

AGENDA

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party

Thursday 30 April 2026 at 9:00 am - 10:00am

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party Agenda

Meeting to be held in the Council Chamber, 36 Water Street, Whangarei
on Thursday 30 April 2026, commencing at 9:00 am - 10:00am

Please note: working parties and working groups carry NO formal decision-making delegations from council. The purpose of the working party/group is to carry out preparatory work and discussions prior to taking matters to the full council for formal consideration and decision-making. Working party/group meetings are open to the public to attend (unless there are specific grounds under LGOIMA for the public to be excluded).

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT WDC-NRC WHANGAREI PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKING PARTY

Chairperson, Councillor Amy Macdonald

NRC Councillor, Jack Crow

NRC Councillor, Joe Carr

WDC Councillor, Nicholas
Connop

WDC Councillor, Stephen
Martin

WDC Councillor, Brad Flower


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TITLE: Confirmation of Minutes - 10 February 2026
From: Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience
Authorised by Louisa Gritt, Group Manager - Community Resilience, on 18 March 2026
Group Manager/s:

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommendation

That the minutes of the Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party meeting held on 10 February 2026, be confirmed as a true and correct record and that these be duly authenticated by the Chair.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: Minutes - 10 February 2026 [↓](#) 

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party
10 February 2026

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party Minutes

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, 36 Water Street, Whangarei
on Tuesday 10 February 2026, commencing at 9:00 am - 10:00am

Tuhinga/Present:

Chair - NRC Councillor, Amy Macdonald
NRC Councillor, Jack Craw
NRC Councillor, Joe Carr

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Full Meeting
NRC Transport Manager, Chris Powell
NRC GM Community Resilience, Louisa Gritt
NRC Secretariat, Haylee Labelle

The Chair declared the meeting open at 0900am with karakia.

Ngā Mahi Whakapai/Housekeeping (Item 1.0)

Ngā whakapahā/Apologies (Item 2.0)

Moved (Carr / Craw)

That the apologies from Councillor Flower, Martin, Connop for non-attendance be received.

Carried

Receipt of Minutes - 21 July 2025 (Item 4.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Moved (Craw / Carr)

That the minutes of the Whangarei Public Transport Working Party meeting held on 21 July 2025, are noted.

Carried

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 5.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Moved (Macdonald / Craw)

That the action sheet be received.

Carried

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Action:

1. **NRC Transport Manager to follow-up with WDC to request an update on the status and prioritisation of T2 lanes and bus lane projects, including any planned improvements to the hospital intersection and intentions regarding a bus lane on Maunu Road, and ask WDC members to be prepared to speak to this at the next meeting.**

Terms of Reference (Item 6.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

It was agreed that this item will be carried over to the next meeting of the working party due to the absence of all WDC members

Carried

Operational Report (Item 6.2)

Report from Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Moved (Carr / Craw)

That the report 'Operational Report' by Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council and dated 22 December 2025, be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: Staff reported a gradual increase in passenger numbers on rural services, attributing this to the extension of Super Gold card eligibility, which has encouraged more usage, particularly on the Hikurangi route.

Staff gave an update on the impact of the fares increase on the CityLink and SchoolLink services. There was an overall decrease of around 8%. The decrease in scholars was 2%.

Members discussed the shift of some students from city link to school link buses, The importance of school bus services in reducing congestion and fostering long-term public transport habits was also talked about.

In response to a request from WDC Deputy Mayor Scott McKenzie, councillors debated the 'chicken and egg' situation of increasing bus frequency versus patronage levels. Staff stated that there has been a passenger decrease post implementation of the T2 lane. Staff have yet to ascertain if this decrease is due to the T2 lane or the fare increase implemented at the same time. The members agreed that there be no increase in services at this time and that detailed data be provided to inform future decisions at future meetings.

Attendees discussed operational challenges such as the impact of new pedestrian crossings on bus punctuality, the limited scope of T2 lanes, and the difficulty in hiring additional drivers for trial service increases due to employment uncertainty.

