



# AGENDA

## RTC Public Transport Subcommittee Meeting

**Date:** Monday, 8 June 2026

**Time:** 1:00 pm

**Location:** Council Chambers  
Waikato Regional Council  
Level 1, 160 Ward Street, Hamilton

**Members:** Cr Liz Stolwyk – Committee Chair – Waikato Regional Council  
Cr Angela Strange – Committee Deputy Chair – Waikato Regional Council  
Cr Ray Broad – Hauraki District Council  
Cr Jo Butcher – Ōtorohanga District Council  
Cr Duncan Campbell – Taupō District Council  
Cr Mike Keir – Waikato District Council  
Cr Mesh Macdonald – Hamilton City Council  
Cr Sue Moroney – Hamilton City Council  
Cr Janette Osborne – Waitomo District Council  
Cr Mike Pettit – Waipā District Council  
Cr Martin Rodley – Thames Coromandel District Council  
Mayor Ash Tanner – Matamata Piako District Council  
Cr Elvisa van der Leden – South Waikato District Council  
Cr Andrew Corkill – Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (non-voting)

**Alternates:** Cr Stephen Crooymans – Hauraki District Council  
Cr Roger Gordon – Waipā District Council  
Cr Sandra Greenslade – Taupō District Council  
Cr Eugene Patterson – Waikato District Council  
Cr Kerry Purdy – South-Waikato District Council  
Deputy-Mayor James Sainsbury – Matamata Piako District Council  
Cr Dan Tasker – Waitomo District Council  
Cr Sarah Thomson – Hamilton City Council  
Susan Collins – Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (non-voting)

# RTC Public Transport Subcommittee

## *Ngā Tikanga Whakahaere* | Terms of Reference

### 1. *Mana ā-Ture* | Status

This is a Subcommittee of the Regional Transport Committee and was established by Council under clause 30(2) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002. It is a discretionary committee that can be created or disestablished by Council or Regional Transport Committee resolution.

### 2. *Kawenga* | Responsibilities

This Subcommittee is responsible for considering and making recommendations on:

- a. Preparing the *Regional Public Transport Plan* for endorsement by the Regional Transport Committee and adoption by Waikato Regional Council.
- b. Adopting non-significant (as defined in the *Regional Public Transport Plan*) variations to the *Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- c. Adopting non-significant (as defined in the *Regional Public Transport Plan*) variations to the *Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- d. Considering and making recommendations on matters relevant to regional implementation and monitoring of the *Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- e. Receiving regular monitoring reports and presentations on relevant public transport matters.
- f. Preparing recommendations on public transport strategy and programmes, and investment requirements, to the relevant authorities.

### 3. *Ngā Apatono* | Powers

The Committee has the following powers required to carry out its responsibilities:

- a. Prepare and recommend the *Regional Public Transport Plan* for endorsement and adoption.
- b. Recommend significant variations to the *Regional Public Transport Plan* to the Regional Transport Committee and Waikato Regional Council.
- c. Establish a single purpose hearings committee or subcommittee with appropriate representation to develop and hear submissions on the *Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- d. Advise on public transport strategy, programmes, and investment needs.

### 4. *Ngā Tūranga* | Membership

#### 4.1 *Ngā Mema* | Members

The Subcommittee has sixteen members as follows:

- a. Two persons appointed by, and representative of Waikato Regional Council, one being the chair (or deputy-chair) of the Regional Transport Committee.
- b. Two persons appointed by, and representative of Hamilton City Council.
- c. One person appointed by, and representative of, the following territorial authorities in the Waikato region being:
  - i. Hauraki District Council
  - ii. Matamata-Piako District Council
  - iii. Ōtorohanga District Council
  - iv. South-Waikato District Council
  - v. Taupō District Council
  - vi. Thames Coromandel District Council
  - vii. Waikato District Council
  - viii. Waitomo District Council
  - ix. Waipā District Council
- d. The Subcommittee includes the following non-voting members:
  - i. One non-voting member appointed by the Auckland Council Governing Body.
  - ii. One non-voting member appointed by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.
  - iii. One person appointed by the Regional Transport Committee representing the disability, access and mobility sector in an advisory (non-voting) capacity.

**4.2 Ngā Kairīwhi | Alternates**

Any appointing agency or organisation may appoint one alternate member. Where the member appointed by the agency or organisation concerned is absent, the alternate will have full voting rights in the place of the absent member (where that member had those same rights).

**4.3 Mema-kore | Non-members**

The Subcommittee may invite non-member, non-voting experts to assist the Subcommittee, sitting at the Subcommittee table and with the same speaking rights as a member.

**4.4 Ūpoko me te Ūpoko Tuarua | Chair and Deputy-Chair**

- a. The Chair of the Subcommittee is the Chair (or the Deputy-Chair), of the Regional Transport Committee as appointed above.
- b. The Deputy-Chair is appointed by Council in accordance with clause 25 of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002.

**5. Tokamatua | Quorum**

Seven voting members. *Refer clause 23(3)(b) of Schedule 7, Local Government Act 2002*..

**6. Ngā Tikanga Pōti | Voting**

- a. Decisions are made by majority vote of members present.
- b. If votes are equal, the Chair has a deliberative and casting vote.

*Refer clause 24 of Schedule 7, Local Government Act 2002.*

**7. Ngā Hui i te Tau | Frequency of meetings**

Quarterly or as required.

**Order Of Business**

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**1 KARAKIA TIMATANGA**

<b>Whakataka te hau ki te uru</b>	<b>Cease o winds from the west</b>
<b>Whakataka te hau ki te tonga</b>	<b>Cease o winds from the south</b>
<b>Kia mākinakina ki uta</b>	<b>Bring calm breezes over the land</b>
<b>Kia mātaratara ki tai</b>	<b>Bring calm breezes over the sea</b>
<b>E hī ake ana te atakura</b>	<b>And let the red-tipped dawn come</b>
<b>He tio</b>	<b>With a touch of frost</b>
<b>He Huka</b>	<b>A sharpened air</b>
<b>He hau hū</b>	<b>And promise of a glorious day</b>
<b>Tīhei mauri ora!</b>	<b>Behold we live</b>

**2 APOLOGIES****3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA****4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Members are reminded of the need to be aware of maintaining a clear separation between personal interests and duties and their role as an elected member.

If any member has an interest that creates an actual, or could be perceived to create, a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda, it is recommended that this be disclosed.

## 5 PRELIMINARY ITEMS

### 5.1 PUBLIC FORUM

**Rā | Date:** 4 March 2026

**Kaituhi | Author:** Jordan Metz, Democracy Advisor

**Kaituku | Authoriser:** Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections

#### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. To provide details of speakers that are planning to present in the public forum, and to attach any materials that they may have supplied.
  - (a) Heidi Hughes, speaking on behalf of the Wednesday Challenge. A presentation is attached to this report (refer attachment one).
  - (b) Margaret Whitmore speaking to orbiter route changes has been confirmed.
2. To provide an overview of the process and relevant standing orders pertaining to public forums.

#### KŌRERO WHAKATAHI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Public forums are a defined period, usually at the start of an ordinary meeting, which, at the discretion of a meeting, is put aside for the purpose of public input. Public forums are optional and are designed to enable members of the public to bring matters of their choice, not necessarily on the meeting's agenda, to the attention of the local authority.
4. In the case of a committee or subcommittee, any issue, idea or matter raised in a public forum must also fall within the relevant terms of reference.

#### Time limits

5. Where implemented, public forums run for a period of up to 30 minutes, or such longer time as the meeting may determine. Requests to speak at a public forum (where available) must be made to the chief executive (or their delegate) at least 10 clear working days before the meeting; however, this requirement may be waived by the chair. Requests should also outline the matters that will be addressed by the speaker(s).
6. Speakers can speak for up to 5 minutes. Where the number of speakers presenting in the public forum exceeds 6 in total, the chair has discretion to restrict the speaking time permitted for all speakers.

#### Restrictions

7. The chair has the discretion to decline to hear a speaker at a public forum or to terminate a presentation at any time where:
  - (a) A speaker is repeating views presented by an earlier speaker at the same public forum;
  - (b) The speaker is criticising elected members and/or staff;
  - (c) The speaker is being repetitious, disrespectful or offensive;

- (d) The speaker has previously spoken on the same issue;
- (e) The matter is subject to legal proceedings; and
- (f) The matter is subject to a hearing, including the hearing of submissions where the local authority or committee sits in a quasi-judicial capacity.

**Questions at public forums**

8. At the conclusion of a presentation, with the permission of the chair, members may ask questions of speakers. Questions are to be confined to obtaining information or clarification on matters raised by a speaker.

**No resolutions**

9. Following the public forum, no debate or decisions will be made at the meeting on issues raised during the forum unless related to items already on the agenda.

**NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES**

10. The rules pertaining to public forums are contained in the Standing Orders. The Executive Summary above contains an excerpt of those rules, but the Standing Orders are available on the Council website, or by clicking [here](#).

**ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Public Transport Month Presentation 2026 Doc # 35916070** [↓](#)

# NATIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT MONTH



A coordinated, nationwide behaviour change campaign that encourages people to shift their daily commute to public transport.

- A dedicated public transport campaign that sustains across political cycles.
- A points and rewards APP that captures data and creates friendly competition and positive stories.
- Nation wide with strong, region by region, focus.
- Direct reach into businesses to speak to commuters.
- Kids Can charity partner, putting shoes and raincoats on kids for their school journey.
- Provides councils with measurable data on participation, mode shift and impact.



# PUBLIC TRANSPORT MONTH

- 2026 Pilot year to set the programme up, create collaborations across the region and begin awareness
- Builds momentum year-on-year
- Connects regions with a shared goal
- Provides measurable data on participation, mode shift and impact
- Reduces traffic congestion and emissions
- Increases public transport patronage and establishes behaviour change patterns
- Delivers measurable outcomes

WEEKDAY  
**CHALLENGE**  
FOR BUSINESSES

WEDNESDAY  
**CHALLENGE**  
FOR SCHOOLS



# PUBLIC TRANSPORT MONTH



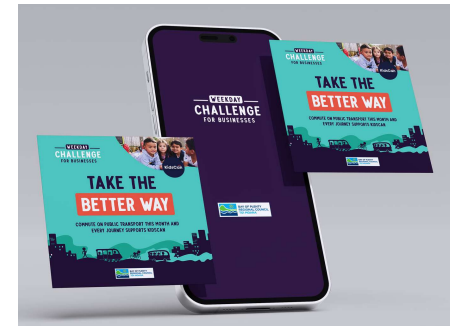
## PROPOSED INVESTMENT

Fourteen councils across NZ contribute to a nationwide budget of \$350,000.

**Waikato Regional Council contribution \$30,000 plus \$5,000 bus passes.**

### WAIKATO REGION SPECIFIC BENEFITS:

- Regional workplace engagement and relationship building
- Collaboration with business networks and community organisations
- Opportunity for education, features on routes, promotions, bus backs.
- Local ambassadors and influencers, regional promotion and storytelling highlighting Waikato commuters
- Access to the Weekday Challenge platform to track participation, ridership impacts and emissions reductions
- Delivery of a detailed evaluation report following the campaign



**6 MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION OR RECEIPT**

RTC Public Transport Subcommittee Meeting – 9 March 2026



# MINUTES

## RTC Public Transport Subcommittee Meeting

**Monday, 9 March 2026**

**Order Of Business**

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**7 Karakia Whakamutunga .....7**

**Waikato Regional Council**  
**RTC Public Transport Subcommittee Meeting**  
**OPEN MINUTES**

**Date:** Monday 9 March 2026, 1.00pm  
**Location:** Council Chambers  
 Waikato Regional Council  
 Level 1, 160 Ward Street, Hamilton

**Members Present:** Cr Liz Stolwyk – Committee Chair – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Angela Strange – Committee Deputy-Chair – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Ray Broad – Hauraki District Council  
 Cr Jo Butcher – Ōtorohanga District Council  
 Cr Duncan Campbell – Taupō District Council  
 Cr Mike Keir – Waikato District Council (until 4.23pm)  
 Cr Mesh Macdonald – Hamilton City Council  
 Cr Sue Moroney – Hamilton City Council  
 Cr Janette Osborne – Waitomo District Council (until 4.23pm)  
 Cr Mike Pettit – Waipā District Council  
 Cr Martin Rodley – Thames-Coromandel District Council  
 Mayor Ash Tanner – Matamata-Piako District Council (until 2.57pm)  
 Cr Elvisa van der Leden – South Waikato District Council (until 4.23pm)

**In Attendance:** Cr Stephen Croymans – Hauraki District Council  
 Cr Ben Dunbar-Smith – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Keith Holmes – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Warren Maher – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Garry Reymer – Waikato Regional Council  
 Cr Sarah Thomson – Hamilton City Council

**Staff Present:** Chris McLay – Chief Executive  
 Phil King – Director Regional Transport Connections  
 Trudi Knight – Manager, Public Transport Operations  
 Lorraine Cheyne – Manager, Transport Strategy and Delivery  
 Jordan Metz – Democracy Advisor

***The contents of these minutes meet all legal requirements and include a full set of decisions. An audio-visual recording of the open session of the meeting is available on Waikato Regional Council's public website.***

Recording	Document ID #	YouTube Link
Meeting Recording #1	34865630	<a href="https://youtu.be/hUy2St4bWyl">https://youtu.be/hUy2St4bWyl</a>
Meeting Recording #2	34865631	<a href="https://youtu.be/Lyl-6dEUTUM">https://youtu.be/Lyl-6dEUTUM</a>

## 1 KARAKIA TIMATANGA

Item commenced in recording 1, at start.

The Director, Regional Transport Connections (Phil King) opened the meeting with a karakia.

## 2 APOLOGIES

Item commenced in recording 1, at 42 seconds.

Nil

## 3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

Item commenced in recording 1, at 50 seconds.

### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/01

Moved: Cr Angela Strange

Seconded: Cr Janette Osborne

1. That the agenda of the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee Meeting of 9 March 2026, as circulated, be confirmed as the business of the meeting.
2. That the order of items follows the order set out in the minutes.
3. That the meeting may sit longer than two hours continuously and continue longer than six hours including adjournments.

**CARRIED**

## 4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Item commenced in recording 1, at 1 minute 7 seconds.

No interests were disclosed pertaining to items on the agenda or interests not already recorded on a relevant register.

## 5 PRELIMINARY ITEMS

### 5.1 PUBLIC FORUM

Item commenced in recording 1, at 1 minute 14 seconds.

Pamela Chiles outlined the Land Transport Management Act and the Regional Transport Plan (2022-2032), highlighting accessibility and service design. She noted that while some Hamilton bus routes operate at high frequency, low-frequency services were often neglected.

## 6 GENERAL ITEMS

### 6.1 BRIEF SUBCOMMITTEE INDUCTION

Item commenced in recording 1, at 12 minute 14 seconds.

Presented by the Director, Regional Transport Connections (Phil King).

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/02

Moved: Cr Elvise van der Leden

Seconded: Cr Janette Osborne

That the report *Brief Subcommittee Induction* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.

CARRIED

### 6.2 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Item commenced in recording 1 at 13 minutes 2 seconds.

Presented by the Director, Regional Transport Connections (Phil King).

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/03

Moved: Cr Elvise van der Leden

Seconded: Cr Martin Rodley

That the *Director's Report* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.

CARRIED

### 6.3 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONNECT-2-TAUPO TRIAL SERVICE

Item commenced in recording 1, at 47 minutes.

Presented by the Manager, Transport Strategy & Delivery (Lorraine Cheyne).

This item was discussed. There was no motion put.

2.57pm – Mayor Ash Tanner left the meeting.

### 6.4 CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND NZTA WORK PLAN

Item commenced in recording 1, at 1 hour 21 Minutes and 4 seconds.

Presented by the Manager, Transport Strategy and Delivery (Lorraine Cheyne).

3.30pm – The meeting adjourned.

3.49pm – The meeting reconvened.

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/04

**Moved:** Cr Roger Gordon  
**Seconded:** Cr Martin Rodley

**That the report *Central Government and NZTA work plan* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.**

**CARRIED**

## **6.5 TE HUIA UPDATE**

Item commenced in recording 2, at start.

Presented by the Director, Regional Transport Connections (Phil King).

4.00pm - Cr Duncan Campbell left the meeting.

### **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/05**

**Moved:** Cr Janette Osborne  
**Seconded:** Cr Sue Moroney

**That the report *Te Huia Update* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.**

**CARRIED**

## **6.6 PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATIONS REPORT**

Item commenced in recording 2, at 13 minutes 7 seconds.

Presented by the Team Leader, Contracts and Insights (Vincent Kuo) and Network Monitoring Analyst (Melissa Smith).

### **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/06**

**Moved:** Cr Angela Strange  
**Seconded:** Cr Mesh Macdonald

**That the *Public Transport Operations Report* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.**

**CARRIED**

## **6.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Item commenced in recording 2, at 18 minutes 7 seconds.

Presented by the Manager, Transport Strategy and Delivery (Lorraine Cheyne).

### **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/07**

**Moved:** Cr Mesh Macdonald  
**Seconded:** Cr Ray Broad

**That the report *Public Transport Issues and Opportunities* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.**

**CARRIED**

## **6.8 PUBLIC TRANSPORT BRANDING REFRESH**

Item commenced in recording 2, at 31 minutes 34 seconds.

Presented by the Manager, Public Transport Operations (Trudi Knight).

4.23pm – Cr Elvisa van der Leden left the meeting.

4.23pm – Cr Mike Keir left the meeting.

4.23pm – Cr Janette Osbourne left the meeting

### **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION RTCPTS26/08**

**Moved: Cr Martin Rodley**

**Seconded: Cr Angela Strange**

**That the report *Public Transport Branding Refresh* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 9 March 2026) be received.**

**CARRIED**

## **7 KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA**

Item commenced in recording 2, at 52 minutes.

The Director, Regional Transport Connections (Phil King) closed the meeting with a Karakia.

4.42pm – The meeting closed.

## 7 GENERAL ITEMS

### 7.1 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rā | Date: 25 May 2026

Kaituhi | Author: Lorraine Cheyne, Manager – Transport Strategy & Delivery

Kaituku | Authoriser: Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections

#### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report updates the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee on policy and legislative changes impacting the planning and operations of public transport in the Region.
2. The report also updates the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee on current workstreams of interest to elected members and the wider public.

#### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Changes in the policy and legislation that have occurred since March 2026 include:
  - (a) Government requirement for Local Government Reform
  - (b) Fuel Supply Impacts for Public Transport
4. Current workstreams of interest to elected members and communities across the region include:
  - (a) Waikato Regional Council Bus Contracts Renewal
  - (b) National Ticketing Solution (NTS)
  - (c) Cambridge Local Service Study Update
  - (d) Taumarunui Public Transport Bus Service
  - (e) Establishment of an informal Te Huia Working Group

#### TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the *Director's Report* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 8 June 2026) be received.

