

Total Mobility Scheme Background

In the early 2000's the government legislated (Land Transport Management Act 2003) that Regional Councils across New Zealand would assist those living in their regions who were unable to utilise public transport (bus) by administering and co-funding a subsidised transport scheme where eligible clients would receive 50% discount on taxi travel. A number of eligibility criteria applied to both intending passengers and the transport providers.

The main eligibility criteria for clients at the time was their inability to fully complete a public transport journey unaided, which included walking to their nearest bus stop, identifying the bus they required as it approached, to board and alight the bus safely, and to make their way home again.

The main operator restriction was that transport providers must be part of an approved taxi organisation (ATO). This was to give consistency across the country in terms of service provision, quality of vehicle, passenger safety and to restrict opportunities for fare gouging.

Travelling passengers paid 50% of their fare at the completion of their trip, and the remaining 50% was invoiced by the operators to councils and shared by Transfund (now Waka Kotahi) and the councils. The financial assistance rate (FAR) for councils was initially 50 – 53%.

The Northland Regional Council responded to this requirement by preparing to strike a regional Transport rate to secure the local share needed. At that time, both Kaipara and Far North District Councils were opposed to the rate being introduced, however Whangarei District Council decided to provide the local share for the Whangarei District Scheme, on the understanding that the NRC would administer the scheme.

The Whangarei Scheme has an annual operational budget of a maximum of \$300,000 per annum. 40% (\$120,000) of this is funded by the Whangarei District Council, and 60% (\$180,000) by Waka Kotahi. The Whangarei total mobility scheme has 1249 clients, and four service providers.

The funding is provided by Waka Kotahi on the understanding that the Scheme is provided on a nationally consistent basis, and therefore has several criteria around eligibility, assessment, and operation of the Scheme.

There has also been a number of changes to the operator requirements over the years, one important change being that transport providers no longer need to be affiliated with an ATO. Acceptance as a transport provider is not automatic, there is an application process and the applicant's ability to adhere to the Scheme requirements is assessed at the time of application.

NRC has received a number of requests over recent years to provide a Total Mobility Scheme in both the Mid and Far North, however the main barriers to addressing these has been the provision of the local share required and the lack of approved transport providers. In August 2020, a consultant completed a review of what transport services were in operation in Northland and provided a number of recommendations as to what the way forward might be.

<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/media/gxhrlzm/northland-transport-needs-final-report-oct-2020.pdf>

In the more isolated areas of Northland, it was considered that a total mobility scheme may not be feasible due to the absence of a suitable service provider. NRC is reviewing an alternative option for these areas, based on the Environment Canterbury's Community Vehicle Trusts (CVT).

However, it has recently come to the attention of the NRC that a subsidised transport scheme similar to Total Mobility was being run by Age Concern in Kerikeri until mid 2021.

In 2004 a one-off grant from the Ministry of Health was successfully sought by Age Concern for a pilot transport scheme in the Mid North with the primary objective of improving the quality of life of the older persons. The concept was in line with the Aging in Place Strategy, which had the aim of enabling people to travel for necessary health and social reasons, and in turn this would enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as they wanted to.

After 2004, funding was provided by the then Te Tai Tokerau Health Organisation. A number of merges since then sees this now known as Mahitahi Primary Health Enterprise (PHE).

The scheme has been run very simply over the years. There was no official assessment process undertaken, and the only eligibility criteria was that clients were required to be aged 65 and over. A book of ten vouchers was issued to each client, who in turn gave a voucher to the driver at the time of travel, and these were returned to Age Concern Kerikeri with a monthly invoice.

The serviced area was between Kaikohe, Okaihau, Moerewa, and Kerikeri, and Kawakawa and Whangarei Hospital. Subsidy provided was a maximum of \$20 **per one way trip**. Kerikeri transport operators were Driving Miss Daisy and Health Drive, and in Paihia and Opuia there were also two operators, Haruru Falls Cabs and Dial A Ride.

Unfortunately, Mahitahi PHE advised Age Concern Kerikeri in April 21 that funding would be discontinued from the start of the 21.22 financial year. As a result, the scheme is not currently available for residents of the Mid North.

The purpose of this paper is to request agreement from the Far North District council to the implement of a Total Mobility Scheme for the far north.

NRC worked with the FNDC programme planners and applied for subsidy from the national land transport fund via the 2021/2024 Regional Land Transport Plan for subsidy to implement a small total Mobility Scheme in the Far North District, and to source the required local share via the Far North District Council long term Plan.

Waka Kotahi have approved a total expenditure of up to \$100,000 across the Far North District – and will subsidise the local share required at 60% FAR. This equates to \$60,000 from Waka Kotahi (60%) and \$40,000 from FNDC (40%). This was intended as a starting point to roll out a Total Mobility Scheme across the Far North district in areas where there were existing operators. Kerikeri would seem to be the ideal location to launch the first scheme.

The implementation would be staged as follows:

Stage one would be to discuss with Age concern Kerikeri the possibility of providing them with funding to re-instate the transport scheme they had in place, and the changes that would be required.