Discussed the prioritization of T2 and bus lanes on various roads, the rationale behind current priorities, and the working groups role in influencing District Council decisions, ultimately agreeing to seek updates from WDC on project status and future plans.

Reviewed the historical prioritisation of T2 lanes, noting that Kamo Road was identified as the highest priority, followed by Maunu Road and Riverside, with Tikipunga excluded due to road width constraints and feasibility concerns.

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Clarified that while the working group can discuss and attempt to influence T2 and bus lane priorities, the final decision rests with WDC as the roading authority, and the working party's main purpose is to provide input and advocate for preferred outcomes.

It was agreed to formally request updates from WDC regarding the status and prioritization of T2 and bus lane projects, including any intentions to implement bus lanes on Manley Road, and to ensure these updates are provided at the next meeting.

Concerns were raised about the availability of NZTA funding for these projects, the complexity of implementing T2 lanes at certain intersections, and the need for property acquisition and infrastructure changes for future expansions.

Confirmed that current SchoolLink services adequately cover major high schools and intermediate schools, with additional services implemented to address specific needs such as antisocial behaviour and demand from certain suburbs.

It was clarified that national policy requires a minimum farebox contribution for council-contracted bus services, preventing further fare subsidies for school buses, and that third-party revenue (e.g., advertising) is already factored into the funding model.

Explored long-term strategies for public transport, including the potential for park and ride facilities, the need for a joined-up approach with WDC leadership, and the targeting of commuter markets to reduce congestion.

An action was proposed for the Chair to meet with the Deputy Mayor to gauge the current appetite for public transport initiatives, the future of T2 lanes, and the potential for park and ride, ensuring alignment with WDC's strategic direction.

The group identified commuters as the primary target for expanded public transport services, recognizing that shopping and other off-peak travel would likely remain car-dependent, and discussed the potential impact of even modest modal shifts on congestion.

Discussed upcoming changes to the Total Mobility Scheme, including reductions in subsidy rates and tighter eligibility criteria, and the implications for service sustainability and communication with the public.

The Ministry of Transport and NCTA are reducing the maximum subsidy for Total Mobility trips from 75% to 65% and lowering the fare cap, effective 1 July, in response to significant budget overruns in major regions.

A review of eligibility criteria is underway, with the Ministry of Transport and NZTA aiming to tighten access to the scheme to ensure sustainability, and a ministerial meeting scheduled to finalise changes.

Noted that Northland region remains on budget due to proactive measures such as requiring doctor certificates and capping fares, and credited WDC for maintaining its subsidy contribution despite broader funding pressures.

Plans are in place to coordinate with the communications team to clearly explain the changes to the public, emphasising that the NRC operates within national guidelines and is not responsible for the subsidy reductions.

Discussed the potential impact of future local government restructuring on public transport governance, funding models, and the distribution of rates across the region.

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Debated whether future funding for public transport would be based on district-wide rates or area-of-benefit models, recognising that changes could lead to shifts in who pays for services and the potential for cross-subsidization.

It was noted that any significant changes to funding or governance would require amendments to the Land Transport Management Act, and that a joined-up public transport strategy could be facilitated by council amalgamation.

Actions:

- 1. NRC Transport team to monitor bus patronage on the T2 lane route and provide information at future meetings to inform decisions on increasing bus service frequency on this route.**
- 2. The chair to meet with WDC Deputy Mayor to discuss the appetite for public transport improvements, the future of T2 lanes, and opportunities such as park and ride.**
- 3. NRC Transport Manager to check and confirm whether the transport rate is collected district-wide or only for the urban area, and report findings to the working party by email**

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The meeting concluded at 0952am with karakia by the chair.

TITLE: **Receipt of Action Sheet**

From: Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Authorised by Louisa Gritt, Group Manager - Community Resilience, on 10 April 2026
Group Manager/s:

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to enable the meeting to receive the current action sheet.