#### TE TAKE | ISSUE

##### Government Requirements for Local Government Reform

5. On 5 May 2026, the Government announced its “Head Start” for Simplifying Local Government. The stated aim of the Head Start (with back-stop) approach is for the voluntary creation of unitary authorities within a region.

6. The model will replace regional councillors at the 2028 local elections with an interim body (for example, a board of mayors, Crown commissioners, or a combination of both). The approach relies on proposals from two or more territorial authorities that together represent a majority of either directly affected territorial authorities or a majority of the population across directly affected districts. More than one unitary authority in a region is only likely to be approved if:
  - (a) the region is large and has more complex issues
  - (b) the proposal clearly meets the criteria and doesn't lead to the fragmentation of key regional functions where collaboration is required.
7. Proposals for amalgamation will be assessed against the following criteria:
  - (a) **Deliverability:** Proposals are realistic and demonstrate how new arrangements can be implemented in a timely manner.
  - (b) **Supports the new planning system:** Shows clear support for implementing the new planning system – including progress on spatial and natural environment plan development – and avoids or minimises disruption to that work.
  - (c) **Simplifies local governance:** Proposes more efficient regional governance arrangements, consolidating decision-making and improving alignment between a region's councils. Economies of scale:
  - (d) **Supports regional strategic planning and effective delivery** of key regional functions (such as transport and catchment management), and demonstrates responsible and affordable asset management, infrastructure investment, and service delivery.
  - (e) **Maintains local voice:** Demonstrates fair and effective representation for communities of interest and how decisions will be made at the local level, balancing urban and rural interests.
8. The Head Start approach is focused on local authorities proving themselves to be ready and future-fit for new planning legislation. As per 7(d) above, to be successful Head Start amalgamation proposals must demonstrate that they support the strategic planning of regional transport functions (regional land transport planning and management) and responsible and affordable delivery of regional transport services.
9. For members of the RTC Public Transport Committee's benefit, Waikato Regional Council's key public transport service delivery activities include:
  - (a) Bus and Rail Services contract management – comprising 10 Units currently, ~\$45M annual operating cost (gross), 6 FTEs
  - (b) Bus and Rail Services promotion and customer service/ticketing - ~\$1.5M annual operating cost, 7 FTEs
  - (c) Total Mobility Services – operating in Hamilton City, Waikato District, Waipā District, Matamata-Piako District, Thames-Coromandel District, Taupō District and Tokoroa. Annual operating budget of ~\$2.6M; 1.3 FTE.
  - (d) Community Transport – region-wide; Annual operating budget of \$500,000; 1.3 staff.
  - (e) Regional Public Transport Planning, including funding – Annual operating budget ~\$1.75M; 2.5 staff

### National Fuel Supply Issues

10. The outbreak of hostilities between US / Israel and Iran in late February has resulted in a drastic disruption to fossil fuel supply from the Middle East. Since late February fuel vessel transits in the Strait have dropped from over 100 per day to around eight per day.
11. The immediate supply disruption and short-term outlook for further shortage has increased the cost of all fuels and, significantly, the price of diesel.
12. Both the cost of fuel and the potential disruption to fuel supply will likely have impacts for the public transport operations of Waikato's primarily diesel fleets, and the Te Huia Rail service. New Zealand currently remains in Phase 1 of a four-phase fuel supply response plan. In preparedness for New Zealand advancing to any other fuel security response phase, staff are developing a public transport contingency response. This has included:
  - (a) Identifying high-cost/low-patronage routes and potential network rationalisation (regional and Hamilton urban).
  - (b) Assessing frequency, hours of operation, weekend services, and route hierarchy/core network, with on-going weekly monitoring of changes in use
  - (c) Understanding impacts on Total Mobility, including fare increases and existing budget pressures.
  - (d) Anticipating increased demand as people shift from private vehicles to buses.
13. It is noted that currently Unit 6A serving the Waipā routes and comprising 7 buses is fully electric. Additionally, there is one electric bus in Unit 9, Taupō currently.
14. Waikato Regional Transport staff provide fortnightly updates to Regional Council elected members on the key indicators that would factor into the contingency response for public transport, if required.
15. The latest Fuel Supply situation update is provided in Attachment 1. All updates are also available on the regional council website: [Public transport fuel updates | Waikato Regional Council](#).

#### Waikato Regional Council Bus Contract Renewals

16. On Friday 27 March, WRC published the Request for Proposals (RFP) for our bus units 1-5 and 10. These units consist of our 2 larger urban Hamilton contracts and include 4 regional contracts inclusive of Thames. We have issued the RFP for a period of 16 weeks that is due to close 27 July. To date, we have completed a supplier briefing 1-week into the tender period and most recently four one-on-one sessions with interested suppliers, which were well received and demonstrated good market interest.
17. We are now at the halfway point of the tender period. Notably, a new supplier has entered the process and is very interested in Unit 10. We have received positive feedback on the RFP documentation that we issued, and we continue to receive a small number of questions regarding the full RFP package. These questions span a range of areas but there has been a particular focus on the clarifying of conditions within the new regional agreement
18. The question period will close on 26 June, with the deadline for proposal submissions set for 27 July. Preparation is underway for the evaluation phase, including preparation for the evaluation team and providing them with the necessary guidance and materials. We are also reviewing the final approvals process to ensure a smooth and efficient conclusion to the procurement by the end of 2026

### National Ticketing Solution (NTS) Update

19. The national rollout of Motu Move will be delivered on a region-by-region basis and is expected to be completed by the end of 2027. Waikato is currently anticipated to transition in the latter stages of the programme, with specific implementation timeframes for the region yet to be confirmed
20. With refreshed national governance arrangements now in place, programme delivery activity in the Waikato is progressing. This includes the successful completion of pre-wiring of the Transit fleet in April 2026 to support the installation of NTS equipment.
21. Pre-wiring of the remaining fleet is planned to occur following completion of the bus contract renewals process in December 2026, ensuring alignment between contractual arrangements and system implementation.
22. In parallel to this, staff are working with New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) on required budget forecasting and engaging with key stakeholders to commence development of a Waikato NTS change delivery plan, covering transition support, implementation planning, and resourcing requirements.

### Cambridge Local Service Study Update

23. The Cambridge Local Service Study has now been completed, with Technical Report 2 confirming a preferred option for enhancing public transport provision within Cambridge. The study responds to strong population growth and increasing demand for travel, and builds on earlier work to assess a range of service models. The final report has been developed in collaboration with Waikato Regional Council and Waipā District Council staff, with feedback incorporated throughout the assessment process.
24. The recommended approach is a modification to the existing Route 20 service through the introduction of a northern branch (Option C2 in Attachment 2). This would increase overall service frequency and expand coverage within Cambridge, while continuing to provide strong connections to Hamilton. The preferred option is identified as the most cost-effective and operationally efficient, with forecast patronage growth to approximately 250,000 annual boardings by 2037 (overall #20 patronage) and a lower cost per passenger (\$7.29) than the other options. It also enables relatively straightforward implementation as a variation to the existing contract and can be delivered in stages from approximately mid-2027, subject to funding and infrastructure delivery.
25. It is important to note that the recommended option represents a pragmatic short-term step to improve service coverage and frequency, rather than the ultimate long-term public transport solution for Cambridge. The proposed changes are intended to incrementally build the network, with infrastructure and service improvements that can support future evolution toward a more comprehensive local service as the town continues to grow.
26. The next step is to progress funding through the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP), with the service enhancement proposed for consideration under the Low Cost, Low Risk activity class. Funding applications are due in December. Subject to approval, implementation will proceed alongside the delivery of required bus stop infrastructure, with the final report attached in Attachment 2.

### Taumarunui Public Transport Bus Service

27. Due to changes led by Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand, the Taumarunui public bus service will cease operating on Friday, 26 June 2026. Te Whatu Ora advise that this decision supports a safer and more sustainable transport approach for health clients.
28. To maintain access to hospital specialist appointments, Te Whatu Ora will introduce a dedicated health shuttle designed specifically for patients who depend on this service.
29. However, the decision means that the public transport element of the service currently provided by Waikato Regional Council cannot be retained. As a result, the public bus service will be discontinued, leaving InterCity as the only long-distance bus provider operating from Taumarunui.
30. In a meeting organised and chaired by Ruapehu District Council, Waikato Regional Council councillors and staff recently met with a number of local district councils and Horizons Regional Council to discuss the impact of these changes on the Taumarunui community.
31. A joint meeting will shortly be convened between Waikato Regional Council and Horizons Regional Council to explore future transport options for Taumarunui and ensure alignment with upcoming funding bid opportunities. This will include ascertaining Horizon's interest in investigating a future cross-boundary Public Transport service linking Taumarunui to Te Kuiti and/or Ōtorohanga.

#### Te Huia Working Group

32. At its meeting held on 28 May 2026 the Waikato Regional Council considered a report on the fares policy for remainder of the Te Huia Passenger Rail Service trial (to June 2027). As part of its consideration, Council resolved to establish an informal Te Huia Working Group. Members of the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee are asked to express their interest in joining the Te Huia Working Group.

#### **WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

33. The legislative, policy and structural changes outlined in this report are collectively the biggest change to the local government transport operating environment in a generation and likely impact on the work of the Subcommittee in this triennium.
34. The next steps will be reporting back on policy and projects updates to the Subcommittee, as required.

#### **ĀPITIHINGA | ATTACHMENTS**

1. **19 May 2026 PT Update re the Fuel Situation Doc # 36177417** [↓](#)
2. **Cambridge Local Service Technical Report 2 - Final 300426** [↓](#)

## Memo

**File No:** 21 00 31

**Date:** 19 May 2026

**To:** WRC Transport Committee  
Katherine Simpson, Team Leader – Transport Planning

**From:** Vincent Kuo, Team Leader – Contracts and Insights

**Subject:** **2026.05.19 Regional Transport Connections PT Update re. the Fuel Situation**

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### **Purpose of this memo**

This memorandum provides the second fortnightly update to the WRC Transport Committee on the current fuel environment and its impacts on public transport service delivery. The update is intended to support Committee oversight by summarising key operational and financial indicators, and by highlighting emerging risks and responses associated with fuel cost volatility.

### **Scope of this update**

This memo focuses primarily on recent trends in public transport patronage across bus and rail services, changes in operating costs driven by fuel price movements, and the extent to which fare revenue has offset increased costs. It also outlines any other relevant developments that are considered worth mentioning. Subsequent sections provide more detailed commentary on each of these matters.

It should also be noted that the patronage and fare revenue data (including the % of change between years) for the most recent week presented is provisional and may be subject to minor revision in subsequent reports. This reflects the timing of data extraction, as final figures depend on the capture of complete data for the last day of the reporting period.

New Zealand currently remains at “Phase 1: Watchful” in the national Fuel Response Plan where access to fuel remains steady and available but fuel prices are rising due to global market changes.

### **Public transport patronage (bus and rail)**

The table below presents public transport (bus and rail) patronage data from February to the end of week 20 in both 2025 and 2026, to support year-on-year comparison. It is important to note that direct weekly comparisons between years do not always provide a like-for-like assessment due to variations in the timing of public and school holidays as discussed in detail the previous memo.

For this reason, data has been presented from the beginning of February rather than focusing solely on the most recent fortnight. Committee members will also note that comparative data for the Te Huia service has not been included for weeks 16 and 17, as the service did not operate during these weeks in 2025 due to line closures. Actual patronage figures for weeks 16 and 17 in 2026 are, however, included in the table below.

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For clarity, while the below data presents public transport (bus and rail) patronage, the patronage information does not include data from the Thames Connector, 25-Tamarunui and Night Flex services.

<b>Patronage Summary</b>			
	<b>Bus service</b>	<b>Train service</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Before Fuel Price Increase</b>			
<b>Week 6</b>			
(2025-02-03 - 2025-02-09)	74922	1185	76107
(2026-02-02 - 2026-02-08)	74774	1024	75798
<b>Week 7</b>			
(2025-02-10 - 2025-02-16)	93520	1636	95156
(2026-02-09 - 2026-02-15)	90577	1686	92263
<b>Week 8</b>			
(2025-02-17 - 2025-02-23)	98954	1562	100516
(2026-02-16 - 2026-02-22)	94027	1905	95932
<b>Week 9</b>			
(2025-02-24 - 2025-03-02)	101733	1599	103332
(2026-02-23 - 2026-03-01)	98105	1985	100090
<b>Fuel Price Increased</b>			
<b>Week 10</b>			
(2025-03-03 - 2025-03-09)	100516	1576	102092
(2026-03-02 - 2026-03-08)	101516	1666	103182
<b>Week 11</b>			
(2025-03-10 - 2025-03-16)	100599	1820	102419
(2026-03-09 - 2026-03-15)	99562	1844	101406
<b>Week 12</b>			
(2025-03-17 - 2025-03-23)	96464	1578	98042
(2026-03-16 - 2026-03-22)	101764	1973	103737
<b>Week 13</b>			
(2025-03-24 - 2025-03-30)	96902	1745	98647
(2026-03-23 - 2026-03-29)	97957	2169	100126
<b>Week 14</b>			
(2025-03-31 - 2025-04-06)	91286	1430	92716
(2026-03-30 - 2026-04-05)	84979	1311	86290
<b>Week 15</b>			
(2025-04-07 - 2025-04-13)	93601	1367	94968
(2026-04-06 - 2026-04-12)	54099	1908	56007
<b>Week 16</b>			
(2025-04-14 - 2025-04-20)	50656		50656
(2026-04-13 - 2026-04-19)	64960	2483	67443
<b>Week 17</b>			
(2025-04-21 - 2025-04-27)	47022		47022
(2026-04-20 - 2026-04-26)	98462	1543	100005
<b>Week 18</b>			
(2025-04-28 - 2025-05-04)	91303	1454	92757
(2026-04-27 - 2026-05-03)	87459	1813	89272
<b>Week 19</b>			
(2025-05-05 - 2025-05-11)	92680	1447	94127
(2026-05-04 - 2026-05-10)	97873	1914	99787
<b>Week 20</b>			
(2025-05-12 - 2025-05-18)	92981	1740	94721

(2026-05-11 - 2026-05-17)	97463	2226	99689
<b>Total Fare Revenue: Week 10 - 20</b>			
(2025-03-03 - 2025-05-18)	954010	14157	968167
(2026-03-02 - 2026-05-17)	986094	20850	1006944

The following table presents the percentage change in public transport patronage on a week-by-week basis, comparing each week with the equivalent week in the previous year. This provides an indication of relative growth or decline in patronage over time, while accounting for seasonal patterns and variability across the reporting period.

Period Type	Weeks	Bus service	Train service
<b>Before Fuel Price Increase</b>			
	Week 6	▼ -0.2%	▼ -13.6%
	Week 7	▼ -3.1%	▲ 3.1%
	Week 8	▼ -5.0%	▲ 22.0%
	Week 9	▼ -3.6%	▲ 24.1%
<b>Fuel Price Increased</b>			
	Week 10	▲ 1.0%	▲ 5.7%
	Week 11	▼ -1.0%	▲ 1.3%
	Week 12	▲ 5.5%	▲ 25.0%
	Week 13	▲ 1.1%	▲ 24.3%
	Week 14	▼ -6.9%	▼ -8.3%
	Week 15	▼ -42.2%	▲ 39.6%
	Week 16	▲ 28.2%	
	Week 17	▲ 109.4%	
	Week 18	▼ -4.2%	▲ 24.7%
	Week 19	▲ 5.6%	▲ 32.3%
	Week 20	▲ 4.8%	▲ 27.9%

The following key observations summarise week-by-week changes in public transport patronage for 2026 compared with the same period in 2025.

- Early divergence between modes pre-fuel increase: Prior to the fuel price increase (Weeks 6–9), bus patronage remained slightly below 2025 levels, while rail patronage showed strong and increasing growth from Week 8 onward, indicating an earlier recovery in rail demand.
- Gradual bus recovery following fuel price increase: From Week 10 onwards, bus patronage begins to stabilise and show modest growth, suggesting a gradual return to previous levels and a possible early behavioural response to increased fuel costs.
- Holiday-driven volatility still evident: Significant fluctuations in Weeks 14–17 continue to reflect the Easter and school holiday period, particularly the sharp decline in bus patronage in Week 15 (-42.2%) followed by a strong rebound. Rail patronage remains comparatively resilient through this period.
- Clear post-holiday strengthening trend, particularly for rail: From Week 18 through Weeks 19 and 20, both modes show more stable growth. Bus patronage records moderate increases (around 5%), while rail continues to demonstrate strong and sustained growth (approximately 25–32%), suggesting strengthening demand and a potential ongoing shift toward public transport following fuel price increases.

**Public transport fare revenue (bus and rail)**

It has been identified that, while the weekly fare revenue figures were accurate, the “total fare revenue for Weeks 10–18” reported in the previous memo was incorrect. We apologise for this error and any confusion it may have caused.

The table below presents public transport (bus and rail) fare revenue for the period from February to the end of April for both 2025 and 2026, to enable year-on-year comparison. Revenue figures reflect farebox revenue only (excluding GST) collected directly from customers and do not include any subsidies, café sales, or bus-back advertising income. Similar to the patronage above, this data does not include fare revenue data from the Thames Connector, 25-Taumarunui and Night Flex services.

As with patronage data, it is important to note that direct comparisons between equivalent weeks are influenced by differences in the timing of public and school holidays between the two years. In addition, the impact of the Te Huia line closures in 2025 also affects comparability across parts of the dataset. These factors should be taken into account when interpreting trends over the reporting period.

The following table presents the change in public transport fare revenue on a week-by-week basis, comparing each week with the corresponding week in the previous year. This provides an indication of relative changes in fare revenue over time and should be interpreted alongside patronage trends and known seasonal influences, including variations in school holidays and the impact of the Te Huia service disruption in 2025.

