funding for any improvements will be sought from the New Zealand Transport Agency. Any proposals for new services will have to be justified using the New Zealand Transport Agency Business Case approach. The business case is required to assess the costs and benefits of the proposed new service and how it fits in the Transport Agency's funding criteria. Additional funding cannot be guaranteed.

Tasman District Council has indicated that an investigation into extending the NBus route through Richmond should be considered. Richmond is growing both demographically and economically and there are associated benefits in extending the route to cover the Richmond South area where the main residential growth is expected.

Tasman District Council would consider a Richmond link route to feed into an extension of NBus route if it came about. This link route would include Champion Road, Hill Street and Hart Road.

The potential to have some park and ride facility linking to the bus service in the future needs to be noted.

### Units

The LTMA requires every public transport network in New Zealand to be divided into "units". Each unit must then have a separate contract. Contract arrangements are provided in the Plan. Contracts are able to continue until they end and the new LTMA model is then included in future contracts.

Nelson City Council manages the contract for public transport services with the SBL Group Ltd including the service to Richmond. They have made the decision that because of the nature and relatively small size of the Nelson bus service including the route to Richmond, that there should be a single bus contract for the entire network of services. Future contracts may split the Nelson City to Richmond route into a separate "unit" contract but at present, it is considered that the single contract is the best arrangement for the district. This approach has been adopted in most similar sized cities to Nelson in New Zealand.

The current bus service contract runs until 2018, but contains provisions for an extension until 2022. Minor changes to the contract are permitted without the need for re-tendering. The next tender is therefore not expected until 2021. The new contract is likely to commence at the end of January 2022.

## Value for Money

Central to the purpose and intent of the LTMA is the concept of “value for money” and this concept extends to the provision of bus services. Value for money can be measured in many ways. An important measure (set by the New Zealand Transport Agency) is the contribution made by passengers towards the cost of providing a service. The passenger contribution is known as the fare-box recovery level. This is measured as the ratio of passenger fares to the costs of providing the service.

The New Zealand Transport Agency has a goal of an aggregated national fare-box recovery rate of no less than 50% by 30 June 2018. The current rate is approximately 46%.

The Nelson City Council has always had a high fare-box recovery, with a current level of 62%. This is one of the highest fare-box recovery rates in New Zealand. This indicates that the Nelson bus service, including the route through to Richmond provides excellent value for money. Nelson’s fare-box recovery rate has a target of 50% at a minimum.

## Working with contractors

A LTMA objective is for councils to develop a close partnership with their contracted bus operators. It is considered that Nelson City Council has a good working relationship with the SBL Group Ltd. Tasman District Council keeps lines of communication open with the SBL Group Ltd and aims to assist the bus service providers as much as possible in collaboration with Nelson City Council.

For new contracts, Nelson City Council will prepare a business plan in conjunction with the contractor, which will outline actions and proposed improvements. This business plan will be reviewed annually. This approach will be outlined in the *Public Transport Procurement Strategy* and in future contracts. Any future contracts will include a “financial incentive mechanism”. This will provide the contractor with annual payment should certain targets be met. These targets will be based on patronage levels and should involve a payment to the contractor for each passenger carried over and above a target figure. The financial incentive is still to be developed and will be contained in the *Public Transport Procurement Strategy* prior to tendering future contracts. The process will also follow the New Zealand Transport Agency’s Procurement Manual. Tasman District Council’s Procurement Strategy is closely aligned with this manual.

## Fares

The LTMA requires the Public Transport Plan to set out policies on passenger fares. The Nelson City Council has done this for the bus service route between Richmond and Nelson City. The current fares and fare setting processes are set out in the current bus contract. The contract allows Nelson City Council to set the maximum fares for the bus service, to review fares annually and to change fares where considered appropriate.

The Nelson City Council intends to keep fares for the Nelson bus services maintained at the current level. The New Zealand Transport Agency requires that fare levels are reviewed annually. Nelson City Council is compliant with this request and will review the fare structure every six years. The review will also include Total Mobility fares and rules that apply to Total Mobility fares.

Tasman District Council wishes to be included in the fares review for the route between Richmond and Nelson.

### **Integration with other transport modes**

Public transport services in Nelson are part of an integrated network of transport services. This recognises that all journeys usually involve other modes of transport (especially in urban areas) as well as the bus trip. Most bus journeys include a walking component and increasingly a cycling component. The needs of bus passengers who use wheelchairs must also be considered.

Therefore Nelson City Council has a policy that buses should have bike racks; bus-stops should be conveniently located and easily accessible; and car parking facilities should be near to some stops (in Richmond the main bus-stop is located in Sundial Square where there is all day parking available within a few minutes' walk) to encourage bus users to use a bus for the last leg of their journey.

### **Objectives of the Public Transport Plan**

The basic objectives of the public transport network are to provide services which;

- Reduce the traffic congestion between Richmond and Nelson; and
- Meet the basic needs of the community, particularly those without access to private transport.

Tasman District Council as part of their funding criteria wishes to extend the service in Richmond, so that the two objectives listed above are met more effectively within our main urban area.

### **Bus Requirements**

Buses for the Richmond to Nelson City route are required to have:

- low floors;
- easier access for wheelchairs;
- bike racks;
- electronic ticket systems;
- GPS tracking to assist with real time tracking is proposed to be introduced in 2015/2016;
- full training for drivers; and
- branding as required by Nelson City Council.