Nga mahi tutohutia / Recommendation

That the action sheet be received.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: Action Sheet [↓](#) 

Whangarei Public Transport Working Party Action Sheet

Action	Meeting date	Agenda Item	Action	Person(s) responsible	Status	Notes
3	21/07/2025	6.3 Update on progress on Kamo/Whangarei T2 Lane	Investigate the feasibility and costs of implementing T2 lanes on Tikipunga and Riverside Drive, considering the existing road widths and infrastructure challenges	WDC		
4	21/07/2025	6.3 Update on progress on Kamo/Whangarei T2 Lane	Collaborate with NZTA to address traffic congestion issues on Hospital Road, particularly during peak hours.	WDC		
5	21/07/2025	6.3 Update on progress on Kamo/Whangarei T2 Lane	Develop and roll out an education programme on merging and courtesy for drivers, particularly in relation to the new T2 lanes.	WDC		
1	10/02/2026	5.1 Receipt of Action Sheet	follow-up with WDC to request an update on the status and prioritisation of T2 lanes and bus lane projects, including any planned improvements to the hospital intersection and intentions regarding a bus lane on Maunu Road, and ask WDC members to be prepared to speak to this at the next meeting.	NRC Transport Manager	In Progress	NRC staff have requested WDC staff to attend the April 2026 meeting to brief the working group on both matters.
2	10/02/2026	6.2 Operational Report	Monitor bus patronage on the T2 lane route and provide information at future meetings to inform decisions on increasing bus service frequency on this route.	NRC Transport Manager	In Progress	An update will be included in the April 2026 operations report.
3	10/02/2026	6.2 Operational Report	Meet with WDC Deputy Mayor to discuss the appetite for public transport improvements, the future of T2 lanes, and opportunities such as park and ride.	Chair	Completed	19/2/26 Cr MacDonald advised she has met with Cr McKenzie and will review if another meeting is required after the April 2026 WPTWP meeting 11/2/26 Rae Hetaraka has asked Cr MacDoonald for availability and will connect with WDC
4	10/02/2026	6.2 Operational Report	Check and confirm whether the transport rate is collected district-wide or only for the urban area, and report findings to the working party by email	NRC Transport Manager	Completed	11/2/26 NRC Transport Manager emailed members: Good afternoon all, At the Whangarei Passenger Transport Working Group meeting held yesterday, the question was raised as to whether the targeted transport rate that covers the CityLink and SchoolLink bus services was a district wide rate or a rate directed to those areas served by the buses only. I can confirm that this is a "District Wide" rate.

TITLE: **Terms of Reference**

From: Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Authorised by Louisa Gritt, Group Manager - Community Resilience, on 10 April 2026
Group Manager/s:

Executive summary/Whakarāpopototanga

This paper is to allow the terms of reference to be reviewed and confirmed for the 2025-2028 triennium

The terms of reference are attached.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: WPTWP Terms of Reference [↓](#) 

Document approval

Date	Section amended	Approved By
17 November 2020	NRC membership amended following resignation of Cr Bain.	As per council resolution 17 November 2020
26 July 2021	Update for membership of Cr Archer. Transfer to Sharepoint document management system.	Governance Support Manager.
29 March 2023	Update Membership	
2 July 2024	Update membership	Personal Assistant Communtiy Resilience
14 January 2025	Updated membership – new triennium	Personal Assistant Communtiy Resilience

ID: [DMHUB-33537858-1067](#)

Terms of Reference

NRC/WDC Whangārei Public Transport Working Party

Membership

The NRC/WDC Whangārei Public Transport Working Party shall be comprised of three (3) Northland Regional Council members and three (3) Whangārei District Council members as follows:

Chairperson:	Cr A Macdonald
NRC members	Cr J Carr Cr J Crow

WDC member 1	Cr N Connop
WDC member 2	Cr S Martin
WDC member 3	Cr B Flower

The number of members from WDC and NRC are to be the same.