<b>Revenue collect from customer summary</b>			
	<b>Bus service</b>	<b>Train service</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Before Fuel Price Increase</b>			
<b>Week 6</b>			
(2025-02-03 - 2025-02-09)	\$ 112,528.61	\$ 12,954.26	\$ 125,482.87
(2026-02-02 - 2026-02-08)	\$ 119,337.47	\$ 12,547.66	\$ 131,885.13
<b>Week 7</b>			
(2025-02-10 - 2025-02-16)	\$ 138,497.39	\$ 17,483.30	\$ 155,980.70
(2026-02-09 - 2026-02-15)	\$ 142,265.96	\$ 20,886.02	\$ 163,151.97
<b>Week 8</b>			
(2025-02-17 - 2025-02-23)	\$ 147,854.87	\$ 18,163.83	\$ 166,018.70
(2026-02-16 - 2026-02-22)	\$ 148,088.64	\$ 21,183.26	\$ 169,271.90
<b>Week 9</b>			
(2025-02-24 - 2025-03-02)	\$ 147,817.30	\$ 18,070.70	\$ 165,888.00
(2026-02-23 - 2026-03-01)	\$ 152,905.53	\$ 22,825.10	\$ 175,730.63
<b>Fuel Price Increased</b>			
<b>Week 10</b>			
(2025-03-03 - 2025-03-09)	\$ 145,827.39	\$ 17,099.48	\$ 162,926.87
(2026-03-02 - 2026-03-08)	\$ 156,273.58	\$ 19,066.38	\$ 175,339.97
<b>Week 11</b>			
(2025-03-10 - 2025-03-16)	\$ 145,507.22	\$ 20,275.83	\$ 165,783.04
(2026-03-09 - 2026-03-15)	\$ 153,134.34	\$ 21,869.06	\$ 175,003.40
<b>Week 12</b>			
(2025-03-17 - 2025-03-23)	\$ 141,000.52	\$ 16,913.04	\$ 157,913.57
(2026-03-16 - 2026-03-22)	\$ 156,206.99	\$ 22,728.15	\$ 178,935.14
<b>Week 13</b>			

(2025-03-24 - 2025-03-30)	\$ 139,218.87	\$ 17,645.74	\$ 156,864.61
(2026-03-23 - 2026-03-29)	\$ 149,447.66	\$ 21,451.23	\$ 170,898.90
<b>Week 14</b>			
(2025-03-31 - 2025-04-06)	\$ 134,175.83	\$ 16,122.09	\$ 150,297.91
(2026-03-30 - 2026-04-05)	\$ 130,487.68	\$ 14,329.04	\$ 144,816.72
<b>Week 15</b>			
(2025-04-07 - 2025-04-13)	\$ 134,254.61	\$ 14,057.39	\$ 148,312.00
(2026-04-06 - 2026-04-12)	\$ 69,491.08	\$ 23,711.17	\$ 93,202.25
<b>Week 16</b>			
(2025-04-14 - 2025-04-20)	\$ 64,655.48		\$ 64,655.48
(2026-04-13 - 2026-04-19)	\$ 83,965.93	\$ 30,695.99	\$ 114,661.92
<b>Week 17</b>			
(2025-04-21 - 2025-04-27)	\$ 58,018.87		\$ 58,018.87
(2026-04-20 - 2026-04-26)	\$ 147,736.32	\$ 18,052.80	\$ 165,789.12
<b>Week 18</b>			
(2025-04-28 - 2025-05-04)	\$ 132,905.65	\$ 15,094.87	\$ 148,000.52
(2026-04-27 - 2026-05-03)	\$ 133,101.45	\$ 17,480.01	\$ 150,581.46
<b>Week 19</b>			
(2025-05-05 - 2025-05-11)	\$ 133,391.04	\$ 15,611.22	\$ 149,002.26
(2026-05-04 - 2026-05-10)	\$ 148,173.23	\$ 20,821.52	\$ 168,994.76
<b>Week 20</b>			
(2025-05-12 - 2025-05-18)	\$ 133,700.78	\$ 17,544.52	\$ 151,245.30
(2026-05-11 - 2026-05-17)	\$ 146,764.37	\$ 23,057.70	\$ 169,822.08
<b>Total Fare Revenue: Week 10 - 20</b>			
(2025-03-03 - 2025-05-18)	\$ 1,362,656.26	\$ 150,364.17	\$ 1,513,020.43
(2026-03-02 - 2026-05-17)	\$ 1,474,782.64	\$ 233,263.07	\$ 1,708,045.71

The following table presents the percentage change in public transport fare revenue on a week-by-week basis, comparing each week with the equivalent week in the previous year. This provides an indication of relative growth or decline in revenue over time, while accounting for seasonal patterns and variability across the reporting period.

Period Type	Weeks	Bus service	Train service
<b>Before Fuel Price Increase</b>			
	Week 6 ▲	6.1%	▼ -3.1%
	Week 7 ▲	2.7%	▲ 19.5%
	Week 8 ▲	0.2%	▲ 16.6%
	Week 9 ▲	3.4%	▲ 26.3%
<b>Fuel Price Increased</b>			
	Week 10 ▲	7.2%	▲ 11.5%
	Week 11 ▲	5.2%	▲ 7.9%
	Week 12 ▲	10.8%	▲ 34.4%
	Week 13 ▲	7.3%	▲ 21.6%
	Week 14 ▼	-2.7%	▼ -11.1%
	Week 15 ▼	-48.2%	▲ 68.7%
	Week 16 ▲	29.9%	
	Week 17 ▲	154.6%	
	Week 18 ▲	0.1%	▲ 15.8%
	Week 19 ▲	11.1%	▲ 33.4%
	Week 20 ▲	9.8%	▲ 31.4%

Key observations are as follows:

- Early revenue growth, led by rail: Prior to the fuel price increase (Weeks 6–9), bus fare revenue shows consistent modest growth, while rail revenue demonstrates strong increases from Week 7 onward, indicating stronger underlying demand and recovery in rail services.
- Sustained growth following fuel price increase: In the period immediately following the fuel price increase (Weeks 10–13), both bus and rail revenue continue to grow, with particularly strong gains in rail, suggesting increased public transport usage and/or improved yield during this period.
- Holiday-related disruption remains pronounced: As with patronage, the Easter and school holiday period significantly impacts revenue trends. This is most evident in Week 15, where bus revenue declines sharply (-48.2%) while rail revenue increases substantially (+68.7%), reflecting differing travel patterns and likely leisure-based demand.
- Strong recovery and stabilisation in later weeks: Following the holiday period, bus revenue rebounds strongly in Weeks 16 and 17 before stabilising, while rail revenue maintains consistent and strong growth through Weeks 18–20 (approximately 15–33%). This indicates a return to more stable demand and sustained strength in rail revenue performance.

#### **Operator feedback**

Council has sought feedback from contracted operators regarding the impact of current fuel conditions on service delivery. At this stage, no operators have raised concerns or reported any issues affecting the delivery of services.

#### **Customer Focus update**

As an update from WRCs Customer Focus team - initially, there was a suggestion from councillors to partner with Hamilton City Council (HCC) to run a collaborative promotion encouraging public transport as a cost-effective alternative to driving. However, after expressing concerns about the lack of clarity over public transport delivery responsibilities, HCC has now decided to step away from the joint approach.

In light of this, WRC staff are currently reworking the campaign with a broader regional focus. The strategy involves using WRC channels to build general awareness, while BUSIT and Te Huia platforms will deliver more targeted communications. By adapting our approach, we hope to encourage more people to consider public transport as a cost-effective transport alternative.



# Cambridge Local Service Assessment Technical Report 2

Planning for the future of public transport in Cambridge

April 2026

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Mott MacDonald  
Level 1, 30 Daldy Street  
Wynyard Quarter  
Auckland  
1010  
PO Box 91568  
Victoria St West 1142  
New Zealand

T +64 (0)9 375 2400  
mottmac.com

# **Cambridge Local Service Assessment Technical Report 2**

Planning for the future of public transport in  
Cambridge

April 2026

Mott MacDonald New Zealand Limited  
Registered in New Zealand no. 3338812

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## Executive summary

Cambridge, in Waipā District, is currently served by a single public bus route that connects it to Hamilton City. This service, route 20, averages around 500 boardings per weekday. Most of these trips are between Cambridge and Hamilton, though some are internal within Cambridge.

Cambridge is expected to grow from 22,000 residents in 2025 to nearly 31,000 by 2037. This growth will increase transport demand, including for local trips. Waikato Regional Council and Waipā District Council are therefore considering potential improvements to public transport.

This is the second of two Technical Reports considering options for a Cambridge local public transport service. The first report considered a long-list of potential options for serving the town and identified a short-list of four preferred options. These were:

- A complementary local bus service supporting the current regional route.
- A new branch of the regional service to expand coverage to the north of Cambridge.
- Set-destination on-demand service, to maximise both usage and coverage.
- Mixed service, a combination of fixed routes and on-demand service.

This report includes a more detail assessment of these short-listed options, including multiple sub-options for the fixed-route bus services. The potential costs (both operational and capital) and possible usage of the four options were assessed in greater detail (compared to the previous phase of work). Consideration of the relative merits, challenges and costs of the four options led to the identification of a new branch of the regional service as the preferred option.

The preferred option makes changes to the existing route 20 in Cambridge. It proposes an increase in the frequency of the service, to at least half hourly, with half of trips continuing to their current destination in Leamington and half travelling to a new terminus in North Cambridge. This change will result in a slight reduction in frequency to Leamington, but an increase in service between Cambridge town centre (where most passengers board) and Hamilton. The new northern branch will improve coverage within the town, including providing new access for local trips between northern Cambridge and the town centre. To reinforce the common nature of both branches, it is recommended they be signed as the 20L (to Leamington) and 20N (to Northern Cambridge), or similarly. This will reinforce that both are part of the same service.

The preferred option is expected to cost an additional \$750,000 per annum to operate (in addition to the existing \$1.05 million for the current route 20). By 2037, it is expected to carry around 125,000 passengers on each branch, or a total of 250,000 boardings per year for the combined service (compared to roughly 110,000 currently). The cost per passenger (in 2026 dollars) will be around \$7.29, which is slightly less than the existing service costs. Slightly over \$1.6 million of capital investment in roughly 10 new sets of bus stops will also be required.

Implementing the preferred option will be relatively straightforward. The existing route 20 service can be varied to include the additional trips, under the current contract. This approach should enable the service to be introduced relatively quickly, if funding is approved. The service can be implemented in phases, beginning with the new branch from potentially the middle of 2027. A school assist service could subsequently be introduced to run across both branches and provide access from Leamington students directly to Cambridge High School. In a final phase, the existing route in Leamington can be varied to improve coverage, especially of growth areas.

The new service, and associated infrastructure, can also act as a step towards a future dedicated local service in Cambridge. This may be appropriate from the middle of the 2030s, when there is likely to be greater demand for a local service in addition to the regional route.

# 1 Introduction

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) has commissioned Mott MacDonald to assess potential options for public transport improvements within Cambridge, in the Waipā District. Cambridge is experiencing significant population growth, and WRC is working with the Waipā District Council (WDC) to consider how best to respond to this growth with improved transport connections.

Mott MacDonald's scope includes possible public transport improvements within Cambridge (including potential changes to the existing service), covering the 2027 to 2037 period.

This is the second of two Technical Reports that considers improvements to local public transport within the town. The work is intended to inform future funding applications to the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and to contribute to WDC's Cambridge Connections transport planning work.

The previous phase of this work, included in Technical Report 1, identified a short-list of four options for service in Cambridge. These were:

- **Option A** – Supplementary local service.
- **Option C** – Regional branch service.
- **Option E** – Set-destination on-demand.
- **Option G** – Mixed service.

This report covers consideration of the short-list in more detail, before identifying a preferred option. The report is broken down into four further sections:

- **Section 2** looks at potential roads that could accommodate fixed-route bus services within Cambridge and Leamington, to form the basis for short-list options using buses.
- **Section 3** details the short-list options recommended in the first report, with further detail and analysis (compared to Technical Report 1), including sub-options, for each.
- **Section 4** goes into more detail regarding the preferred option and its implementation.
- **Section 5** covers the next steps before implementation can occur.

## 2 Bus routing considerations

Three of the four short-listed options involve operating fixed-route bus services. This section outlines the process used to identify roads suitable for bus operations and explains how their suitability was assessed. These findings form the foundation for the potential bus routes presented in the sub-options in Section 3.

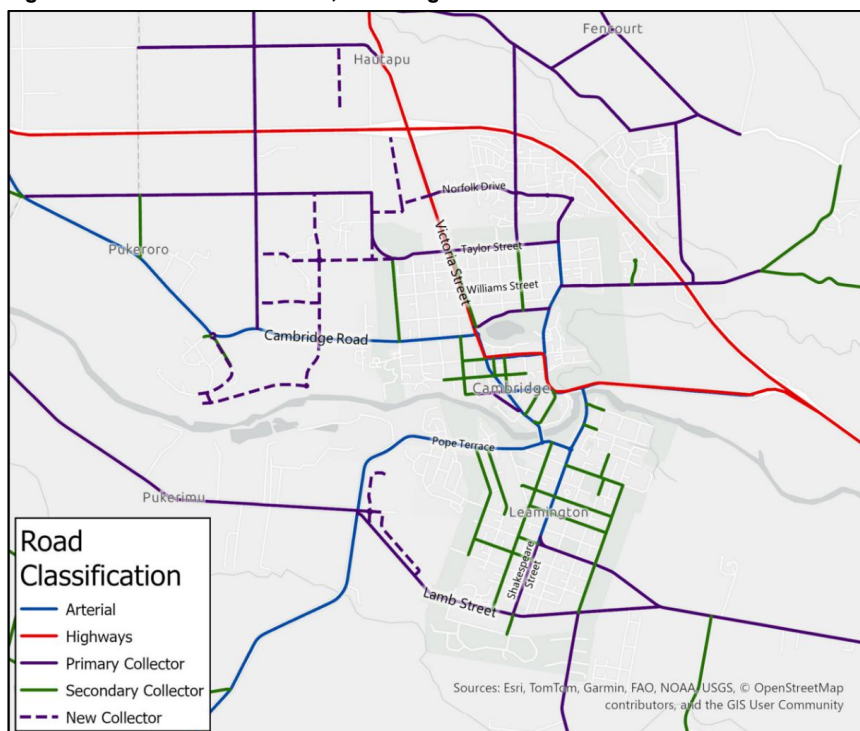
### 2.1 Methodology

Bus services generally operate on collector and arterial roads, rather than local roads. This is because collectors and arterials are usually wider and feature geometry that can better accommodate larger vehicles such as buses.

Arterial and collector roads were therefore identified as a starting point, including future collector roads proposed within Cambridge's growth cells (some of which have not yet been built). In some instances, local roads were also included, particularly where existing bus services operate or where their use would enable efficient connections between collectors and arterials.

Information from the New Zealand Transport Agency's One Network Framework and the Waipā District Plan was used to identify road classifications, as summarised in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: Road classifications, including future roads**



Source: Mott MacDonald

The suitability of these roads for bus services was evaluated against key criteria, including:

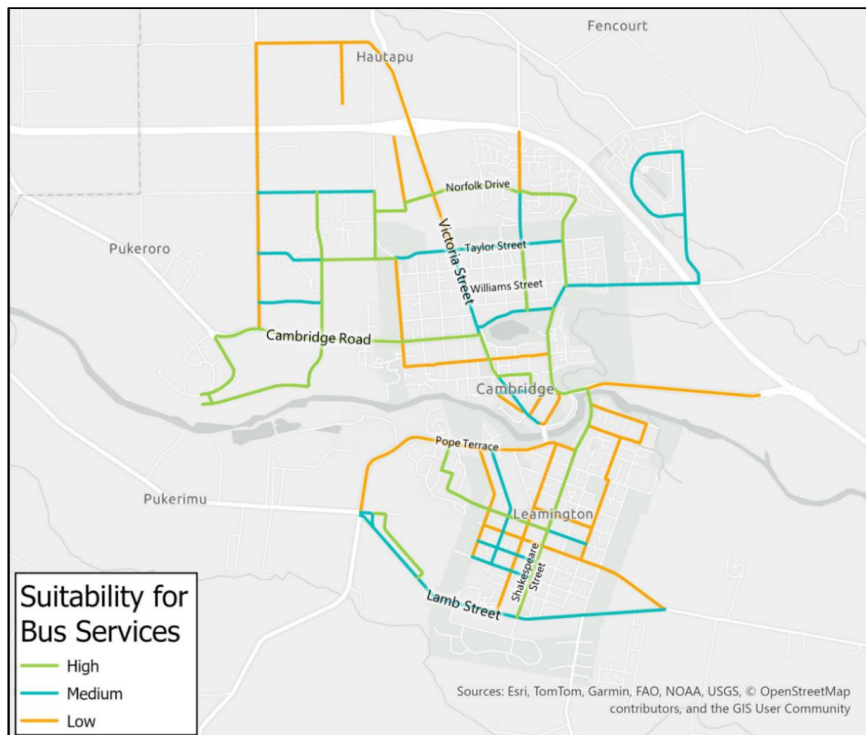
- Whether the road is located within the urban area,
- The presence of existing bus services
- Adjacent land uses, in particular the balance of the road’s catchment (for example, a road with a park on one side does not score as high as one with residential uses).
- Proximity of and access to significant locations in Cambridge.
- Operational considerations, such as bus turning movements, potential stop locations, and safety (including safe crossing opportunities for pedestrians accessing stops).
- Possible effects on parking and cycleways, with an aim to avoid conflicts or loss of large numbers of parking spaces in key areas.

Residents’ perspectives or potential objections to buses using particular streets were not included in this assessment.

Roads that scored highly across multiple criteria were ranked as ‘high’ suitability for bus service. Roads with high ranking on at least one criterion were considered as ‘medium’ suitability, while other roads were considered ‘low’ suitability. The results of this assessment are summarised in Figure 2.2 below.

Roads with high suitability were given the greatest preference. Some sections of medium or low suitability were included, particularly to link segments of high suitability or to serve catchments that would otherwise not get service (like St Kilda or Hautapu).

**Figure 2.2: Road suitability for bus services**



Source: Mott MacDonald

### 2.1.1 Victoria St considerations

Victoria St is a key north-south route in Cambridge, north of the Waikato River. It is a primary arterial route.

While a primary arterial would generally be a good candidate for bus services, the assessment of Victoria St shows it only has 'medium' suitability to carry bus services (between Taylor St and Hamilton Rd). This is partly because of the lack of safe crossing opportunities, which are necessary to provide access to potential bus stops.

Between Hamilton Rd and Taylor St (north of the town centre), Victoria St is formed by two parallel carriageways, separated by a reserve that was a former railway line. The western carriageway is a primary arterial (and formerly State Highway 1B) that connects central Cambridge to the Waikato Expressway and Hautapu, while the eastern carriageway provides local access to properties.

Currently, the only safe crossing point is a signalised pedestrian crossing near the intersection of Williams St. Bus stops near this location would ideally be on the departure sides of this signal (to minimise disruption to both bus runtimes and general traffic). This would necessitate the northbound stop to be north of Williams St (which itself is hard to cross), while the southbound stop would require a new footpath in the central reserve strip, to provide an accessible stop.

A stop near Williams St would be fairly centrally spaced to serve its immediate catchment, but at 600-metres north of the existing stops by Lake St it would be slightly beyond an ideal stop distance (of 500-metres). Ideal locations would be at the King St and Princes St intersections, but the lack of safe crossings preclude this. A stop further north, near Taylor St, would have a reduced catchment due to the town belt (and a lack of crossings).

