

Greater Wellington Regional Council

Transport Division Initial Review of Total Mobility Proposed Policy Framework

This report is an initial review of the proposed Framework. Further detailed work is required to analyse the full impact to the Council of the improvements to the scheme.

Key recommendations from the Framework:

1. Scheme Purpose

The current purpose statement is:

“The goal of the Scheme is to increase the mobility of people with serious mobility constraints. The aims are to encourage participation in society and provide for personal independence, reduce pressure on care givers, and allow people to continue living longer in their own homes if they prefer to do so.”

Recommendations:

1.1 That there will be an agreed, nationally consistent purpose statement.

The recommended improvement statement is:

“The Total Mobility Scheme is to assist eligible people with impairments to access appropriate transport to enhance their community participation. This assistance is provided in the form of subsidised door-to-door transport services wherever Scheme transport providers operate”

Impact for GWRC

Council officers agree with the purpose statement as it outlines the purpose of the scheme as we understand it. Some clarification or definition of “appropriate transport” would be useful.

1.2 That the founding central tenet of the Total Mobility scheme and the role of local authorities in providing the scheme is supported and strengthened.

The review recommends that the Scheme should be perceived primarily as a transport service and should not be substituted for services more appropriately supplied by the health education or ACC sectors. It also recommends that improved data collection about travel behaviours and travel needs would assist in monitoring the appropriate scope and funding sources of the scheme

Impact for GWRC

If the Council is to provide the service suggested by the review, additional funding would be required to support the number of eligible clients using the scheme.

Officers, agree that the scheme should be primarily a transport service, (particularly in light of hoist vehicles funded by Council but relied on heavily to provide services for Education and Health sectors).

Officers have begun a project to automate the service by introducing swipe cards for registered clients. This will increase the data available relating to travel purpose and need.

1.3 That the Total Mobility scheme parameters are clearly defined.

To ensure the limits of service provision remain within a finite budget.

Impact for GWRC

How would this parameter be defined? Finite budget is difficult at the present rate of growth. If the scheme is to be generally available and advertised, budgeting could only be on an estimated basis.

2. Eligibility

The current eligibility criteria are as follows:

Eligible people are those who for reason of permanent physical, sensory, intellectual or psychological disability, whether congenital, acquired or age-related, satisfy the following criteria: Cannot unaided complete any of the component activities involved in making use of public passenger transport. The component parts of public transport are defined as:

- Proceeding to the nearest bus stop/train station
- Boarding, riding securely and alighting; and
- Proceeding from the destination stop to the trip end

Recommendations:

2.1 That there will be agreed, nationally consistent eligibility criteria.

The recommended improved criteria are:

“An eligible person must have an impairment that prevents them from undertaking any one or more of the following five components of a journey unaccompanied, on a bus train or ferry in a safe and dignified manner:

- *Getting to the place from where the transport departs*
- *Getting on to the transport*
- *Riding securely*
- *Getting off the transport*

- *Getting to the destination”*

Impact for GWRC

Agree, the scheme is currently administered on this basis in the Wellington region.

- 2.2 That people with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility scheme, are able to use bus, train or ferry services some of the time but not all of the time, should be eligible for the scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

The Greater Wellington TM scheme currently includes people who have impairments that affect them some of the time, (For example sight impaired people who are fully blind at night, people with epilepsy, multi sclerosis, cancer sufferers during treatment etc). However, it must be clearly specified that this type of membership is because of disability not because of the limitation of transport service in their residential area.

- 2.3 That people who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility scheme, and have an impairment that has lasted, or is expected to last six months or more, should be eligible for the scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington currently subsidises people with types of serious impairment which may improve, for example strokes, or severe heart problems etc. However we would need to seek a clear definition of the intention of this recommendation from Land Transport NZ to enable good administrative guidelines. (For example is it intended that surgical patients are included in this category?)

- 2.4 That children with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme should be eligible for the scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington already includes children who meet the criteria in its scheme. However, once again a clear definition should be sought to enable effective administration. (For example are babies and toddlers with impairment who, are transported by their parents in prams, buggies or carried, entitled to subsidy?)

- 2.5 That people with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme and live in residential care should be eligible for the scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

People in residential care already have access to the Greater Wellington scheme.

- 2.6 That people with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility scheme, and who live in areas that do not have bus, train or**

ferry services should be eligible for the Scheme, enabling them to use the Scheme wherever it operates.

Impact for GWRC

These people already have access to the Greater Wellington scheme

3. Entitlement

Recommendations:

3.1 That the fare subsidy for the Total Mobility Scheme should be nationally consistent and standardised at 50%.

Impact for GWRC

The fare subsidy for the Greater Wellington Scheme is already at 50%.

3.2 That the Total Mobility Scheme has no minimum threshold.

Impact for GWRC

The Greater Wellington Scheme currently has no minimum threshold.

3.3 That local authorities determine maximum subsidised fares for the Total Mobility scheme in negotiation with Land Transport NZ, taking into account NZ Travel Survey, and review them annually.

Impact for GWRC

The current subsidy maximum is \$40, up to half of an \$80 fare. This allows access from Upper Hutt to Wellington hospital or from Waikanae to Kenepuru Hospital. The subsidy may need more analysis in view of current petrol prices. However the recommendation that the maximum fare be reviewed annually is quite sensible.

3.4 That town boundary travel restrictions for the Total Mobility scheme be removed and replaced with a maximum subsidised fare.