Standing orders do not apply.

Quorum

The quorum for meetings of the working party shall be three (3). All members count towards a quorum.

Vision, mission and areas of focus (Long Term Plan 2018-2028)

Our Northland – together we thrive. Working together to create a healthy environment, strong economy and resilient communities.

The working party will contribute directly to the following areas of focus:

- Efficient and effective service delivery
- Safe and resilient communities
- A strong regional economy

Objectives

The objectives of the working party are to:

- To examine and discuss Whangārei public transport issues with the intention of increasing patronage across all modes of public transport; and advise and make recommendations to both councils accordingly.

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Responsibilities

- The working party is directly responsible and accountable to their respective councils for the exercise of its responsibilities. The Chairperson, supported by staff, will provide a brief written report of working party activities to each council meeting.
- In carrying out its responsibilities, the working party must at all times recognise that primary responsibility for management of the councils' rests with the Chief Executives.
- For reasons of efficiency and/or expediency, should the working party not be able to perform its functions, the councils will assume its role and responsibilities.

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

The council authorises the working party, within the scope of its Terms of Reference, role and responsibilities, to:

1. General

- a) Subject to operating within approved budget allocation - obtain information it needs from the CEO and/or external party (subject to their legal obligation to protect information);
- b) Discuss any matters with the external auditor, or other external parties (subject to confidentiality considerations);
- c) Request the attendance of any employee, subject to the Chief Executive's approval, at meetings of the working party or its working groups;
- d) In discussion with the CEO and subject to operating within approved budget allocation - obtain external legal or other professional advice, as considered necessary to meet its responsibilities, at the council's expense;
- e) Co-opt a person as a (non-voting) member of the working party to assist with special projects;
- f) Recommend to council that additional members be appointed to the working party should it consider wider representation would be of assistance in performing its functions;
- g) Undertake such other functions as may be delegated by council from time to time.

2. Whangārei Public Transport

Issues to be considered include, but are not limited to;

- a) Bus route terminus location and infrastructure,
- b) Bus stops/shelters and signage,
- c) Potential new routes, services and trials,
- d) Park and ride options,
- e) Integration with city and district planning.

3. No Delegated Authority – Power to Act

The working party has no delegated authority or power to act.

ID: [DMHUB-33537858-1067](#)

TITLE: **Operational Report**

From: Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Authorised by Group Manager/s: Louisa Gritt, Group Manager - Community Resilience, on 14 April 2026

Executive summary

This report provides an update to the Whangarei District Council/Northland Regional Council Public Transport Working Group (WPTWG) on the various Whangarei passenger transport services in operation and projects being undertaken since the last meeting of 10 February 2026.

Recommendation

That the report 'Operational Report' by Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council and dated 18 March 2026, be received.

Background

CityLink and SchoolLink Services

There were no issues/incidents that led to any serious disruptions to services.

Staff in consultation with Whangarei Hospital have recently completed a scoping study into a proposed Rose street to Whangarei Hospital service, focusing on travel times and suitable bus stop locations. The information will support future planning should this service be developed for both hospital staff and the public. As with all such initiatives, the ability to source both national and local share funding assistance will determine the outcome.

CityLink Running Times

Following an in-depth investigation into the bus running times on all the CityLink Services, which included GPS tracking and interviews with drivers, it has been confirmed that due to the increase in peak traffic volumes (during school terms) the number of peak trips running late has become a problem. The routes most affected are: -

- Tikipunga via Kamo to Whangarei – Running on average 18-20 minutes late.
- Onerahi – Running on average 5-10 minutes late.
- Maunu - - Running on average 5-10 minutes late.

As the CityLink service comprises a Hub and Spoke type operation, any delay to one trip will carry over into the next trip operated by the bus. This situation leads to a snowball effect of late trips across the network.

The above situation has reached the level that an additional 2-3 peak buses are required to operate the existing timetable on time.