### **Infrastructure**

Tasman District Council aims to have bus stops that are accessible, safe and attractive. We will:

- manage the provision of bus stops on the basis that they are provided at locations where there is an identifiable passenger demand and associated infrastructure;
- ensure supporting pedestrian and cycle facilities such as footpaths, pedestrian crossing points/refuges and cycle parking are provided where appropriate to enable walking and cycling access to and from bus stops; and
- ensure that the bus infrastructure is maintained.

### **Fare System**

For the bus service between Richmond and Nelson City, the fare system will include:

- electronic ticketing (recording all trips and issuing tickets);
- child fares will be available;
- discounted fares for tertiary students and Community Service card holders;
- free off-peak travel for those who hold a Super-Gold card;
- multi-trip tickets available at a discounted rate;
- fare levels will be reviewed annually; and
- fare structures will be reviewed every six years.

For further details on the fare system, refer to the Nelson Regional Public Transport Plan.

### **Super-Gold Card**

Nelson City Council administers the Super-Gold card scheme subsidies on behalf of the Tasman District Council. For further information on the Super-Gold card scheme visit <https://www.supergold.govt.nz/>.

### **Monitoring**

The bus service is monitored in line with the New Zealand Transport agency's requirements. Nelson City Council collects the monitoring data required and reports to the New Zealand Transport Agency on an annual basis. Tasman District Council receives a copy of this report.

### **Promotion and advertising**

Tasman District Council advertises the NBus, Late Late Bus and Total Mobility on their website. We also provide comprehensive route and timetable information through various channels as well as the Council's website. Nelson City Council also advertises the available public transport services through community newsletters and radio advertising.

### **Total Mobility**

Tasman District Council supports Nelson City Council's policy regarding Total Mobility. Nelson City Council administers and manages the scheme for Tasman District Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency. Tasman District Council contributes to discussions and decisions regarding fares and fare structure reviews.

### **Background and Context**

#### **Legislative requirements**

Section 124 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 requires that a *Regional Public Transport Plan* must:

- contribute to the purposes of the LTMA;
- have been prepared in accordance with New Zealand Transport Agency guidelines;
- be consistent with any regional land transport plan; apply the principles specified in the Act, namely:
  1. Councils and operators should work in partnership to deliver services and infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of passengers;
  2. The provision of services should be coordinated with the aim of achieving the levels of integration, reliability, frequency and coverage necessary to encourage passenger growth;
  3. Competitors should have access to public transport markets to increase confidence that services are priced efficiently;

4. Incentives should exist to reduce reliance on public subsidies to cover the cost of providing public transport services; and
  5. The planning and procurement of public transport services should be transparent.
- take into account:
    - any national energy efficiency and conservation strategy
    - any relevant district plans
    - the public transport funding likely to be available
    - the need to obtain the best value for money, having regard to the desirability of encouraging a competitive and efficient market for public transport services
    - the views of public transport operators.

Tasman District Council has complied (as have Nelson City Council) with all these requirements when preparing this plan.

#### ***Assistance of the transport disadvantaged***

The Plan is required to describe how it will assist the transport disadvantaged. The LTMA describes transport disadvantaged as those people who the Council has reasonable grounds to believe are the least able to travel to basic community activities and services eg, work, education, health care, welfare and shopping.

This Plan assists the transport disadvantaged through supporting the Nelson City Council's public transport policy and the Total Mobility scheme.

#### ***Fare-box Recovery policy***

New Zealand Transport Agency requires the Council to include in their regional public transport plans a Fare-box Recovery policy. Fare-box recovery is the percentage of the costs of providing the service that are covered by passenger fares. The New Zealand Transport Agency has been concerned that fare-box recovery is declining nationally and wants to reverse that trend. The New Zealand Transport Agency has set out what a fare-box policy must contain, which includes a target ratio of costs that are to be covered by passenger fares and how the target is to be achieved.

Nelson City Council has developed a policy which states that long-term passenger fares should cover at least 50% of the costs of providing the bus service and its fare-box policy is based on this premise.

Tasman District Council is supportive of Nelson City Council's policy on fare-box recovery.

#### ***Significance policy***

All regional public transport plans are required by the LTMA to include a significance policy. This policy determines if any proposed change to a Plan is significant (in which case it must follow certain consultation requirements as set out in the Act) or not (in which case an abbreviated process can be used).

Essentially, the policy states that small changes and changes that may have already been the subject of consultation can be treated as "not significant" and thus need not be the subject of extensive consultation. More significant changes may require the preparation of a new Regional Public Transport Plan.

This Draft Regional Transport Plan is not a significant plan in terms of Tasman District Council's Significance Policy, as it does not relate to a strategic asset or delivery of our levels of service of a significant activity. Nothing in this Plan is likely to be very controversial. The funding covered by the Plan is not significant and has already been approved by the New Zealand Transport Agency through the National Land Transport Fund on 30 June 2015.

#### ***Monitoring and Review***

This Plan must be kept current for not less than three years, and not more than ten years. It must be reviewed and updated if necessary, following the release of a Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding, a Regional Land Transport Plan or a community Long Term Plan.

Therefore, the next review of this Plan will take place following the adoption of the Tasman Regional Land Transport Plan and Long Term Plan in 2018. The Regional Public Transport Plan is linked to the National Land Transport Plan and a review requires the Council to consider whether the existing Plan is relevant and whether a renewal or variation is required.