Infrastructure investment on Victoria St could address these issues and make the street more suitable to carry bus services. The eastern part of the carriageway could be redesigned to prioritise buses and active modes, for example. This would be a significant investment, however, and is unlikely to be justified in the short-to-medium term.

This issues with this central section of Victoria St are shown in Figure 2.3: Central Victoria St considerations

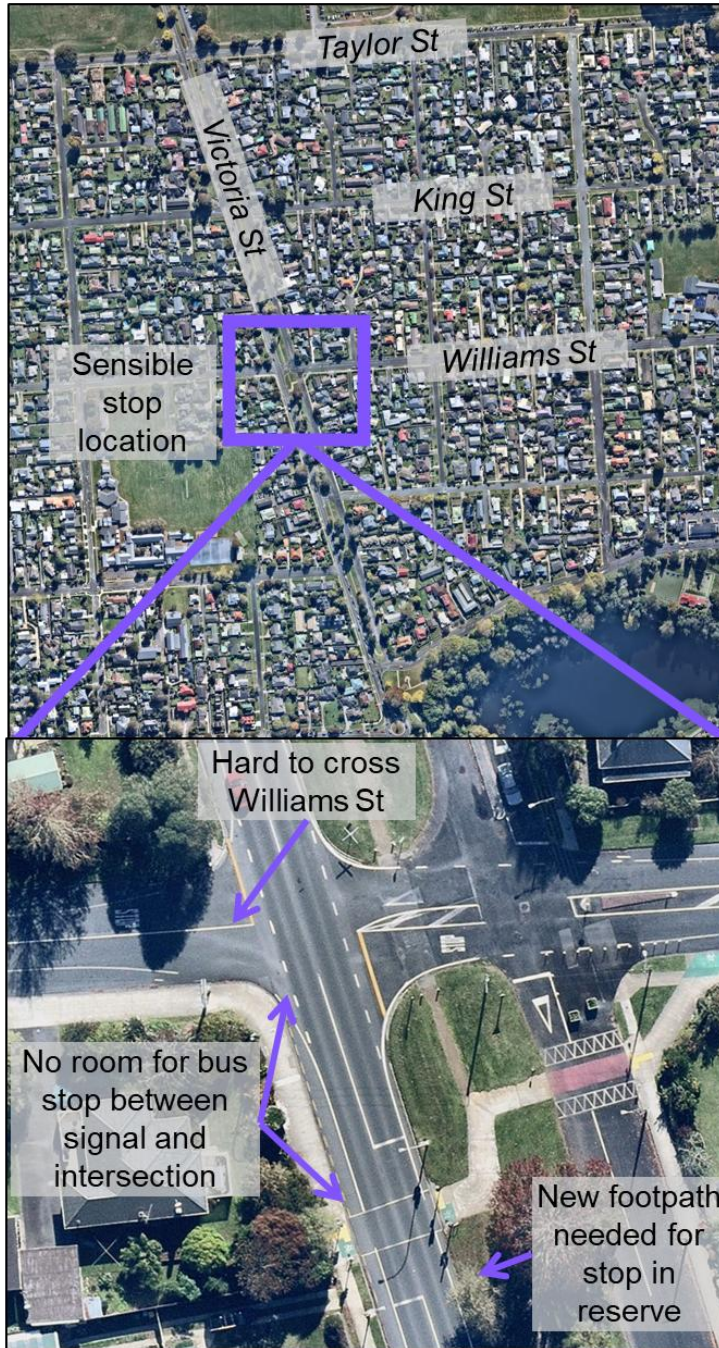
Some options for services do consider the use of this section of Victoria St (between Taylor St and Hamilton Rd). These options assume that some basic level of infrastructure investment is required to support safe use of this street.

North of Taylor St, there is only one carriageway and minimal land use that is directly served by Victoria St, so its suitability is assessed as 'low' (although some options do consider use of this section in order to serve Hautapu).

Within the town centre, Victoria St's suitability is 'high' where it is currently used by route 20. The remaining section (to the Victoria St bridge) is assessed as 'medium' suitability', as added buses to this section would require changes to car parking which may not be desirable. No bus services are proposed for this section, as the existing town centre routing (via Alphas St, Anzac St and Duke St) is considered appropriate.

The Victoria St bridge (connecting to Cook St in Leamington) is narrow and has weight limits that mean it is not suitable to carry bus services.

Figure 2.3: Central Victoria St considerations



Source: Mott MacDonald

## 2.2 Potential routes in Leamington

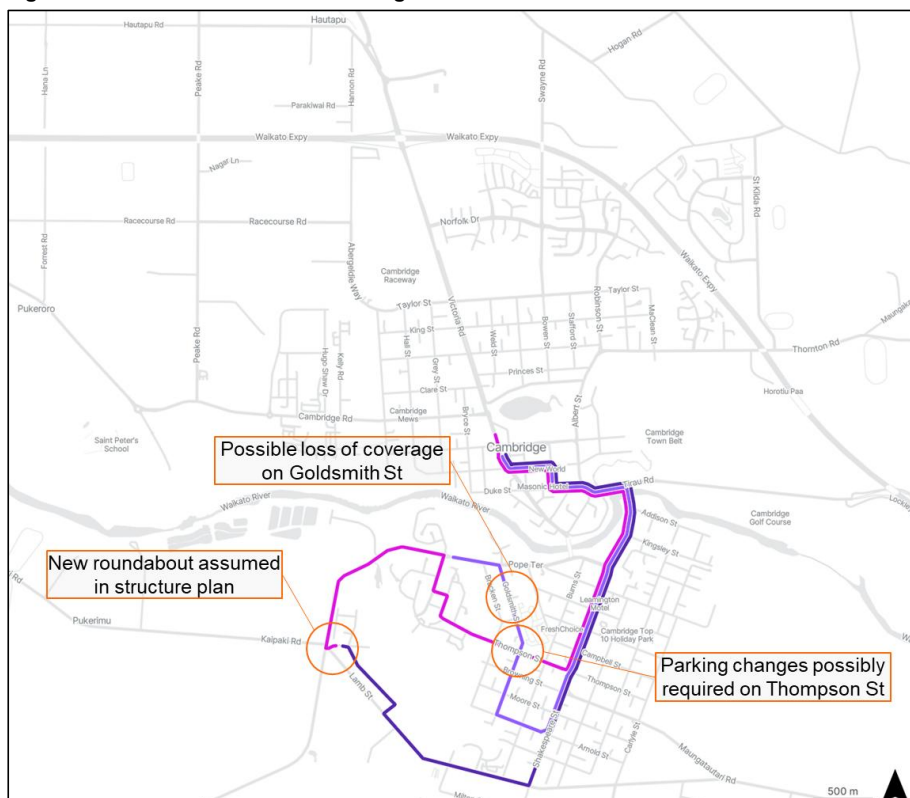
Two potential bus routes have been identified for Leamington, in addition to the existing service that operates via Goldsmith Street. The new routes are designed to improve coverage within Leamington and thereby maximise accessibility for residents. These are shown in Figure 2.4.

The proposed routes terminate at the roundabout which is anticipated to be located at Keri Rua Rd as part of the future development of the C4 area. Alternative options for route termination include the current location at Pope Tce or utilising blocks in the eastern part of Leamington for turnaround, although these alternatives offer less coverage compared to the preferred terminus.

All three routes are assumed to provide access to Cambridge town centre, as there is likely limited demand for a standalone Leamington-only service.

All three options could be used by a local Cambridge route (in options A and G) or as part of the regional service (in option C).

**Figure 2.4: Potential routes in Leamington**



Source: Mott MacDonald

### 2.3 Potential routes in northern Cambridge

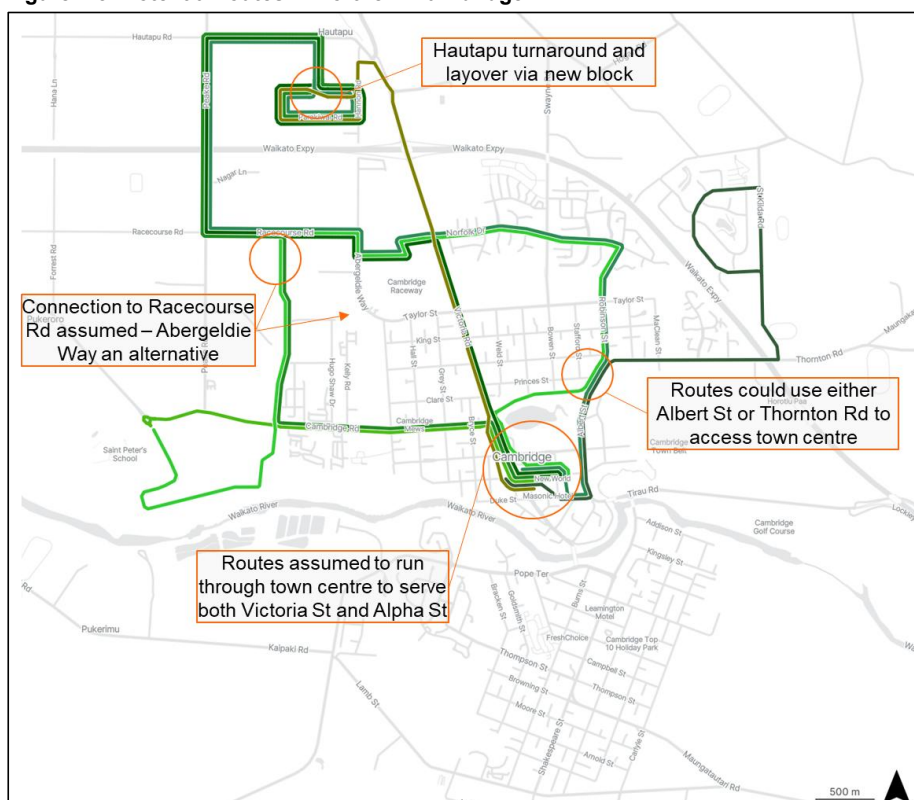
In addition to the existing route operating along Cambridge Rd, Hamilton Rd and Victoria St, six potential new bus routes have been identified to enhance service coverage in northern Cambridge. These proposed routes aim to expand coverage in the area and provide greater accessibility for residents not currently within route 20's catchment. The routes are shown in Figure 2.5.

The routes north of the river have been designed to terminate at three key destinations: St Kilda, Hautapu, or the Velodrome. These were selected as the logical eastern, northern and western termini respectively. Further consideration has been given to Cambridge North as a possible terminus, near the intersection of Norfolk Dr and Victoria St. All routes are assumed to either pass through or terminate in Cambridge town centre.

Some of the identified route options offer the flexibility to be combined with either a Leamington route or the existing regional service. Services operating east-west (such as from the Velodrome to St Kilda) could not be combined with other routes.

The layover and turnaround in Hautapu are contingent on the development of new roading infrastructure, the time of which is uncertain. In the meantime, layover could occur on Hanson Rd, using the cul-de-sac head for turnaround.

**Figure 2.5: Potential routes in northern Cambridge**



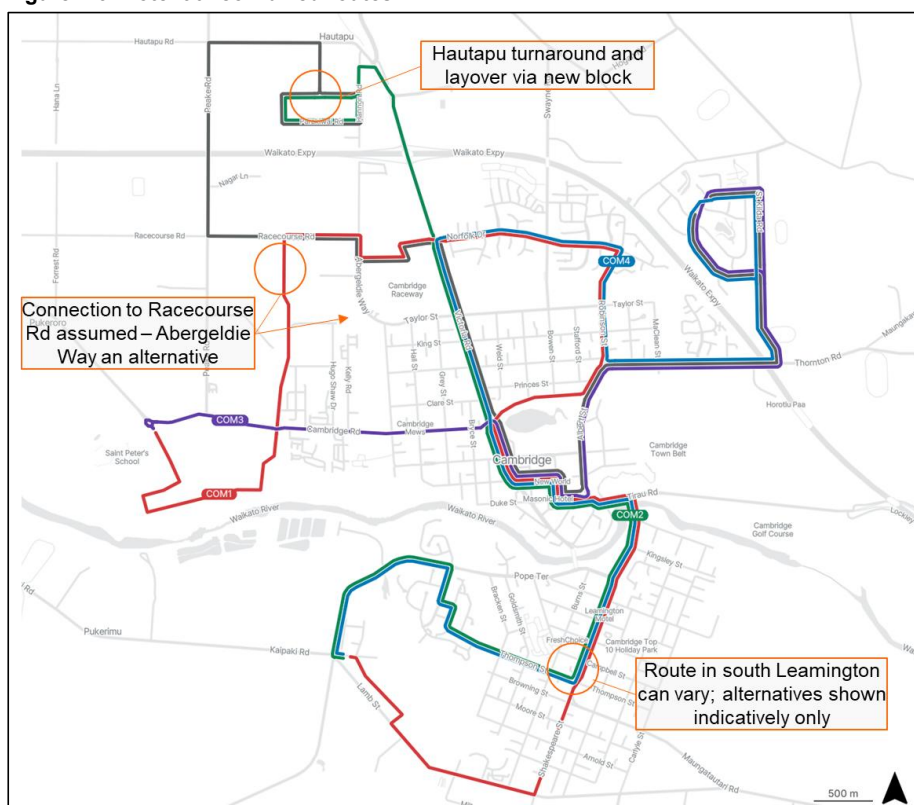
Source: Mott MacDonald

### 2.4 Potential combined routes

Based on the routings outlined in sub-sections 2.1.1 and 2.3, five potential local routes are shown in Figure 2.6. These proposed routes are designed to improve service coverage and accessibility for residents across key catchments. The indicative routes operating between the Velodrome and Leamington (red), north-south from Hautapu to Leamington (green), east-west from the Velodrome to St Kilda (purple), south-east from Leamington to St Kilda (blue), and north-east from Hautapu to St Kilda (grey).

The flexibility of these options allows for integration with existing regional services, particularly if those services are either shortened or diverted via Victoria Street to the Expressway.

**Figure 2.6: Potential combined routes**



Source: Mott MacDonald

These routes would expand coverage of public transport services in Cambridge. The terminal locations are intended to either expand services to new catchments, and/or facilitate connections between local and regional services.

The potential routings identified in this section go on to form the basis for the sub-options outlined in section 3.

### 3 Short-list options

This section includes a detailed assessment of each of the four short-list options:

- **Option A** – Supplementary local service (section 3.1)
- **Option C** – Regional branch service (section 3.2)
- **Option E** – Set-destination on-demand (section 3.3)
- **Option G** – Mixed service (section 3.4)

Sub-options are presented for options A and C, as these options both consider introducing a singular additional bus route (for which there are multiple potential routes). In each case, a preferred sub-option is identified and justified.

Options E and G are based on an on-demand model which is assumed to cover the entirety of Cambridge and therefore make sub-options unnecessary. More detail about sub-option considerations is included in the commentary for each option.

A summary of the key metrics for each option and discussion about the relative merits and challenges associated with each is included in section 3.5. These metrics include the expected costs and patronage for each of the options (not including sub-options which were not preferred). These metrics then inform the preferred option in section 4.

### 3.1 Option A – Supplementary local service

Option A proposes adding a new local route to increase coverage within Cambridge. This would provide connections to the existing regional service (route 20) as well as providing for local trips.

Three possible routing sub-options have been identified, based on the assessment of potential bus routes in section 2. The three sub-options are intended to best contrast possible approaches to a local service. Additional sub-options were possible but these were excluded as they were not distinct enough to add additional value.

All sub-options are expected to operate a similar frequency, with services operating approximately every 20 minutes throughout the day. This frequency is intended to enable connections to the regional route 20 (which operates roughly every 40 to 60 minutes). The exact timetables would need to be designed to maximise the ability to connect between services, which may necessitate an irregular timetable (rather than consistent intervals).

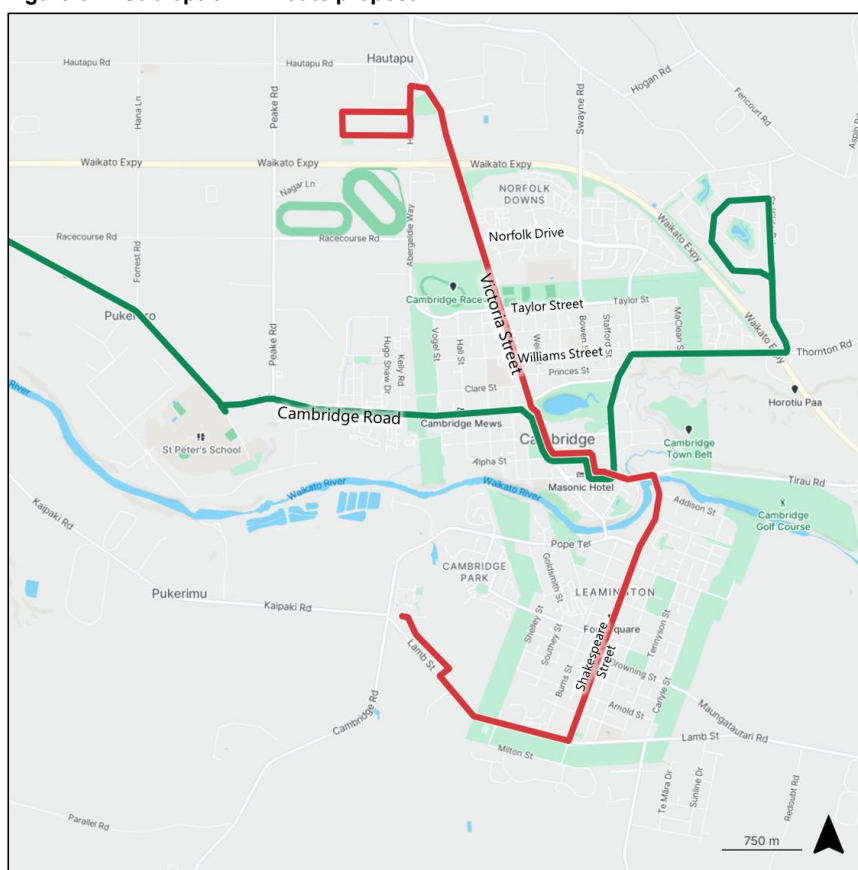
In each sub-option, the existing route 20 is assumed to retain its current frequency and span of service.

### 3.1.1 Sub-option A1

Sub-option A1 proposes a new north-south local route, with a northern terminus in Hautapu, following Victoria St and Shakespeare St to a southern terminus near the intersection of Lamb St and Cambridge Rd in the C4 growth cell. Charging infrastructure for route 20 could be required in St Kilda under this sub-option, but further investigation would be required to determine when and where charging is necessary. The local route could use existing chargers.

The proposed route, along with potential bus stop catchments, is shown in Figure 3.1. Route 20 (shown in green) would be varied to travel to St Kilda. This change avoids duplication with the Leamington section of the local route and helps expand overall coverage in Cambridge.