Impact for GWRC

Town boundaries are not imposed in the Greater Wellington scheme but regional boundaries are set. However, people who travel over the regional boundaries can apply for a special dispensation if needed. (For example people unable to mobilise only by hoist van who travel to Palmerston North for purposes of study, treatment, or family event).

- 3.5 That the number of allocated subsidised trips for the Total Mobility Scheme take into account the self-assessed needs of individual Scheme members, and be adjusted by local authorities to manage their budgets, and negotiated with Land Transport N.Z.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington currently imposes no limit to the number of trips a client can take.

- 3.6 There will be no restrictions on the purpose of the trip for the Total Mobility Scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington already imposes no restriction on trip purpose.

4. Assessment

Recommendations:

- 4.1 That Land Transport NZ develops guidelines for contracts between local authorities and assessment agencies to ensure high quality and consistent assessments.**
- 4.2 That local authorities enter into contracts with assessment agencies, aligned with the guidelines produced by Land Transport NZ.**
- 4.3 That Local Authorities should make a financial contribution towards the costs of assessments and administration undertaken by assessment agencies.**
- 4.4 That appropriate training be provided to assessors to assist in the consistent application of the eligibility criteria.**
- 4.5 That a handbook, including best practice guidelines, should be developed and published by Land Transport NZ in conjunction with local authorities, to assist assessors in consistently applying the eligibility criteria.**

Impact for GWRC

Agree Assessment procedures need to be tightened and formalised. GW Council Officers are at present involved in discussion about assessment requirements with agencies. It is intended that Council move towards an arrangement to contract assessors. When agencies have had an opportunity to discuss the proposed change to swipe ID cards, assessment costs, registration processes, assessor training needs and continuing agency involvement with Total Mobility if contracts are imposed the project will be progressed. Fund impact for Council to be reviewed.

- 4.6 That the assessment process assists Total Mobility scheme members estimate how many trips they would use (self assessed needs). This information will be provided to local authorities to**

assist them to determine the appropriate number of allocated subsidised trips.

Impact for GWRC

We are unsure how this requirement would fit into our assessment needs or procedures as Greater Wellington does not impose a limit on the number of trips a member may take.

- 4.7 That potential members of the Total Mobility Scheme are not required to become financial members of an assessment agency in order to have an assessment for the Scheme, although they may be asked to pay an application fee. The appropriate amount of any such fee should be negotiated between Land Transport NZ, local authorities and assessment agencies.**

Impact for GWRC

Assessment through a team of independent assessors (the Presbyterian Home Support Team) has been available to all Greater Wellington Scheme members for some years. This service is paid from the Total Mobility budget, and no charge is currently made to applicants

- 4.8 That potential members of the Total Mobility Scheme should have the option to be assessed by a voluntary disability sector agency in every region.**

Impact for GWRC

Agency assessment is available to any one who requires it. (A wide variety of agencies are involved with the scheme in the Wellington Region, and we can refer people with any type of impairment to an appropriate agency of support.

5. Administration

Recommendations

- 5.1 That Land Transport NZ encourages local authorities to establish systems for data collection, monitoring and evaluation.**
- 5.2 That Land Transport NZ encourages local authorities to improve their administration systems for the allocation and redemption of trip entitlement vouchers.**

Impact for GWRC

Officers are at present undertaking a project to automate the Total Mobility scheme. The project involves the issue of swipe ID cards to all members and contracting the service requirements for swipe card technology to the taxi industry. An automated system will streamline service delivery and provide any data requirements of Land Transport NZ.

- 5.3 That local authorities implement appropriate methods to promote the Total Mobility scheme. This should be phased in following the implementation of other improvements to the scheme.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington does not at present formally promote or advertise the Total Mobility Scheme

6. Transport Operators

Recommendations

- 6.1 That Land Transport NZ develops guidelines for contracts between local authorities and Total Mobility Scheme operators to ensure high quality and adequate service levels, including the provision of wheelchair accessible taxis within fleets.**

- 6.2 That local authorities enter into contracts with transport operators, aligned with the guidelines produced by Land Transport NZ.**

Impact for GWRC

Agree As part of Council's project to automate the Total Mobility scheme we are advising all taxi companies that the ability to offer the service will in future be contracted. The proposed contract will cover the technological requirements and will also set service and training standards. The contract will also acknowledge any guidance received from Land Transport NZ.

- 6.3 That Land Transport NZ encourages adequate provision of wheelchair accessible taxis by providing a flat payment (in addition to the fare) to the transport operator for each trip taken by a Total Mobility Scheme member using a wheelchair hoist.**

Impact for GWRC

While the idea of additional support is reasonable, a clear definition of process and journey type will be needed for to administer it. Concern about administrative requirements for such a system have already been expressed by hoist owners. Further investigation will need to be undertaken.

- 6.4 That Land Transport NZ investigates the establishment of appropriate regime to ensure the wheelchair hoists meet acceptable safety standards.**

Impact for GWRC

Greater Wellington has had a formal programme for hoist van replacement and adaptation in place for the last ten years. All Total Mobility vans in the region meet current safety requirements. Also because of the increased funding available over the last two years we have also been able to increase our fleet numbers. At the end of this financial year we anticipate that we will have 29 vans operating.

- 6.5 That local authorities are encouraged to investigate the possibility of contracting taxi services operating in areas that are not currently covered by the Total Mobility Scheme, to provide a scheme service.**
- 6.6 That the possibility of other types of transport providers participating in the Total Mobility Scheme is investigated.**

Impact for GWRC

These matters should appropriately be set aside for political consideration.