Stage two would be to bring that scheme more in line with the national total mobility scheme, and ensure it is meeting all the mandated requirements in terms of assessments for eligibility, conditions of travel and more as detailed in Waka Kotahi's Policy Guide for Local Authorities:

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/total-mobility-scheme/docs/Total-mobility-scheme-local-authorities.pdf>

FNDC and NRC would work together to agree on a number of rules such as maximum fares, the boundary the scheme would operate in, what reporting would be required and the process to be followed in the event the uptake is so large that more funding is required.

Stage three would be to seek other agencies in Kerikeri who would be interested in becoming an assessing agency for their clients and open the scheme up for other eligible residents of Kerikeri.

Stage four would be to seek other transport operators, and assess their ability to meet the requirements to become a registered transport provider

It is envisaged that NRC staff would administer the Scheme and would initially travel to Kerikeri on a regular basis to train assessors and providers, and to provide support to the agencies and operators.

If successful, and with FNDC's permission, this model could be introduced in other towns such as Kaikohe and Kaitaia, depending on the budget available

Costing options/Scheme expenditure:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Suggested Kerikeri Total Scheme cost - maximum	\$25,000	\$35,000	\$45,000	\$75,000
FNDC Share – 40%	\$10,000	\$14,000	\$18,000	\$30,000
Waka Kotahi Share – 60%	\$15,000	\$21,000	\$27,000	\$45,000
Maximum one-way fare	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Number of one-way trips per annum	1250	1750	2250	3750
Number of one-way trips per day	3.4	4.8	6.1	10.3

From the Managers Desk

We have had a very busy last few months. Shirley and Kayla have presented Safe with Age in Whangarei (2 times), Dargaville, and Jane Mander Retirement Village in Whangarei, Paihia and Kerikeri.

There are two more workshop one in Whangarei and one at the Bream Bay Retirement Village in Ruakaka. The interest in Safe with Age for senior drivers has been really rewarding, we have kept a register of those that missed out on the Kerikeri and Whangarei workshops, so if you missed out expect a phone call from us to give you our future workshop dates. We have also been presenting workshops on Life without a Car, which some had renamed "there is no life without a car in Northland", this of course is true, we have limited public transport. Access is very poor, making it difficult for people to manage their health and social activities. I long for people to be still talking passionately about "positive ageing, giving the older person independence, improving quality of life and enabling them to remain in their own homes".

Other activities include the Strength and Balance in Kaikohe and Kerikeri, both areas have enthusiastic weekly attendees. Many are pleased to tell us how their physical ability has improved and how much they enjoy the social interaction.

Our digital learning (tech for seniors) has a steady flow of requests from people wanting to learn. To meet this demand a volunteer tutor will assist on a Friday. It is great to see so many wanting to be able to manage their lives through technology. Remember tech training is by appointment, so give us a call on 407 4474 to make an arrangement.

PLEASE READ IF YOU USE THE TAXI AND RECEIVE/CLAIM THE \$20 SUBSIDY:

**AS FROM 1 MAY 2021
WE ARE UNABLE TO
OFFER THE SUBSIDY.**

In 2004 Age Concern Mid North successfully secured funding from the Ministry of Health for a pilot scheme to provide for a subsidised taxi service in the Mid North of Northland. At that time we offered the service where there was a licensed taxi provider.

The aim of the project was to subsidise taxi fares for older people for all reasons, but especially to ensure

the ability of clients to access doctors, specialists, health promotion and social activities. The initiative was proposed in response to the Ageing in Place Strategy which was aimed at encouraging people to stay well both physically and mentally and be able to stay in their own homes as long as they wish to. The Ministry of Health funding was a one off and in late 2004 we made a successful funding application to the then Te Tai Tokerau Primary Health Organisation. TTTPHO was later to be merged with Manaia PHO and became Mahitahi Primary Health Enterprise (Mahitahi PHE). Since 2004 we have been fortunate enough to have had funding to provide this service to the older people of the Mid North. We have always appreciated the funding. Over the years the service has grown, and those clients using the taxi subsidy will know that we have adjusted the subsidy over the years. The service has attracted new providers, Driving Miss Daisy and Health Drive, both providers deliver their service across the Mid North, in the Bay of Islands Dial a Ride and Haruru Cabs have been delivering the service for many years. These providers are a valuable eyes and ears of our community and we so appreciated their feedback and willingness to assist whenever needed.

I have given the background to how we were able to provide the service to our older community and to endorse that the funding over the 17 years has been appreciated. In April 2021 we were informed that the funding will not continue beyond this financial year. This means that we will not be able to continue to offer this service, if you have any concerns please contact us on 407 4474 we will do our best to answer your questions and assist you the best we can.

Your annual subscription form will be included with the newsletter, we will have an eftpos machine at the office in June to receive your payment, our bank account number is on the subscription form which means you can pay by internet banking. If you come into the office to pay it is our opportunity to thank you for being a member, and get to know you a little better.

For some the taxi subsidy will be a sad loss, currently we are looking at other funding options that will cover urgent transport assists.

Juen Duxfield