Future of T2 Lanes in Whangarei

In 2018 Whangarei District Council (WDC) released its Whangarei City Transportation Network Strategy which included provision for the following "Bus Priority" Lanes". included: -

- Bank Street/Kamo Road (Kamo Bus Route)
 - Riverside Drive (Onerahi Bus Route)
-

- SH14 and Maunu Road (Manu Bus Route)

NZTA subsequently approved NRC funding application for increase in services on the abovementioned Bus Lanes and NRC approved local share rating for increase in services on the abovementioned Bus Lanes.

In August 2020 WDC advised that local share funding had been approved for the Kamo Bus Lane as part of the 2021-24 LTP. The proposed timing of the project was for construction to be undertaken during the 2022/23 financial year with operation of the bus lane by 2023/24 or sooner if possible. NRC made provision in LTP for increased bus services associated with the Bus Lanes.

Following the submission of a full business case NZTA confirmed Climate Emergency Relief Funding (CERF) for the construction of the Kamo Bus priority Lane at 100% subsidy. Anticipated the construction phase of the Kamo Bus Lane, renamed T2 Lane, project would commence in August 2023. Despite the delays in moving to the construction phase NZTA granted an extension for the funding for the Kamo T2 lane to June 2025.

At the April 2024 WPTWG meeting – WDC advised that the Onerahi and Maunu proposed Bus lanes had not been included in the WDC draft Long Term Plan. Kamo T2 lane was opened in August 2025. Enforcement phase of the project has yet to be fully implemented.

Hikurangi Bus Service

At a previous meeting a request was made to investigate the opportunity for more bus stops closer to the shops in Hikurangi. Whilst there is a bus stop presently situated across from the Miners Rest Café, staff have organised a meeting with the relevant WDC roading staff along with the Hikurangi Community Development Coordinator to discuss this request.

Whilst the NRC staff and the community may apply for additional bus stops in Hikurangi, the final decision on number and location lies with the WDC.

National Fuel Supply and Price Situation

Staff continue to work closely with bus operators and NZTA on this matter. At the time of compiling this report, no formal feedback has been received from the Government or NZTA regarding any financial assistance to cover the increase in diesel costs and what staged remedial action will be undertaken if fuel availability is compromised.

Whilst the Government has indicated that it wants every effort to be made to allow students to get to and from educational facilities, no information on how this will be accomplished has been received. Of the 5 fuel “Prioritisation Bands” listed on the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE), public transport falls within the 3rd band. These Bands are however indicative and yet to be finalised.

Staff in conjunction with the operators have developed a phased service reduction plan that can be activated if required. This framework prioritises core routes, peak time capacity, and essential travel needs, while allowing lower demand or less critical services to be reduced gradually and in a controlled, transparent manner.

See [Attachment 1](#) for a copy of the Phased Service Reduction Plan.

Pending the receipt of notification from NZTA as to what, if any, financial assistance will be provided to cover Cost Price Indexes increases, staff are unable to as yet accurately determine the detrimental financial impact to the services.

National Ticketing System (NTS)

Unfortunately, changes have again been made to the implementation plan for the NTS which will affect the rollout in Northland. This is a result of Greater Wellington Regional Council being moved to the top of the list and all available resources diverted to ensure completion within the required time frame.

Northland has made their position clear in that they are wanting to have the NTS implementation completed by 1 September 2027 to align with the start of the new CityLink, SchoolLink, Hikurangi Link and Bream Bay Link services.

The Consortium of the nine smaller councils continues to work with NZTA to try and reach a resolution on this matter.

In the interim the Bee Card system, provided by INIT and currently in use across Northland and nine other regions, will continue to operate as normal.

Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP)

Work has continued on the draft RPTP. The design and formatting phase is being worked on to ensure a reader-friendly document.

On completion, the draft RPTP will be presented to Council with a recommendation that it be released to the Regional Transport Committee, Whangarei Public Transport Working Group, Far North, Whangarei and Kaipara District Councils and NZTA for comment and input.