**Figure 3.1: Sub-option A1 route proposal**



Source: Mott MacDonald

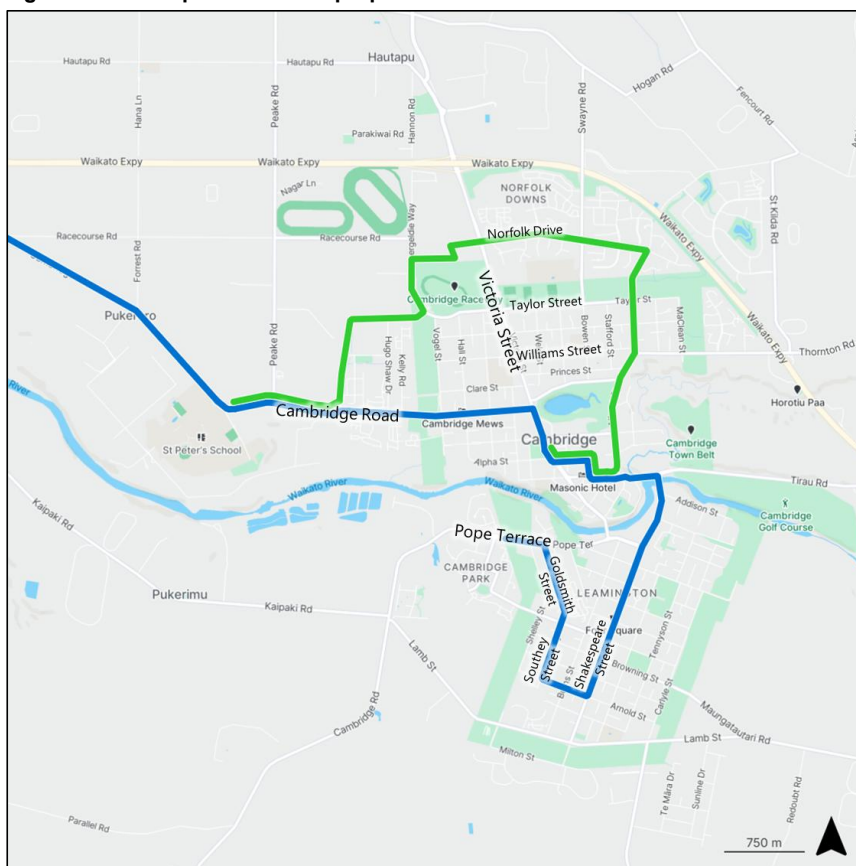
Based on the 2023 Census, 13,500 individuals live within the indicative catchment of this sub-option, providing a medium level of coverage (compared to other sub-options of option A).

New bus stops would be required in all of Option A's sub-options; A1 would require more new stops than A2 but fewer than A3. The proposed route is roughly 11 kilometres long (which can be used as a proxy to estimate costs), which is between the lengths of the other sub-options. The revised route 20 would be marginally shorter than the current configuration.

### 3.1.2 Sub-option A2

Sub-option A2 proposes a new local route serving the northern area of Cambridge, running between the Velodrome in the west and the town centre in the east. The proposed route, along with potential bus stop catchments, is shown in Figure 3.2 in green. The existing route 20 (in blue) would continue to operate to Leamington, with connections between services possible in both the town centre and at the Velodrome.

Figure 3.2: Sub-option A2 route proposal



Source: Mott MacDonald

Based on the 2023, Census 14,500 individuals live within the indicative catchment of this sub-option, which means it provides the highest level of coverage (of option A’s sub-options).

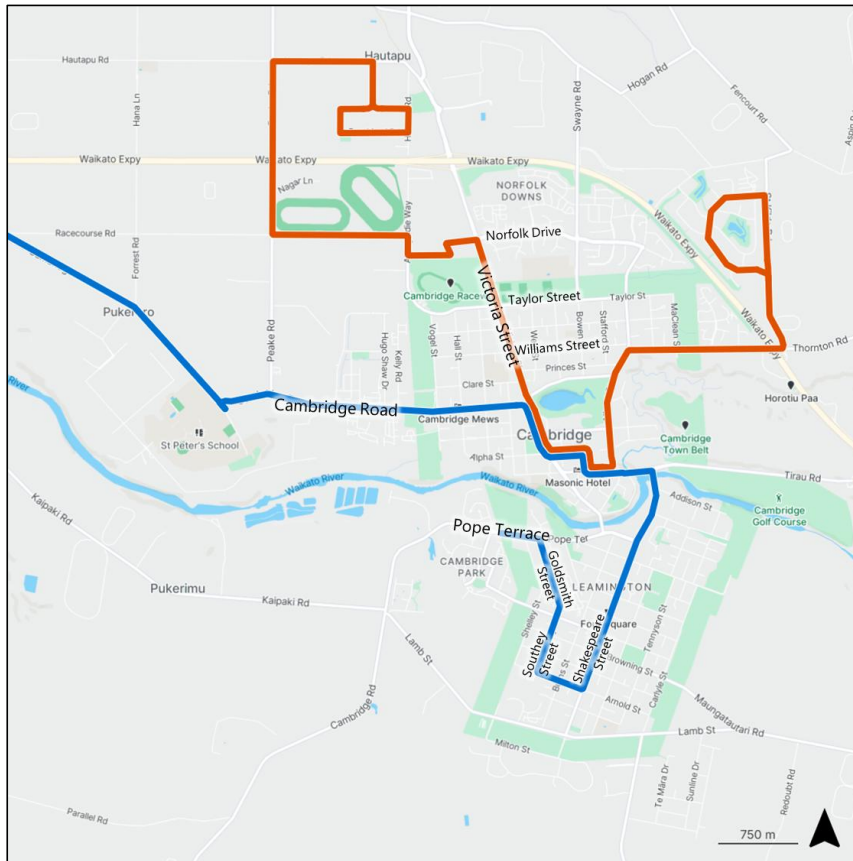
New bus stops would be required in all of Option A’s sub-options; A2 would require the smallest amount (compared to the others). This sub-option does rely on new roads within the growth areas, which may take some time to be delivered. The proposed route is roughly 9 kilometres long (which can be used as a proxy to estimate costs), which is the shortest of the sub-options.

This sub-option may require the installation of charging infrastructure for the new local route. The terminus at the Velodrome would be preferable due to the space availability and to retain flexibility for the eastern terminus into the future. Buses could also return to the depot to charge.

**3.1.3 Sub-option A3**

Sub-option A3 proposes a new local route serving the northern area of Cambridge, connecting Hautapu, the town centre and St Kilda. The proposed route, along with potential bus stop catchments, is shown in Figure 3.3 in orange. The existing route 20 (in blue) would continue to operate to Leamington, with connections between services possible in the town centre.

**Figure 3.3: Sub-option A3 route proposal**



Source: Mott MacDonald

Based on the 2023 Census, 12,000 individuals live within the indicative catchment of this sub-option, which means it provides the least level of coverage (of Option A’s sub-options).

A3 would require the installation of the highest number of bus stops among all of option A’s sub-options, with particular challenges expected in establishing stops along Victoria Street. The proposed route extends for roughly 13.7 kilometres, making it the longest (and therefore most expensive on a cost-per-kilometre basis) of Option A’s sub-options.

Charging infrastructure for the local route could be required at one of its termini (or buses could return to the depot to charge). This would likely be preferable in Hautapu, given the industrial nature of the area is more suited to such infrastructure than the residential nature of St Kilda.

### 3.1.4 Recommended sub-option

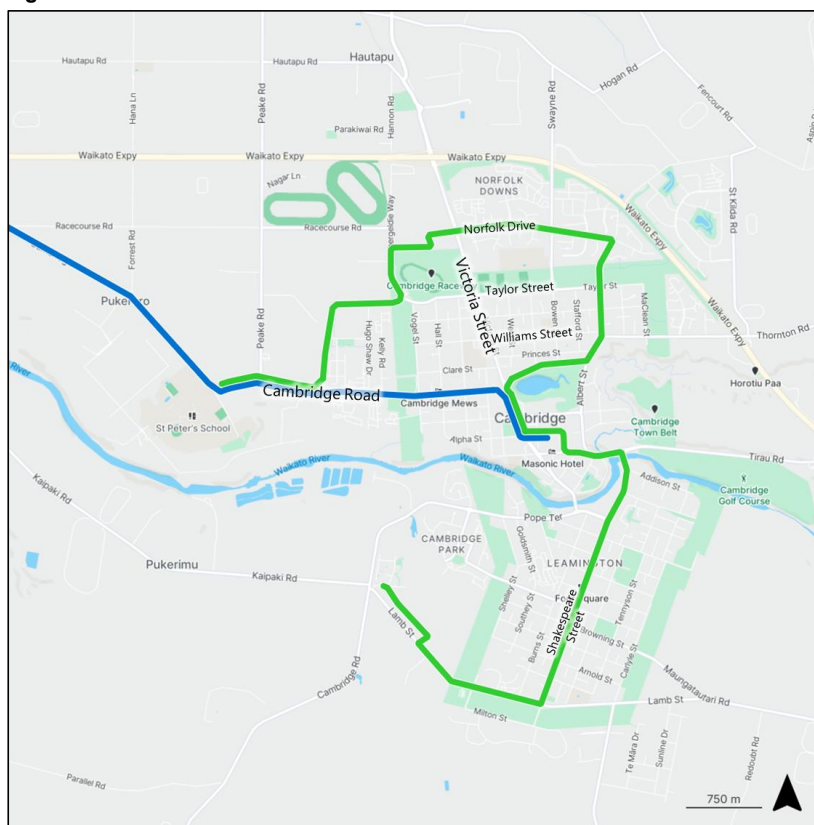
Of the three sub-options, A2 is recommended. While A2 has higher infrastructure requirements, it will have the lowest on-going operational expense and provides the greatest additional coverage of Cambridge. With a runtime of around 20 minutes, a fleet requirement of two buses is likely for this service, which is also likely the lowest of the sub-options.

Additionally, A2 provides the flexibility to alter or extend the route in future as demand or changes and Cambridge continues to grow. The fact that connections to key destinations and the regional service are provided at each end of the route also mean it would have higher bi-directional usage compared to the other sub-options.

The proposed frequency for the local service is approximately every 20 minutes, which offers a suitable balance between service regularity and integration with route 20 (which runs every 40 minutes, so every second local trip would offer a connection). As regional service frequency increases, local services could be adjusted accordingly.

In future this sub-option could be extended to incorporate Leamington into the local route, allowing Route 20 to be shortened at Cambridge town centre. This potential routing is shown in Figure 3.4, and could be implemented once roading infrastructure is available.

**Figure 3.4: Potential future extension of A2 route**



Source: Mott MacDonald

### 3.1.4.1 Patronage expectations

Given that the local service is designed primarily for coverage, it is anticipated that overall patronage per service would be modest. Boardings at peak times would likely be highest (particularly for those transferring to the regional route), with less usage throughout the day.

Potential boardings have been benchmarked against those achieved by local services in Pukekohe, from Technical Report 1. Pukekohe was chosen as it is a New Zealand town with a similar population to Cambridge, and local services there also play a similar role in providing connections to the regional service (in that case, the train to Auckland).

Average boardings per service hour (bpsh) in Pukekohe range between 5 and 15, depending on the service. This is similar to the boardings achieved elsewhere in New Zealand on coverage services. Using this range and applying it to the proposed service characteristics of option A2 results in a potential range of boardings:

- Low (5 bpsh) – roughly **50,000 annual boardings** (2037) (~150 daily)
- Medium (10 bpsh) – roughly **98,000 annual boardings** (2037) (~270 daily)
- High (15 bpsh) – roughly **146,000 annual boardings** (2037) (~400 daily)

These estimates are all for 2037, as this is when the service is expected to be well-established (10 years after its potential introduction in 2027). Boardings would likely start at the 'low' end of the range soon after the service's introduction, and progress towards the 'medium' or 'high' estimate by 2037.

These estimates are based on the 'original' version of the sub-option in Figure 3.2, and not the potential future extension of the route shown in Figure 3.4

### 3.1.4.2 Cost estimates

The estimated annual operating cost for the introduction of the new local service would be approximately \$800,000 (2026 dollars). When combined with the regional service, the total operating expenditure would be around \$1.85 million per annum, compared to the current \$1.05 million of route 20.

Additional infrastructure investment would also be required, including the installation of approximately 16 new pairs of bus stops and potentially charging infrastructure at the terminus to support operations.

Based on the medium patronage scenario, the anticipated cost per passenger would be approximately \$8.22, which positions it between the current costs for Cambridge (\$7.50) and Pukekohe (\$9.37). Passengers transferring to route 20 (which are anticipated to be the majority) would benefit from free transfers, which would reduce overall cost recovery.

These cost estimates are based on the 'original' version of the sub-option in Figure 3.2, and not the potential future extension of the route shown in Figure 3.4

### 3.2 Option C – Regional branch service

Option C proposes establishing a new branch of the existing regional service, as previously recommended by the PT Pathways report.

Under this option, half of the route 20 services travelling from Hamilton would continue through Cambridge town centre and on to Leamington, and the other half would continue through the town centre and then turn north to terminate at a new northern endpoint. To reinforce the shared core of the route, the services could be designated as 20L and 20N, or similar.

This option would result in an increased frequency on route 20, to avoid a significant reduction service levels in Leamington. The expected frequency of the combined route is expected to be every 20 minutes at peak (40 minutes on each branch, similar to the existing frequency of the Leamington service at peak) and every 30 minutes during the day (60 minutes on each branch, again similar to the existing frequency).

To assess this option further, three sub-options have been developed, with varying routes on the northern branch. These routes are again based on the potential corridors identified in section 2. All three sub-options generally serve the northeastern parts of Cambridge. Serving the northwestern growth cells is not considered cost-effective in this option, as any residents wanting to use public transport would be more likely to access the higher-frequency core service on Cambridge Road and Hamilton Road, compared to waiting for the less-frequent branch.

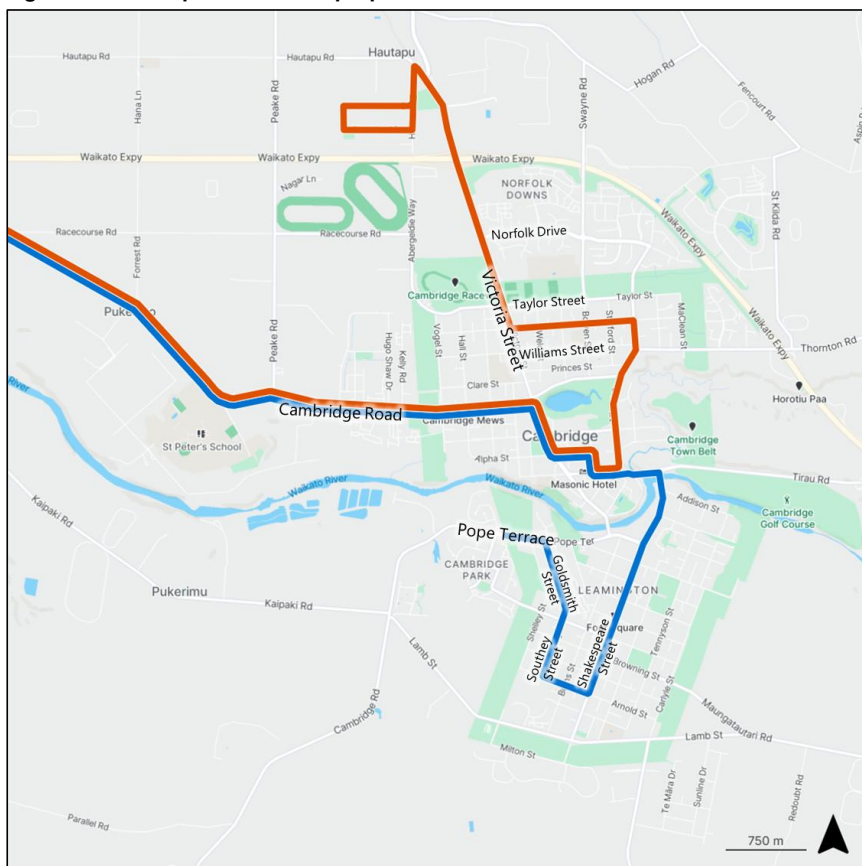
For the purposes of this section, it is assumed that the existing roads in Leamington continue be used (rather than an alternative routing being adopted).

In all sub-options, it is assumed that charging infrastructure at the northern terminus is desirable but not required. Timetabling of the two branches could enable buses to be shared across routes, with trips alternating between branches to enable charging to occur at the end of trips on the southern branch.

**3.2.1 Sub-option C1**

Sub-option C1 proposes a northern branch of the regional service to Hautapu via Victoria St. The proposed route is shown in Figure 3.5 in orange, with the existing southern branch to Leamington in blue.

**Figure 3.5: Sub-option C1 route proposal**



Source: Mott MacDonald

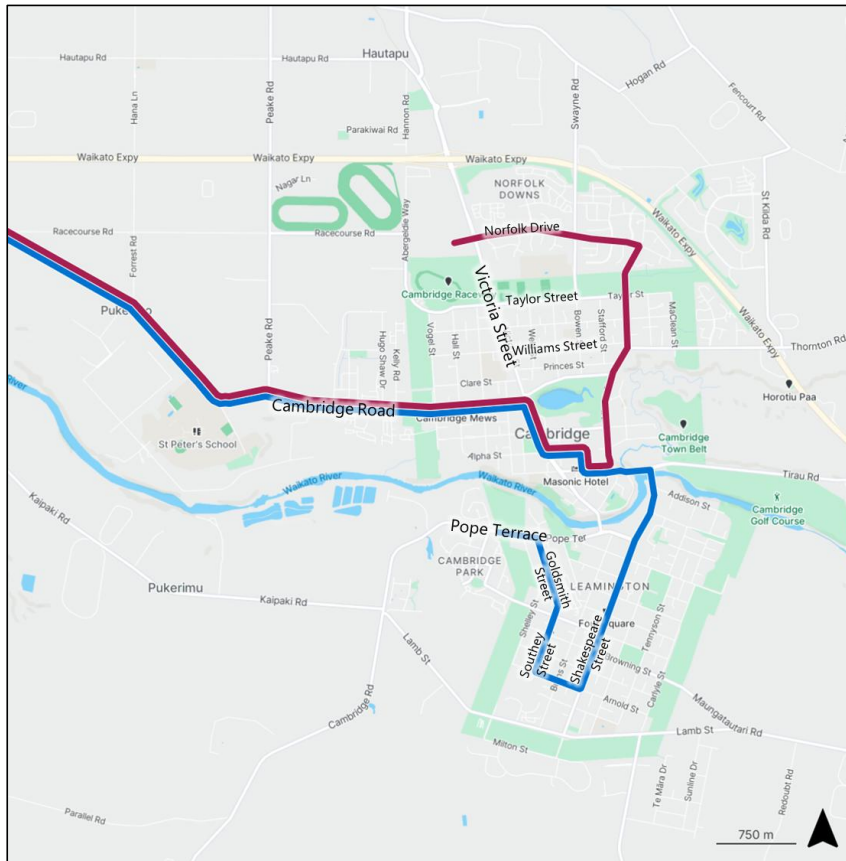
The proposed northern branch of C1 is roughly 6.5 kilometres long, which is the longest of the three sub-options.

