

Joint WDC-NRC Whangarei Public Transport Working Party Minutes

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

Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, NRC Councillor, Amy Macdonald
NRC Councillor, Jack Craw
NRC Councillor, Joe Carr
WDC Councillor, Nicholas Connop
WDC Councillor, Stephen Martin (online) arrived 09.04am

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Full Meeting

NRC GM Community Resilience, Louisa Gritt
NRC Transport Manager, Chris Powell
NRC Secretariat, Haylee Labelle
NRC Transport Project Officer, Anita Child(online)
NRC Transport Contracts Officer, Anan Thiru(online)
NRC Regional Transport Coordinator, Kayla Gunson (online)
NRC Transport Services Coordinator, Pooja Singh Shettyar (online)

Part Meeting

WDC Transportation Strategy & Planning Lead, Nick Marshall (online)

The Chair declared the meeting open at 10am with a karakia

Ngā Mahi Whakapai/Housekeeping (Item 1.0)

Ngā whakapahā/Apologies (Item 2.0)

Moved (Craw/Connop)

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

Carried

Confirmation of Minutes - 10 February 2026 (Item 4.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Moved (Macdonald/Craw)

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.

Carried

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 5.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Recommendation

That the action sheet be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: WDC Transportation Strategy & Planning Lead explained the upcoming enforcement process for T2 lanes, involving automated cameras, targeted education campaigns, and a phased approach to issuing warnings and fines. The system will allow drivers to contest tickets in cases where passengers are not visible (such as baby capsules). The installed cameras are not yet operational as the software requires testing. Once live, these will help to support the required behaviours. The technology reads number plates and takes photos to determine if passengers are onboard. If someone has been driving more than 30-50m in the T2 lane without two or more people in the vehicle, a ticket will be issued. Once the cameras are switched on the targeted education campaign will commence. During the i educational phase tickets will be sent without a bill attached. Following this, full enforcement will ensue.

Discussed growing congestion, particularly on State Highway 14 and routes serving the hospital. Infrastructure improvements, such as additional lanes and signal upgrades, are being considered, with some projects pending inclusion in the next long-term plan (LTP) and RLTP funding bids.

Actions:

Transport Manager to forward copies of the NZTA presentation "SH14 to Maunu Corridor Improvements IBC

Terms of Reference (Item 6.1)

Report from Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant Community Resilience

Recommendation

That the report 'Terms of Reference by Haylee Labelle, Personal Assistant - Northland Regional Council and dated 18 March 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial notes: members debated the effectiveness of the current quorum rule, which allowed meetings to proceed with any three members, and raised concerns about decisions being made without representation from both councils. The consensus was that a minimum of one member from each council should be present to ensure balanced decision-making.

Actions:

- 1. Amend the terms of reference to reflect the new quorum requirement of 3 members but there must be a minimum of one member from each Council present to achieve quorum**
- 2. Terms of reference once amended to be taken to NRC Council meeting to be approved and adopted**

Operational Report (Item 6.2)

Report from Chris Powell, Transport Manager - Northland Regional Council

Recommendation

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

Carried

Secretarial notes:

Efforts are underway to implement a shuttle service connecting the main bus hub at Rose Street to the hospital, with considerations for vehicle size due to site constraints. The feasibility study includes cost assessment and potential funding sources, with the next steps involving schedule development and funding proposals to NRC.

Delays on certain routes, such as the Citylink Tikipunga via Kamo, were attributed to route length, number of stops, and congestion rather than raised crossings. Infrastructure and operational investments are needed to improve reliability.

NRC Transport Manager described ongoing collaboration with WDC staff and community groups to review and potentially enhance bus stop locations and infrastructure in Hikurangi, including seating and shelter, and support for community-led van services to connect with main bus routes.

NRC is monitoring national fuel supply and price trends, with contingency plans for service reductions in case of shortages.

Operators can claim increased costs through the NZTA CPI claim mechanism, invoicing the council quarterly with evidence. There is uncertainty about whether NZTA or MOT will provide additional funding to cover these increases, and the council may need to decide between maintaining service levels at higher cost or reducing services.

A national policy requires councils to collect a minimum amount of farebox revenue to qualify for government subsidies. This restricts the council's ability to lower fares, as doing so would jeopardise subsidy eligibility and make services unaffordable to operate.

NRC reported that a recent fare increase resulted in only a minor decrease in patronage, with levels stabilising at around 6%. The council continues to seek ways to improve patronage within the constraints of the farebox policy.

Members were advised that there is an ongoing shortage of bus drivers, exacerbated by expiring work permits, which may impact service capacity.

Moved (Carr/Craw) The Whangarei Public Transport Working Party recommend that the Council considers providing a comprehensive bus service for scholars in the event of fuel restrictions imposed on the bus services during fuel shortages, recognising the social and educational impacts of disrupted student transport.

It was noted that the government has indicated that school buses will be prioritised for fuel allocation. Plans include reclassifying general service buses as school buses if necessary and communicating this strategy to government agencies. NRC will bring this topic to an upcoming Council workshop for further discussion.

NRC intends to proactively inform the community about plans to prioritise school transport in a crisis, ensuring parents and schools are aware of the measures in place to guarantee student access to education.

Provided an update on the Total Mobility Scheme, noting that government subsidies are being reduced, resulting in increased costs for clients who rely on the service. The government is shifting more of the cost burden to users of the Total Mobility Scheme by reducing subsidies, which will require clients to pay a greater share of transport costs.

Actions:

- 1. NRC Transport Manager to send a copy of the City Links improvement programme single stage business case and the State Highway 14 Whangarei to Maunu Corridor Indicative business case to the WPTWP members**
- 2. NRC Transport Manager to add the discussion of enhanced school bus services during fuel shortages to the upcoming NRC workshop (as per resolution).**
- 3. NRC Transport Manager to obtain and provide current percentage capacity data for general bus patronage to inform on potential for increased usage.**
- 4. NRC Project Manager to share the NRC Total Mobility review submission with WPTWP members**

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The meeting concluded at 10.02am.