Following this step, staff will present a finalised RPTP to Council requesting that it be released for public consultation.

Total Mobility Scheme (TM)

In 2022, to alleviate the financial impact of the Cost-of-Living Crises experienced nationally, the Government increased the fare subsidy from 50% to 75%. The increase was covered through Crown Funding. This substantially reduced client costs but led to a rapid surge in usage, making the scheme financially unsustainable.

On 16 December 2025, the Minister of Transport released a statement saying that due to the above, the Government had decided: -

- *the fare subsidy level will reduce from the current 75 percent down to 65 percent from 1 July 2026*
- *NZTA will work with public transport authorities to lower the fare caps and the maximum subsidy by approximately 10 percent*
- *reduced costs to the Crown from these changes will be recycled to public transport authorities to reduce their shortfall over 2025 to 2030*

Following consultation with the public and regional councils, NZTA have stated that the above will be implemented on 1 July 2026 effectively requiring all clients on the Whangarei Total Mobility Scheme to pay more for their travel.

Client travel on the Scheme continues to increase. Staff do, however, monitor client travel and write to high users requesting they review their travel requirements.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: Fuel Shortage Service Reduction Plan [↓](#) 

Service Plan for Impending Fuel Restrictions

Service	Contractor	Contact	Phone	E-mail	Service Reductions in Order of Priority
Buses					
Hikurangi Link	Ritchies	Christopher Hart Amish Vallabh	027 839 4694 021 299 0305	Christopher.Hart@ritchies.co.nz Amish.Vallabd@ritchies.co.nz	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business as usual 2. Reduce to once a week. Remove either Tuesday or Thursday run. 3. Direct passengers to the Community Trust service if operational. 4. Shut down service.
CityLink	Ritchies	Christopher Hart Amish Vallabh	027 839 4694 021 299 0305	Christopher.Hart@ritchies.co.nz Amish.Vallabd@ritchies.co.nz	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business as usual 2. Identify low volume trips for reduction/removal. 3. Reduce Mon – Fri to a Saturday type service and add additional trips if required. 4. Reduce to Saturday service only. 5. Identify and reduce to critical trips that must be operated only. 6. Shut down all services
SchoolLink	Ritchies	Christopher Hart Amish Vallabh	027 839 4694 021 299 0305	Christopher.Hart@ritchies.co.nz Amish.Vallabd@ritchies.co.nz	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No changes to SchoolLink Services 2. Government looking to keep all school services operational.
Bream Bay Link	Ritchies	Christopher Hart Amish Vallabh	027 839 4694 021 299 0305ca	Christopher.Hart@ritchies.co.nz Amish.Vallabd@ritchies.co.nz	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business as usual 2. Remove Thursday run. No Scholars. Good patronage.

Note: - The above table is broken down into various stages. Broadly, these are: -

Stage 1: - No problem with fuel delivery – No changes to scheduled services – BEST CASE SCENARIO

Stage 2: - Fuel availability starts to be restricted – What trips can be removed to allow best use of available fuel.

Stage 3: - Fuel becomes short in supply with full rationing in place – What are the best skeleton type services that can be operated.

Stage 4: - Fuel supply becomes critical – Services need to be shut down – Identify critical trips to be operated if feasible – WORST CASE SCENARIO

- Note: - On receipt of formal direction from the Government and/or NZTA, NRC to undertake a comprehensive advertising campaign to advise the public of what will be happening should fuel supplies become restricted.
- Unless the Government advise otherwise, tell the public that the bus services are facing the same problems as car drivers. This is beyond the NRC and bus company's control.
 - Encourage the public to look seriously at carpooling and/or lift clubs etc. as we only have so many buses and drivers available. If the present bus buses get overloaded, we will not be able to cope.
 - Should the Government direct that bus services and Total Mobility are essential services, don't target these operators as they will be complying with a government directive.