

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party Minutes

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, 35 Walton Street, Whangarei
on Monday 21 July 2025, commencing at 9:00 am

Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, NRC Councillor, Rick Stolwerk
NRC Councillor, Jack Craw (online)
WDC Councillor, Scott McKenzie (online)
WDC Councillor, Simon Reid
WDC Councillor, Carol Peters
NRC Councillor, Joe Carr (left at 10.40am)

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Full Meeting
NRC Transport Manager, Chris Powell
NRC GM Community Resilience, Louisa Gritt
NRC Regional Transport Coordinator, Kayla Gunson
NRC Transport Project Officer, Tony Manga
NRC Secretariat, Haylee Labelle
WDC Kamo Road T2 Project lead, Laura Devcich

The Chair declared the meeting open at 0900am.

Ngā Mahi Whakapai/Housekeeping (Item 1.0)

Ngā whakapahā/Apologies (Item 2.0)

There were no apologies.

Confirmation of Minutes - 11 February 2025 (Item 4.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Moved (Carr / Peters)

That the minutes of the Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party meeting held on 11 February 2025, be confirmed as a true and correct record and that these be duly authenticated by the Chair.

Carried

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 5.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Moved (Stolwerk / Peters)

That the action sheet be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: Action 6 was undertaken prior to school holidays and observed lots of traffic. The number of cars has increased now that school has resumed. People still using cars even though buses in use.

Action:

1. Add LGNZ remit to the next WPTWP agenda

Operational Report (Item 6.1)

Report from Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Moved (Stolwerk/ Peters)

That the report 'Operational Report' by Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council and dated 18 June 2025, be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: NRC Transport manager thanked the NRC Transport Project Officer for the efforts in reinstating the Matai Street, Otangarei service (7 July). There have been no further incidents reported and patronage has returned to normal with morning use substantial.

Discussed the issue of bus driver shortages, which had caused disruptions to the bus services for schools. Confirmed that the shortage has been resolved, and full services resumed as normal for both WBHS and WGHS.

Fare increase takes effect 1 August. Our increase is not as high as the rest of the country as we receive a higher subsidy (54%). The use of a community services card or community connect card will reduce the fare to the original rate.

Despite the provision of additional school buses, it is noted that there is no significant increase in the number of students using the buses. Discussed the need for incentives to encourage students to use the bus services.

NRC monitored traffic during school holidays and noted a reduction in traffic. However, once schools resumed, traffic increased again, indicating that students were not significantly using the provided school buses.

Discussed the responsibility of schools in encouraging bus usage among students. Ministry of Education are adamant that the responsibility of getting children to school lies with the parents, not the schools.

Discussed the school responsibility for student transportation, and confirmed that if a school contracts a bus service and pays for it, it is their responsibility for student safety during transportation. However, for Ministry of Education buses and regional council contracted services, the responsibility lies with the parents.

For Ministry of Education buses, the responsibility for getting children to school lies with the parents, not the schools. The Ministry assists with school buses but does not take responsibility for the students' transportation.

Discussed that for regional council contracted services, they provide the buses but are not obligated to ensure that children get on the buses and reach school. The responsibility remains with the parents.

Discussed the Ministry of Education's rule regarding the distance students must walk to school and the impact on traffic congestion. Suggested challenging the Ministry on this rule to encourage more students to use buses.

Discussed the delays in the national ticketing system and the Minister of Transport's written directive to Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury councils to continue to proceed with the national ticketing system despite the delays and warning that subsidies might be affected if they do not comply. WPTWP expressed support for a national card that can be used across the country and highlighted the benefits of having a unified system where a card purchased in one city can be used in another. Discussed the option of students applying for a Community Connect Card to reduce bus fares. Noted that this option was not previously made aware to them in meetings. Noted that funds from fares are allocated to the appropriate region via back office processes.

Discussed the reintroduction of bike racks on buses, which can carry two bikes each. Noted that the racks have been fitted with safety lighting and are now back in operation as of 16 June 2025. NRC to look into in-bus bike storage for future designs.

Actions:

- **WPTWP to write to the government and NZTA to reiterate support for the national ticketing system and promote its benefits for local economies – Transport Manager**

Hikurangi Service (Item 6.2)

Report from Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Moved (Stolwerk/ Peters)

That the report 'Hikurangi Service' by Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council and dated 18 June 2025, be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: Note that the paper mentioned in this report did not go to the June Council. Will firstly test the inclusion of the Super Gold Card to this service with the intent of increasing patronage. If this doesn't have the intended results, we may have to reduce the service to once a week due to the low passenger numbers and funding constraints. If this is the case, the paper will go to Council with the recommendations outlined in this report. It is intended that a review will take place at the end of 2025 and an assessment will be made and reported back to WPTWP.

Update on progress on Kamo/Whangarei T2 Lane (Item 6.3)

Report from Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Moved (Craw / Reid)

That the report 'Update on progress on Kamo/Whangarei T2 Lane' by Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council and dated 18 June 2025, be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: Laura Devich (WDC) presented the Kamo priority lane project, which includes an extra southbound lane, signalised crossings, and a bus stop location review. The project aims to reduce congestion and encourage bus usage. The lane operational between 7:00 to 9:00 AM on weekdays, five signalised crossings, and a bus stop location review to ensure even spacing and safe crossings. The project aims to reduce congestion on Kamo Rd, which is expected to increase due to future growth. The wide existing road widths allow for the addition of the priority lane at a relatively low cost. Hoping that the project will encourage more people to use the bus by providing efficient infrastructure and reducing travel time for bus users compared to those using private vehicles.

Explained the enforcement cameras for the T2 lane, which will detect infringements and send them to Auckland Transport for review. The cameras are expected to go live between September and December. WDC is working with Auckland Transport to finalise the memorandum of understanding and service agreement for the external service. The cameras are designed to be anti-vandalism and will use AI to identify likely infringements. Detected infringements will be reviewed by personnel at Auckland Transport's control centre. If there is any uncertainty, such as the presence of a baby in a capsule, the infringement will not be sent for enforcement.

Talked about plans for an educational campaign on courtesy and merging and has spoken with the comms team.

Discussed the partnership between WDC and NRC and where responsibility sits and have agreed the following:

- *Queries on buses to NRC*
- *Queries on pedestrian crossings and lanes to WDC*
- *Queries on infrastructure to WDC*
- *Queries on service to NRC*

Rose Street Bus Hub: *The project aims to improve accessibility and convenience for bus users and is expected to be completed by the 8th of August.*

Actions

- **WDC to investigate the feasibility and costs of implementing T2 lanes on Tikipunga and Riverside Drive, considering the existing road widths and infrastructure challenges**
- **WDC to collaborate with NZTA to address traffic congestion issues on Hospital Road, particularly during peak hours.**
- **WDC to develop and roll out an education programme on merging and courtesy for drivers, particularly in relation to the new T2 lanes.**

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The meeting concluded at 9.59am with karakia by Cr Peters.