The new branch would serve an estimated 4,400 additional residents (above the existing route 20) within 500 metres of the route (based on 2023 Census data). This is in the middle of option C's sub-options. C1 would require the greatest number of new bus stops of the three sub-options.

**3.2.2 Sub-option C2**

Sub-option C2 proposes a northern branch of the regional service travelling along Albert St and Taylor St, terminating at the proposed commercial hub in northern Cambridge, at the western end of Norfolk Dr. The proposed route is shown in Figure 3.6 in red, with the existing southern branch to Leamington in blue.

**Figure 3.6: Sub-option C2 route proposal**



Source: Mott MacDonald

The proposed northern branch of C2 is roughly 4.1 kilometres long, the shortest of the three sub-options.

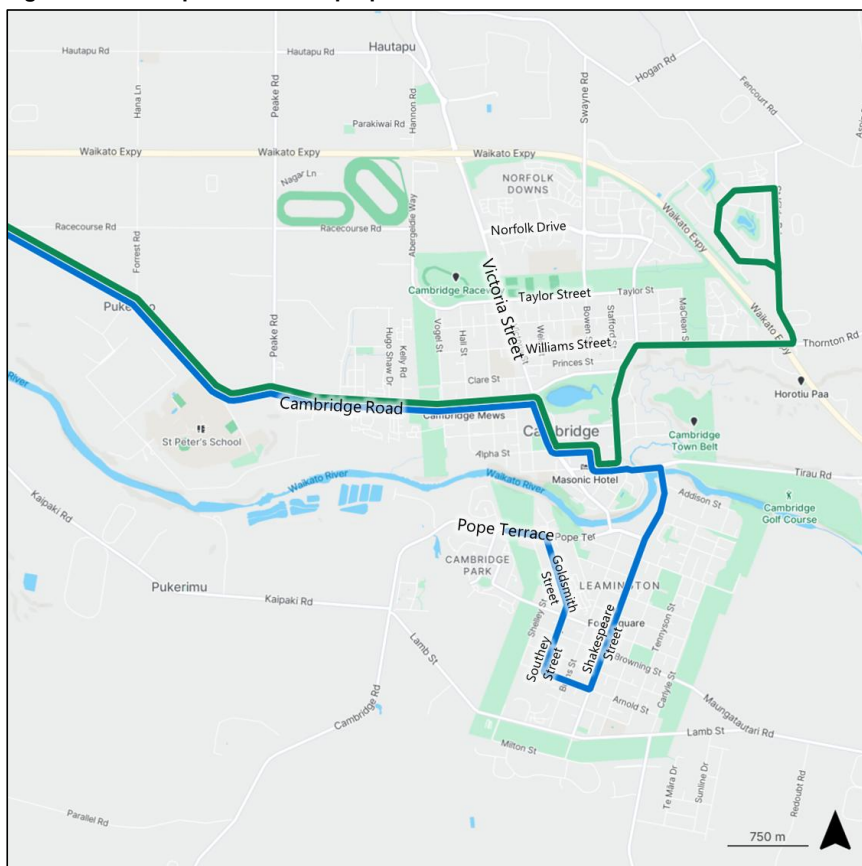
The new branch would serve an estimated 4,800 additional residents (above the existing route 20) within 500 metres of the route (based on 2023 Census data), the most of option C's sub-options. C2 would require a medium number of new bus stops to be installed (between the other two sub-options of Option C).

This sub-option is the most flexible of the three sub-options; its proposed terminus would enable some trips to extend either westwards or northwards (such as to Hautapu). Until the new commercial centre is completed, trips could terminate and turnaround via Harrison Close, Sir Tristram Boulevard, and Tosland Way.

### 3.2.3 Sub-option C3

Sub-option C3 proposes a northern branch travelling along Albert St and Thornton Rd to St Kilda. The proposed route is shown in Figure 3.7 in green, with the existing southern branch to Leamington in blue. Services in St Kilda would run one-way around the loop.

**Figure 3.7: Sub-option C3 route proposal**



Source: Mott MacDonald

The proposed northern branch for C3 extends approximately 4.8 kilometres, which is in between the other two sub-options.

The new branch would serve an estimated 4,000 additional residents (above the existing route 20) within 500 metres of the route (based on 2023 Census data), the fewest of option C's sub-options.

A3 would require the least number of new bus stops among the three sub-options, partly because it serves fewer additional residents.

### 3.2.4 Recommended sub-option

Sub-option C2 offers a balanced approach to network coverage, with its northern and southern branches collectively reaching a significant proportion of the local population. One gap in coverage is the area around Williams St and Victoria St, which is not within the 500-metre catchment of the proposed route. People living in this area are likely to use the higher-frequency Hamilton Rd stops to travel towards Hamilton, so serving this gap is not considered necessary.

Both the Leamington branch and the proposed northern branch are similar in length, at approximately 4.9 km and 4.1 km respectively, which is advantageous for maintaining consistent and efficient trip timetabling.

C2 is also the most flexible option, in terms of potential future changes. Unlike C1 and C3, which terminate on the edge of the urban area and would therefore be more challenging to modify once operational (as existing customers would likely object to the loss of coverage) the C2 northern terminus is relatively central. This location provides greater flexibility for future extensions or alterations of the route.

The previous PT Pathways report recommended an option that was similar to C2 but did not serve the town centre. Serving the town centre is considered essential, given that most existing passengers board and alight at the stops on Victoria St. Having both branches serve the town centre would minimise the potential for passengers to find themselves on the 'wrong' branch.

#### 3.2.4.1 Patronage expectations

Estimating patronage for this service is challenging given it is a variation to an existing service with an established customer base. Some current passengers may benefit from being directly served by the new branch, meaning they board on the new branch but are not an overall gain in patronage. The increase in service frequency could also encourage greater usage along the core route.

Usage on the branch itself is expected to be similar to that of the existing service in Leamington, particularly with regards to local trips. While the branch will increase coverage, it will not result in significantly more boardings. The increased frequency on the core of the route will be the main driver of patronage increase (as that is where most boardings occur now).

A range of elasticities were used to estimate potential future usage. They estimate the extent to which an additional service will be used, relative to existing services. A low elasticity assumes new trips are less well-used than existing services, and a high elasticity assumes it will be more well used. This range results in an estimate of between 210,000 and 280,000 boardings per year by 2037. The elasticities used are:

- Low (0.7) – roughly **210,000 annual boardings** (2037, both branches)
- Medium (1) – roughly **250,000 annual boardings** (2037, both branches)
- High (1.2) – roughly **280,000 annual boardings** (2037, both branches)

Patronage on the service will build over time as new residents move to Cambridge and existing residents make more use of the improved service levels. The initial elasticity is likely to be low and then build over time.

For comparison, the existing route 20 carried roughly 110,000 passengers in 2024.

For the purposes of this assessment, the medium scenario has been assumed. This is likely to be slightly conservative, given both the response to the 2024 increase in frequency on route 20 (which resulted in a 70% increase in patronage year-on-year), and that population growth will contribute to increased usage of the service.

### 3.2.4.2 Cost estimates

The introduction of the new branch is expected to incur an annual operating cost of approximately \$750,000 (2026 dollars). This figure accounts for the additional service required for the new branch, while recognising that the existing branch will see some operational savings due to a reduction in the number of trips.

Buses will be shared across both branches to optimise resources. In total, the combined operating costs for both branches are projected to be around \$1.8 million per year, representing an increase from the current annual cost of \$1.05 million. Additional capital expenditure will be required for infrastructure, including the installation of around nine new pairs of bus stops and the construction of a new terminus.

Based on the medium patronage scenario, the estimated cost per passenger is approximately \$7.29 (in 2037) which is a slight improvement from the current figure of \$7.50 per passenger. This reduction reflects the anticipated growth in ridership resulting from increased service frequency and the efficient allocation of resources across both branches.

### 3.3 Option E – Fixed-destination on-demand

The proposed service for Option E, as illustrated in Figure 3.8, is an on-demand public transport zone that cover the existing urban area of Cambridge. The boundary of the proposed zone excludes several growth cells (specifically C5, part of C9, C10, and C11) although the zone could expand into these areas in the future as they are developed. Covering approximately 25 square kilometres, the zone stretches about 4 to 5 kilometres from its edge to the centre.

A typical round-trip within the proposed zone, which would involve multiple pick-ups and drop-offs, is expected to take between 20 and 30 minutes, travelling from the town centre to the edge of the zone.

To meet anticipated demand, at least three vehicles would likely be required during peak periods: one each for Leamington, west of Victoria Street, and east of Victoria Street. Two vehicles may be sufficient during off-peak times when demand is lower (one each for north and south of the river). Depending on demand and the passenger's origin, this should enable a reasonable wait time of roughly 15 to 30 minutes from a request being made to the vehicle picking up the passenger. By 2037, a fourth vehicle may be necessary to accommodate future growth (and keep the waiting time within an acceptable range), though the associated costs for this additional vehicle have not been included at this stage.

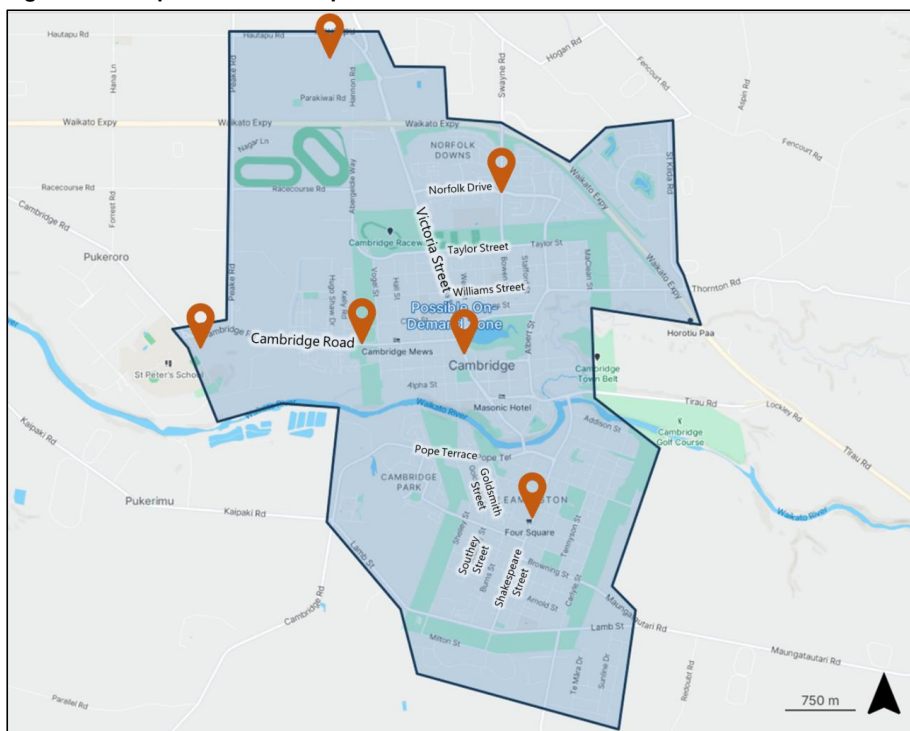
Under this scenario, route 20 is assumed to terminate at the town centre (using a roundabout on Victoria St to turn around), with the on-demand service providing convenient transfers for passengers. Under the existing fare system, this would be a free transfer for passengers. The existing route 20 is assumed to retain its current frequency and span of service in this option.

While sub-options have not been developed, potential variations could include adjustments to the number of destinations available on the service. The range of destinations could expand over time, for example to include the new commercial centre on Victoria Street once it develops.

Currently, the recommended destinations for the on-demand service (shown as orange pins on Figure 3.8) include:

- Cambridge town centre, potentially with two or three stops:
  - The town hall bus stops (for connections with route 20)
  - Near the supermarket.
  - Near the library.
- Leamington shops.
- Cambridge North shops (Swayne Rd)
- Cambridge Road shops.
- The Velodrome.
- Hautapu industrial area.

**Figure 3.8: Proposed zone for option E**



Source: Mott MacDonald

**3.3.1 Patronage expectations**

Projected daily patronage for the on-demand service in 2037 has been estimated using population and usage data from the case studies in Technical Report 1:

- A low use scenario, comparable to the level of usage achieved in Takaanini (Auckland), daily patronage would be expected to be around 150 passengers.
- A medium use scenario, based on the subsidised Uber services operating in Innisfil (Ontario) case study, would achieve around 350 daily passengers.
- A high use scenario, aligned with Timaru (Canterbury), would achieve up to 800 daily passengers.

The medium scenario is the most appropriate to use for estimation. Innisfill's transit system aligns most closely with the fixed-destination model proposed for Cambridge, including the relationship between the on-demand and regional services (in Innisfill's case, t service provides access to the train to Toronto).

The medium scenario represents roughly 124,000 trips per year.

### 3.3.2 Cost estimates

The operating hours for the on-demand service in option E are proposed to match those of route 20, running from roughly 6am to 10pm, thereby facilitating transfers between the on-demand and bus services.

The annual operating cost for the on-demand service is estimated at approximately \$1.35 million (in 2026 dollars). This would be in addition the costs associated with route 20 (which are currently \$1.05 million per year). Minor operational savings would be expected for route 20 due to the shortening of its route, though these are not expected to be substantial as vehicles will likely need to travel out-of-service to the depot to charge. While out-of-service costs are not included in the contract between the operator and WRC, the operator will likely price these operations into the in-service costs they charge (particularly once new contracts are negotiated).

The estimated cost per passenger for the on-demand service is around \$10.90, slightly better than the on-demand service in Timaru (MyWay) which has a cost per passenger of \$11.42.

With projected boardings of roughly 8.5 per service hour by 2037, demand would be high for this type of service. These patronage levels may indicate the need for a fourth vehicle to maintain service quality towards the end of the study period or would result in longer wait times for passengers during peak periods.

Some of the destinations may require a low level of infrastructure investment to ensure vehicles can stop safely. This is likely to be remarking of road surfaces and changes to signage, to indicate the space is reserved for on-demand vehicles.

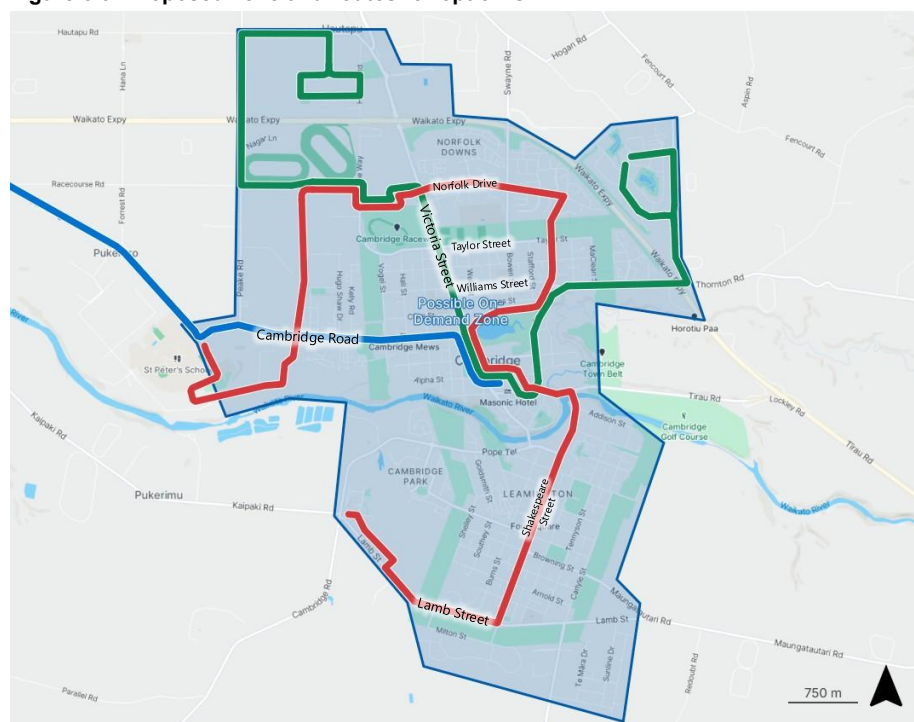
### 3.4 Option G – Mixed service

Option G is a mixed-service model. During peak periods, bus services would follow fixed routes to make best use of capacity when demand is greatest. Outside of peak times, the service would operate on-demand, ensuring flexibility and coverage. Both service types would use the same vehicle fleet. In this option route 20 would terminate in the town centre (using a roundabout on Victoria St to turn around) and local services would provide connections to it. Route 20 is assumed to retain its current frequency and span of service in this option.

Local fixed-route services would operate every 20 minutes during peak times in both directions (to provide connections to route 20), requiring a larger fleet than Option E, with five vehicles required to maintain service levels. The zone, expected waiting time, and possible destinations for the on-demand service would match those recommended for option E (including the potential to add destinations over time as Cambridge grows).

A map of the proposed on-demand zone and bus routes is shown in Figure 3.9. Bus routes were chosen to maximise local coverage and connections to the town centre (and therefore sub-options were not developed). A Hautapu – St Kilda route (shown green) and local Cambridge – Leamington route (shown red, based on the alternative A2 routing) would operate at peak times. A shortened regional service (route 20, shown blue) would operate all-day, running a similar timetable to the current one.

**Figure 3.9: Proposed zone and routes for option G**



Source: Mott MacDonald

### 3.4.1 Patronage expectations

To estimate potential patronage for this option:

- Peak period boardings per service hour for the local fixed routes are assumed to be high, so the 'high' rate of 15 bpsH (noted in option C) have been assumed.
- Inter-peak boardings for the on-demand service are assumed to achieve a lower rate of 5 boardings per service hour. This reflects likely reduced demand through the day. This rate is also assumed to apply on weekends.

Based on these assumptions, the mixed service would achieve roughly 111,000 boardings per year (across both service types).

Customers may also find this option relatively complex, making it difficult for them to understand and utilise this system effectively. This may influence patronage, though the extent of this impact is unknown.

### 3.4.2 Cost estimates

The cost estimates for the mixed-service model assume operating hours from 6am to 10pm, aligning with those of route 20 to facilitate transfers between local and regional services. Fixed-route services would operate between roughly 6am and 9am and 4pm to 7pm, with on-demand services operating at other times.

The annual operating cost is projected to be approximately \$1.55 million in 2026 dollars. This would be in addition the costs associated with route 20 (which are currently \$1.05 million per year). Minor operational savings would be expected for route 20 due to the shortening of its route, though these are not expected to be substantial as vehicles will likely need to travel out-of-service to the depot to charge.

The estimated cost per passenger for the mixed-service option is around \$13.96. This relatively high figure (compared to other options) is primarily attributable to the increased fleet requirements needed to deliver multiple fixed-route services during peak periods. The additional vehicles and resources necessary to maintain frequent service intervals contribute to the elevated per-passenger cost.

This option would also require the highest capital investment of all options, with a large number of new bus stops required for the peak-time fixed routes to use. Some remarking of spaces for on-demand vehicles to use, similar to option E, would likely also be required.

### 3.5 Comparison of options

Each proposed option in offers distinct approaches to service coverage, cost, and operational complexity. A summary of the key metrics for each service is presented in Table 3.1. All annual costs exclude the current operating costs of route 20.

**Table 3.1: Summary comparison of short-list options**

Option	Coverage	Estimated Annual Usage (2037)	Estimated Annual Cost (2026 \$)	Cost per Passenger (2026 \$)
<b>A2 Supplementary route</b>	<b>14,500</b> (2023 Census) (inc. route 20)	<b>98,000</b> (excludes route 20)	<b>\$800,000</b>	<b>\$8.22</b>
<b>C2 Regional branch</b>	<b>11,700</b> (2023 Census) (inc. route 20)	<b>125,000</b> (250,000 inc. southern branch)	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$7.29</b>
<b>E1 Fixed destination on-demand</b>	<b>21,000</b> (2023 Census) (inc. route 20)	<b>124,000</b> (excludes route 20)	<b>\$1,350,000</b>	<b>\$10.90</b>
<b>G1 Mixed service</b>	<b>21,000</b> (2023 Census) (inc. route 20)	<b>111,000</b> (excludes route 20)	<b>\$1,550,000</b>	<b>\$13.96</b>

Option A would be expected to achieve the lowest annual ridership. This is consistent with the performance of local services in other New Zealand towns that are a similar size to Cambridge. While also relatively cheap to operate, it could be perceived as being poor value for money. Buses with few passengers on-board could appear a less well-utilised to observers than an on-demand service, which risks negative public perceptions of the service developing.

Option C, while providing the lowest additional coverage, is expected to be the most efficient use of resources given its high boardings and low cost to operate. This option does not run the same risk of perceived low usage as option A, as it would build on the existing patronage of route 20. Infrastructure put in place for this option could also be used by a local service if one were to be introduced later, when Cambridge is larger. As an expansion of the existing service, it may also be easier to secure funding for than the other options.

Option E provides good coverage of the town but has a higher operating cost. Given the local nature of the service, it is unlikely to achieve as many new boardings as option C. Many of the boardings on this service would be expected to be transfers to route 20, which could increase use of that service (and may require further operational expenditure to provide additional capacity on the regional route).

Option G is the most comprehensive service, but it incurs the most costs (both operational and capital costs). The relatively low volume of boardings, many of which would likely be transfers to route 20, do not appear to warrant the additional costs associated with this option. The complexity of the service is also likely to be challenging for customers.

## 4 Preferred option

This section outlines the preferred option, selected after assessing the merits and challenges of the short-listed alternatives. It describes the preferred option in detail and provides further information on its service parameters, indicative costs, patronage forecasts, implementation phasing, and supporting recommendations.

### 4.1 Preferred option

Option C2 is recommended as the preferred option, due to its advantages in cost-efficiency, connectivity, and adaptability. The model delivers the lowest cost per passenger amongst the short-listed alternatives, while still delivering high patronage. All of this will be 'new' usage, as opposed to other options which are likely to be made up at least partly of existing route 20 users who would take advantage of the local service to transfer to the regional route (rather than being dropped off, walking, or parking as they may currently do).

The preferred option also aligns with long-term strategic planning to continue to enhance service to metro-area towns, like Cambridge. The service will enhance connections with Hamilton, which is the core of existing public transport demand. Only around 7% of bus trips originating or ending in Cambridge are local trips within the town. The new service will contribute to increasing local trips, by expanding the local catchment, but the great majority of trips are likely to continue to be regional ones through to 2037.

An advantage of this option is the ability to implement it as a variation to the existing route 20 contract, which is likely to make it easier and faster to implement. This is likely to make it easier to secure funding from NZTA for the service improvements. This advantage also supports a phased implementation strategy, which is discussed further in Section 4.5.

Option C also retains the flexibility to transition towards other service models, such as option A, in the future. Investment in new bus stops as part of the northern branch could eventually become part of a local bus route in future. Option C does not preclude other options from being implemented later, as demand for local services grows.

While the catchment area of Option C is lower than the on-demand options which would provide full coverage of Cambridge, the increased frequency along the main section between the town centre and Hamilton is likely to result in increased patronage over time (noting that the effect may not be as marked as the previous Route 20 service improvement). The high standard of active modes infrastructure in Cambridge may also allow the bus routes to draw people from further than the standard 500-metre walking catchment, especially along the section with increased frequency.

A map of the preferred option is included in Figure 4.1. This includes an extension of the existing route in Leamington to the new C4 growth cell, which is discussed in more detail in sub-section 4.2.3.

Figure 4.1: Route of preferred option



Source: Mott MacDonald

## 4.2 Service parameters

### 4.2.1 Service branding

The preferred service should continue to be operated and marketed as route 20, with a way of denoting the different destination that the trip ends at. This should mean that for the majority of customers who travel to the main Cambridge stops on Victoria St, they understand that route 20 is the bus service they should take.

Services in other parts of New Zealand operate in this same way:

- **Auckland** – Many frequent services in Auckland branch, with a letter denoting the different destination. Route 25 is the main Dominion Road bus route, with the 25B finishing in Blockhouse Bay and the 25L travelling to Lynfield.
- **Wellington** – Routes 1 and 2 have multiple variations with only the destination sign showing their destination (for route 2, this could be either Seatoun or Miramar).
- **Tauranga** – Route 72 loops around Brookfield in both directions, with the 72a running the clockwise version of the loop and 72b operating anticlockwise.

For Cambridge, the existing branch to Leamington could be denoted as the 20L, with the new branch to the north being the 20N. Destination signage could also help to denote the difference. An example of potential headboards is shown below:



### 4.2.2 Timetable characteristics

The existing Route 20 currently provides 18 trips per direction each weekday (36 trips per day), with additional trips on Fridays and 13 trips per direction on weekend days (26 trips per day). The proposed new service would provide a total of 60 trips per weekday (30 inbound and 30 outbound) across both branches. 52 trips would operate on weekend days. The proposed service would retain the roughly the same operating hours as the existing service, starting around 6 am in the morning (inbound) and finishing in Leamington (outbound) around 9 pm.

The northern branch is slightly shorter than the proposed new Leamington branch (57.2km vs 59.8km) and therefore has a similar overall runtime (estimated around 55 minutes. These runtimes enable the service to layover at the Hamilton transport centre for a short period of time before starting the next service.

The timetable would be constructed so that a bus originating in Leamington would run the return (outbound trip) to Northern Cambridge, and vice versa. This enables charging to occur at the Leamington depot between trips, avoiding the need for a charging facility in northern Cambridge which would be an additional infrastructure cost (but could be desirable from an operational perspective in the future).

### 4.2.3 Revised Leamington route

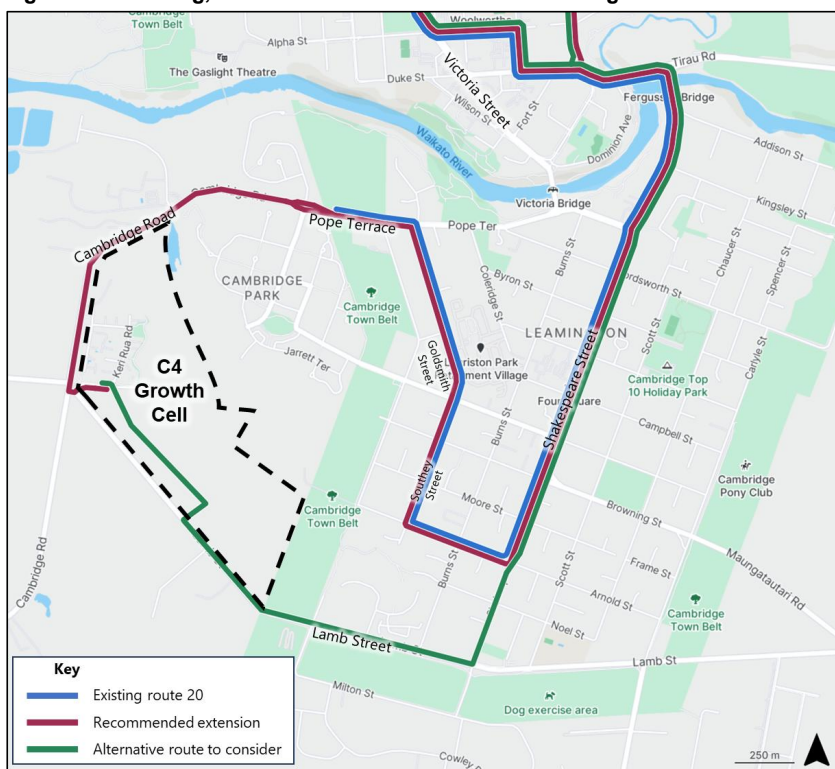
Two options have been developed for the future 20L service to expand its catchment, based on the assessment of potential routes in Leamington in section 2. The recommended option involves an extension of the current route, from the stops on Pope Tce to a new stop on Silverwood Ln near Keri Rua Rd. This stop would serve the C4 growth cell. There would be no intermediate stops, as there is limited catchment on Cambridge Rd between the two locations.

An alternative route for the Leamington branch of the service could also be considered. This would continue the full length of Shakespeare St, onto Lamb St, and then into the new collector roads of the C4 growth cell. This would serve more of southern Leamington and the growth cell, but would remove service from Cambridge Park and existing catchments along Goldsmith St.

The proposed and existing routes are shown in Figure 4.2, with the current route shown blue and the recommended route in red, and the alternative in green. In the extension options, the service would turn around using new infrastructure proposed for the growth cell (either a new roundabout on Silverwood Ln or using the future block structure of the development).

The extension of the current route is recommended in the medium term, as the growth cell develops. It may be suitable as the long-term route, in order to not disadvantage existing customers. Consultation with the community on both options is recommended to determine the preferred long-term routing, once infrastructure is available.

Figure 4.2: Existing, recommended and alternative Leamington routes



Source: Mott MacDonald

#### 4.2.4 Proposed Cambridge North route

The proposed route in Cambridge North includes streets that currently have no bus service, including Robinson St, Watkins Rd, Tulip Dr and Norfolk Dr. Operational staff from WRC drove the route to confirm that it is appropriate for bus services (although the use of double-deck buses may require tree pruning).

WDC will be responsible for installing bus stops on the proposed route (recommended approximate locations are listed in section 4.3.1). Stops could be either kerbside or in-line, with buses temporarily stopping in the lane and other traffic required to wait behind them. Given the proposed bus frequencies (up to 3 per hour per direction) and relatively low traffic volumes on the corridor (approximately 4,000 vehicles per day on Norfolk Dr, compared to over 10,000 on nearby Victoria St), in-line stops could be appropriate in some places. Kerbside stops are recommended for stops near Swayne Rd, as these are likely to be used by students on the proposed school assist service discussed in the following sub-section.

Norfolk Dr and Tulip Dr both feature a central median which reduces the width of the road in sections. For most of the carriageway, however, the kerb-to-kerb distance between the edge of the road and the central median is 5.5 metres. This provides sufficient width for a kerbside bus stop (at 2.5 metres width) and a standard 3-metre-wide lane, allowing cars to pass a stopped bus. Some changes to car parking may be required to enable safe bus operations.

Examples of buses operating on roads of a similar width exist in Hamilton. Woodridge Rd in Flagstaff, for example, features a 5.4-metre-wide carriageway with parked cars and a central median, that has two bus routes operating along it.

Until the proposed commercial centre west of Victoria St is developed, an interim turnaround route for the 20N could use Harrison Close, Sir Tristram Boulevard, Tosland Way and Norfolk Dr. A temporary low-cost stop could be established on Tosland Way close to Norfolk Dr for the bus to terminate and layover at.

#### 4.2.5 School service

Currently, one trip per day in each direction on Route 20 connects Leamington to Cambridge High School in Northern Cambridge. Under the preferred option, there would be multiple ways to provide this connection:

1. Continue operating a direct Leamington – Cambridge High School trip. This trip is convenient for students but inconvenient for Hamilton-bound passengers.
2. Require students to transfer between the two branches of the new service. This would add to their journey time but would not inconvenience Hamilton-bound passengers.
3. Run a direct Leamington – Cambridge North service, bypassing the town centre, providing access to employment in the industrial area around Carters Crescent for Leamington residents and providing access to the High School.

Option 3 is considered the most efficient option that disadvantages students the least. The service could potentially operate as a 'positioning' trip between the Leamington depot and the start of one of the northern branch services, depending on how the timetables are finalised and how the operator allocates their fleet.

The estimated cost per year (for one trip per direction per weekday) is around \$12,000. This assumes that an extra bus is not required for this service. If it is required, this could increase the costs to around \$112,000 per year (based on the current contract).

Such a service would operate like other 'school assist' services in the Waikato region and would be a public bus rather than a dedicated school bus. It could be signed as the 20S (for school).



## 4.3 Indicative cost estimates

### 4.3.1 Operational Costs

Based on the service parameters outlined in section 4.2, indicative operational costs have been calculated based on the existing Route 20 contracted operating rates.

The combined route (20 North and 20 Leamington) would cost **\$1.80 million per year** to operate. The existing route 20 costs \$1.05 million per year, so the additional service has a nominal cost of **an additional \$750,000 per year**. There are some savings to the Leamington service from the modified timetable (which provides slightly less frequent service on the southern branch), so the actual costs of operating are split roughly evenly across each branch.

The current Route 20 rates may change when the current contract ends in 2032, but the current rates are the most appropriate basis from which to calculate the indicative costs. Operational costs are also based on 2026 dollars, without indexation. The actual operating costs in 2037 are therefore likely to be higher, based on both of these factors. It is possible that additional service as part of the preferred option will help to drive down operating costs in the medium- to long-term, resulting in a lower (uninflated) rate.

### 4.3.2 Capital Costs

The proposed new northern branch requires 9 new bus stop pairs and one terminal stop. These were estimated based on maximising the service's catchment, and would be located:

- 3 pairs on Arthur St; 1 near Gillies St, 1 pair Carters Crescent, and 1 pair Princes St.
- On Robinson St near King St.
- On Watkins Rd near Madison St.
- On Tulip Drive near Lilac Close.
- 3 pairs on Norfolk Dr; 1 near Swayne Rd, 1 near Brancaster Pl, 1 near Mary Anne Dr.
- In the proposed new commercial centre west of Victoria Rd (new terminus)

Based on an indicative cost of \$150,000 per pair<sup>1</sup>, this would cost WDC around \$1,500,000. Discussions with developers of the commercial centre may enable a higher quality terminus to be provided through a cost-sharing arrangement with WDC.

For the extension of the existing route in Leamington to the western end of the C4 growth cell, a single new pair of stops on Silverwood Ln near Keri Rua Rd would be required for the new southern terminus. This would cost roughly \$150,000.

The alternative Leamington branch, if progressed, would require a further four new bus stop pairs (in addition to the Silverwood Ln stop). These would be:

- On Shakespeare St; 1 pair near Moor St (replacing the stops on Arnold St and Southey St) and 1 pair near Lamb St.
- On Lamb St near Milton St.
- At the eastern end of the C4 growth cell, on the new collector road near Lamb St.

The cost for these four pairs would be approximately \$600,000 (although the stops at the eastern end of the growth cell could potentially be required to be delivered by the developers, reducing costs to WDC by around \$150,000). There are also three physical bus stop pairs (plus four 'virtual' pairs) on the existing route that would no longer receive service if the alternative route in Leamington was progressed. There would be a nominal cost to close these stops.

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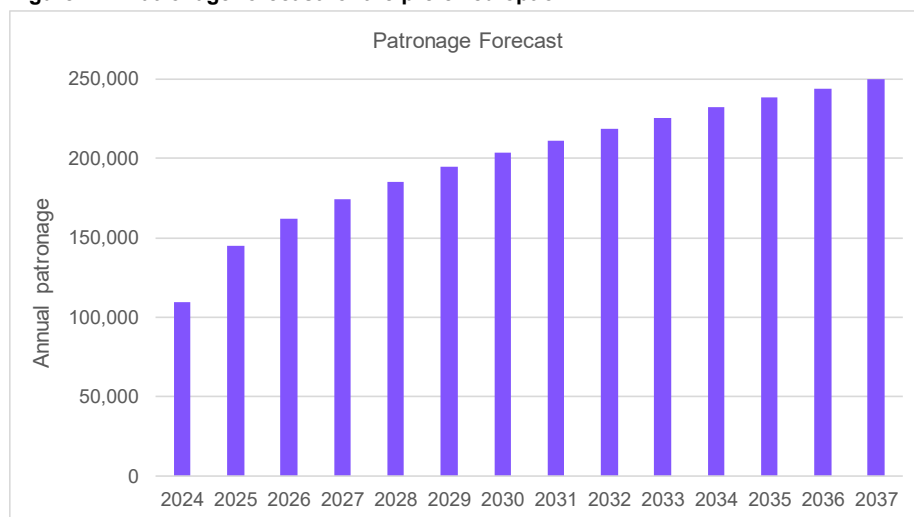
<sup>1</sup> Costs were provided by WDC – stops are assumed to be 'standard' pairs, with one shelter per pair, hard stands and kerbs, lighting, and bus stop signage/road markings. Some pairs could be 'basic' stops, reducing costs.

### 4.4 Patronage forecast

Patronage on the service will grow over time, as existing residents take advantage of the improved service levels and as new residents move to Cambridge and use the bus. Roughly 250,000 boardings are expected in 2037 (10 years after the potential introduction of the northern branch). This assumes that no further service changes are made in Cambridge over this period.

Forecast growth in patronage over this period is illustrated by calendar year in Figure 4.4. The patronage for 2024 and 2025 is actual results. The 2037 patronage is forecast based on a 1:1 elasticity between current (2025) boardings and future service levels, as described in section 3.2.4.1. The 2026 to 2036 forecasts show a smooth curve of consistent but decreasing growth as the improvements mature, with 200,000 annual boardings achieved in 2030.

**Figure 4.4: Patronage forecast for the preferred option**



Source: Mott MacDonald

The forecast shows how patronage will not increase significantly immediately after the service’s introduction. This reflects the fact that most boardings are and will continue to be on the common part of the route, before it branches. The increase therefore reflects on-going growth on the overall Cambridge service, based on existing growth rates and supported by the increase in coverage, frequency and capacity the improved service will provide.

This is a conservative forecast, which assumes that the current (2024 – 2025) growth rate slows slightly from 2027. This is assumed because the 2024 service improvements will have already captured some latent demand, particularly at peak times. Further growth may therefore depend on new residents rather than existing ones (though both will contribute). If growth exceeds this forecast, the preferred service will have enough capacity to accommodate it.

These factors mean that the existing cost per passenger rate for route 20 (around \$7.50 per trip) will increase in the short term (as operating costs rise), before falling over the medium term to eventually be lower than current by 2037 (which it is expected to reach around \$7.29 per trip). Farebox recovery rates for the service are likely to follow a similar pattern (initially reducing before recovering and then exceeding current rates).

## 4.5 Phasing

Changes to the existing route 20, to implement the preferred route, should be undertaken in three broad phases. These are:

1. Implementation of the northern branch.
2. Introduction of the school assist service.
3. Amendment to 20L route in Leamington.

### 4.5.1 Implementation of the northern branch

In this phase, bus stop infrastructure for the new service would be constructed in Cambridge North. Once complete, extra trips on the new northern branch would be added to route 20 (branded as 20N). Trips to Leamington would be re-timetabled (to hourly interpeak) and rebranded as the 20L.

This phase is the most substantive change to the existing service. Dependant on infrastructure delivery and funding availability, the service be introduced from the middle of 2027 to coincide with the new financial year).

The final stop on the northern branch, in the new commercial development, may not be delivered as quickly as the rest of the route. A potential sub-phase of the service's implementation would be the later extension of the route to this location. Services could initially terminate on Norfolk Dr, using the roundabout at Brancaster PI to reposition between trips.

### 4.5.2 Introduction of the school assist service

The potential 20S school assist service, direct from Leamington to North Cambridge, could be implemented as the second phase of implementation. This should be aligned to the start of a school term, or possibly even the school year. This would mean implementation in either mid-to-late 2027, or early 2028.

The existing trip to Cambridge High School on the current route 20 could continue to operate (as a 20L trip) in the interim, before the completion of this phase.

### 4.5.3 Amendment to the 20L route in Leamington

This phase should occur as soon as possible once the roading infrastructure in the new C4 growth cell is complete and bus services are able to operate. This will ensure that new residents moving into the area have access to services.

Implementing this phase will also require additional bus stops for the revised route.

### 4.5.4 Future phases

As Cambridge continues to grow in the future, demand for local journeys is likely to increase. The end of the existing bus route contract at the end of 2032 may be an appropriate time to consider shifting towards operating a local service. This could be similar to the services considered under Option A, with the regional route 20 terminating in the town centre and the local service providing connections to it.

The branch of the 20N could form the northern basis of the local route, with a westward extension to the growth areas. The 20L branch could be incorporated as the southern part of the route.

If the 20S school assist service is implemented, it could form the basis for additional local-only trips in the future. If so, a variation to incorporate Cambridge Town Centre (and provide connections to the regional service) should be considered.

## 4.6 Implementation recommendations

The service parameters in section 4.2 and phasing considerations in section 4.5 include recommendations about how the preferred option should be implemented. Additional recommendations include:

- **Consulting on the proposed changes** – while the proposed service is preferable from a technical perspective, the community are likely to have views on how best to implement the proposed changes. Consulting on elements of the proposal, including the route of the new northern branch, the revised timetable and routing for the modified Leamington service, stop locations, the potential 20S service, and other elements can help to build community support for the new service.
- **Monitoring performance of the improved service** – reporting on patronage should focus on the combined patronage on the improved route 20, rather than performance of the individual branches. This will help to emphasise the combined nature of the service and avoid the potential impression that the new 20N is taking usage away from the 20L. It will be important to monitor boardings at the new stops on the northern branch, and also any transfers between branches.
- **Developing a communications strategy** – news articles and engagement by the public on the Cambridge Connections project show a clear interest in the future of public transport in the town. The introduction of the northern branch of the service should be accompanied by messaging that this service, and associated infrastructure, is the first step towards future improvements. This should reference the possibility of future local-only services for Cambridge.
- **Working with developers of growth cells to secure future bus infrastructure** – as Cambridge continues to grow, identifying likely bus stop locations (particularly for the northwestern growth cells) for a possible local service (such as envisaged in option C2) has the potential to save WDC significant capital expenditure. In addition to the stops required in the C4 growth cell for the revised Leamington route in the preferred option, additional indicative stop locations in the C1, C2, C3 and C7 cells should be identified.
- **Identifying and progress improvements to the service in Hamilton City** – previous work on ways to improve priority for route 20 within Hamilton City's boundaries, particularly along Clyde St, should be revisited with the preferred option in mind. Additional frequency, particularly at peak times, may help make a case for changed routing and improved priority. Any improvements would in turn improve service reliability and lead to further increases in patronage.

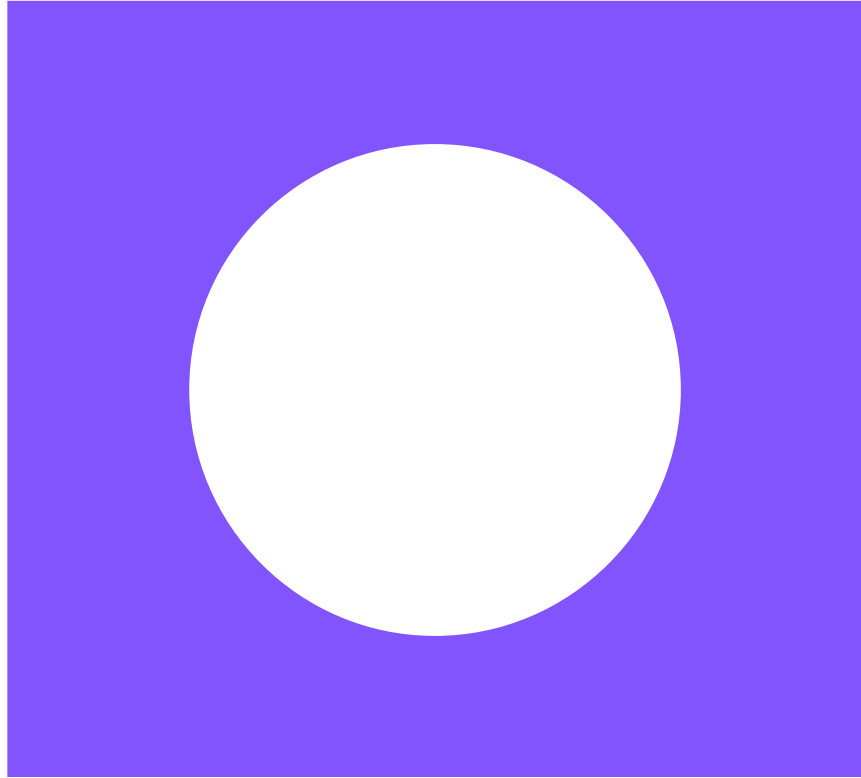
## 5 Next steps

WRC will need to apply for funding from the New Zealand Transport Agency to co-fund the increased service levels associated with the preferred option.

If funding is secured, the existing Waipā bus service contract will need to be varied to incorporate the new service levels.

Infrastructure to support the service will need to be delivered by WDC in advance of the service commencing operations.

The earliest the service could begin operating is likely to be mid-2027, assuming funding is approved and infrastructure delivery is completed by this time.



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## 7.2 WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL RESPONSE TO STRENGTHENING TOTAL MOBILITY

**Rā | Date:** 25 May 2026

**Kaituhi | Author:** Maurice Flynn, Accessible Transport Coordinator

**Kaituku | Authoriser:** Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections

### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report is to present changes to the Waikato Total Mobility subsidy of a regionwide maximum subsidised fare (MSF) or “fare cap” of \$35.00, with a regional maximum subsidy of \$22.50. On the recommendation of the WRC Transport Committee, this change was approved by the Waikato Regional Council (Council) at its meeting held on 28 May 2026.
2. The changes are in response to Government direction for regional “fare caps” to be reviewed, to support the long-term financial sustainability of the Total Mobility scheme.

### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Total Mobility is a national transport assistance scheme that supports disabled and older people with temporary or permanent impairments when public transport is not accessible to them. Since a fare subsidy increase at national level in 2022, Total Mobility usage and costs have risen significantly, driven by more frequent and longer trips.
4. To address increasing costs of the Total Mobility Scheme the Government will reduce the fare subsidy from 75% to 65% of the maximum subsidised fare from 1 July 2026. The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) has also worked with regional councils to review local fare caps.
5. Waikato’s current district-based fare caps are a legacy model that creates administrative complexity, causes confusion for users, and makes inter-district travel more difficult.
6. In conjunction with working with NZTA to reduce the local fare cap, the WRC Transport Committee recommended that Council adopt a single, region-wide maximum subsidised fare (MSF) or “fare cap” of \$35.00, providing a maximum subsidy of \$22.50 per trip. This was approved by the Council at their meeting held on 28 May 2026.
7. The Ministry of Transport (MoT) is also consulting on additional changes to the Total Mobility Scheme to help manage future costs.

#### TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Waikato Regional Council response to strengthening Total Mobility* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 8 June 2026) be received.

**HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND**

8. The Total Mobility Scheme is jointly funded by central and local government. MoT sets national policy and oversight, while regional councils administer and co-fund, along with NZTA, the scheme locally.
9. Regional councils contract approved taxi and companion driving providers to deliver subsidised door-to-door transport, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles where available.
10. Hoist trips are fully funded by central government.
11. For standard trips, Total Mobility currently subsidises 75% of the fare up to a regional maximum subsidy. Users pay the remaining 25% (this will change to 35% from 1 July) and any amount above the subsidy cap. Of the subsidised portion, 25% is funded through the Climate Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), with the balance funded by local rates (40%) and NZTA (60%).
12. In the Waikato region, the scheme operates in Hamilton City, Waikato District, Waipā District, Matamata-Piako District, Thames-Coromandel District, Taupō District, and Tokoroa. Waikato is the only Public Transport Authority in New Zealand that applies different maximum fare subsidies across its districts; all other regions use a single regional subsidy cap.

**TE TAKE | ISSUE**

13. Total Mobility is the principal mechanism through which councils, including Waikato Regional Council, meet their obligation under section 35 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 to consider the needs of transport-disadvantaged people.
14. In 2022, the Total Mobility subsidy increased from 50% to 75%, with the 25% additional subsidy coming directly from Government (Climate Emergency Relief Fund). This change led to significant growth in scheme usage nationwide, with higher expenditure and increased trip frequency and distance.
15. Nationally, Total Mobility trips increased from 1.8 million in 2018 to 3.0 million in 2024/25, while cardholder numbers rose from 108,000 in 2022 to 120,000 in 2024/25. Under current settings, scheme costs are forecast to exceed combined Crown, National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and local authority funding by \$236 million between 2025 and 2030.
16. As shown in Table 1, Total Mobility usage and costs in the Waikato region have increased significantly since 2022 in line with the national trend. While cardholder numbers have grown steadily, the main driver of cost escalation has been the substantial increase in non-hoist trips and their average cost.

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/Mar 26	% Increase 2022/26
# Card holders	5982	4699	5509	7053	8,069	34.9%
Non-Hoist Trips	55,990	90,042	118,175	124,059	135,401	141.8%
Non-Hoist Cost pa	\$512,378.87	\$ 1,185,594.50	\$1,648,246.76	\$1,922,561.41	\$1,827,696.75	256.7%

<b>Hoist</b>	4283	7734	7560	6805	7216	68.5%.
<b>Hoist Cost pa</b>	\$42,830.00	\$77,340.00	\$75,600.00	\$68,050.00	\$114,766	168%

Table 1: Total Mobility cardholders, trip numbers, and trip costs in Waikato 2022 – 2026

17. Non-hoist trips make up the majority of Total Mobility journeys and have grown considerably following the 2022 subsidy increase, which reduced users’ out-of-pocket costs and increased demand.
18. The combined effect of more cardholders, higher non-hoist trip volumes, and increased average trip costs has been the primary contributor to rising scheme costs, highlighting the need to review subsidy levels and fare caps to support long-term financial sustainability.
19. Although hoist trips generally have a higher cost per trip, volumes have remained relatively stable. Hoist trips, being 100% government funded, are not included in the current requirement to reduce fare caps.
20. From 1 July 2026, the Government will reduce its contribution to non-hoist trip subsidies from 75% to 65%. This change will increase the user contribution from 25% to 35% and is expected to reduce demand, but it will not directly reduce WRC’s co-funding obligations.
21. Government has requested that NZTA and Public Transport Authorities reduce local fare caps by up to 10% to improve the financial sustainability of the Total Mobility scheme within the NLTF. The changes are intended to stabilise Total Mobility costs while ensuring the scheme remains financially sustainable, consistently delivered, and equitable across New Zealand.
22. The Waikato region currently applies different maximum subsidy caps district by district. These variations create administrative complexity, customer confusion, and inequities between districts. Aligning to a single regional fare cap would simplify administration and provide a more consistent and equitable subsidy framework.
23. Staff have considered the anticipated reduction in demand resulting from higher user contributions, NZTA guidance on fare cap reductions, and the approved Total Mobility budget of \$2.1 million (NZTA and local share).
24. To ensure efficient and equitable Total Mobility services, from 1 July 2026 the Waikato Total Mobility scheme will implement a region-wide maximum subsidised fare (MSF). The new fare cap (MSF) will be \$35.00, with a maximum subsidy of \$22.50 per trip.

**ĒTAHI ATU TAKE | OTHER MATTERS**

25. MoT is also consulting on further national changes to the Total Mobility Scheme aimed at managing future costs and promoting greater consistency across all stakeholders. These changes are expected to be announced later in 2026.
26. Waikato Regional Council submitted feedback to MoT as part of consultation in early 2026.
27. As at the time of writing, there has been no indication of the final scope of changes to the Total Mobility Scheme, nor confirmation of a formal implementation timeline for changes to be implemented post the 1 July subsidy changes discussed in this report.

**WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

28. Total Mobility is a national transport assistance scheme that supports disabled and older people with temporary or permanent impairments when public transport is not accessible.
29. Since the increase in fare subsidies in 2022, both usage and costs have risen significantly nationwide, driven by more frequent and longer trips. In response, the Government will reduce the subsidy rate from 75% to 65% of the maximum subsidised fare from 1 July 2026, alongside a broader review of fare caps led by NZTA in collaboration with regional councils.
30. In the Waikato, existing district-based fare caps are being replaced due to administrative complexity, user confusion, and barriers to inter-district travel.
31. As recommended by the WRC Transport Committee, Council has approved a single region-wide maximum subsidised fare (MSP) or “Fare Cap” of \$35.00, providing a maximum subsidy of \$22.50. This will be implemented from the 1st of July 2026.
32. Further changes to the Total Mobility scheme are also being considered by MoT to ensure its long-term financial sustainability.

**NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES**

33. [Ministry of Transport – Review of the Total Mobility Scheme](#)
34. WRC Transport Committee Minutes, 22 April 2026 ([WRCTC26/16](#))

**ĀPITI HANGA | ATTACHMENTS**

Nil

## 7.3 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT FUNDING POLICY

Rā | Date: 25 May 2026

Kaituhi | Author: Tofeeq Ahmed, Team Leader - Portfolio Delivery

Kaituku | Authoriser: Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections

### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to frame the review of the Community Transport Fund Policy in advance of workshops to be held with Elected members. The report identifies key issues that feed into the workshops and to shape future Community Transport Fund policy and application.

### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Community Transport Fund has grown rapidly to \$500,000 per annum. Despite its rapid growth, the size of the fund has not exceeded demand. This reflects the important function that the Community Transport activity and associated Fund have in addressing access and transport affordability challenges.
3. At this scale, and to incorporate the learnings of a new and rapidly expanding activity it is appropriate to review policy fitness, particularly in relation to funding scope, governance, and decision-making of the Community Transport Fund.
4. Recent changes and on-going changes to the Total Mobility scheme, including funding and affordability pressures, have highlighted the relationship between Community Transport and the wider transport system.
5. This report frames these issues and proposes a workshop-led approach to inform development of a revised Community Transport Fund policy.

### TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Community Transport Funding Policy* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 8 June 2026) be received.

### HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

6. The Community Transport Fund supports community-led services addressing unmet access needs, particularly where public transport is limited.
7. Demand for support for Community Transport initiatives has increased across the Region, alongside the role of community transport in supporting access, participation, and affordability.

8. The Waikato Regional Council Community Transport Grant Fund has expanded rapidly to \$500,000 per annum, increasing both its impact and expectations around allocation and management.

### **TE TAKE | ISSUE**

9. The current policy was developed at a smaller scale and with lower complexity.
10. As the fund has grown, a number of strategic and operational questions have emerged regarding its design, scope, and governance.
11. Recent changes required to the administration of the national Total Mobility Scheme, primarily to address the financial sustainability of Total Mobility services, provide the opportunity to leverage access outcomes for transport disadvantaged.
12. A review is required to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose and provides clear direction for decision-making.

### **Policy Fitness at Scale**

13. At its current level, the fund represents a significant regional investment.
14. This raises questions about the clarity of policy intent, expectations on providers, and whether existing settings adequately support transparency, accountability, and outcomes.

### **Funding Scope (Operational vs Capital Expenditure)**

15. The policy has historically focused on operational funding.
16. With the growth of the fund, questions have emerged about whether capital investment (e.g. vehicles or accessibility improvements) should be supported, or whether the fund should retain a clearer operational focus.
17. These choices will influence the purpose, impact, and sustainability of the fund.

### **Governance and Decision-Making**

18. Growth in funding has prompted consideration of whether current governance and delegation arrangements remain appropriate.
19. This includes the role of staff in allocation decisions, oversight by committees, and the need for consistency with other Council funding programmes.
20. Clearer policy direction may be required to support transparency and confidence in funding decisions.

### **Relationship with Total Mobility**

21. Changes to Total Mobility settings and associated affordability pressures have highlighted the interaction between Total Mobility and Community Transport.
22. This includes the potential for community transport to complement Total Mobility services and support access outcomes where affordability or service gaps exist.

23. These interactions highlight the need for a more coordinated approach to transport investment and policy settings.

## **ĒTAHI ATU TAKE | OTHER MATTERS**

### **Role of the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee and Council**

24. The Community Transport Fund Policy sits within the broader public transport policy framework administered by Waikato Regional Council, including the wider context of public transport planning.
25. Any revised Community Transport Fund Policy will require:
  - a) endorsement by the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee and
  - b) formal approval by Waikato Regional Council, in line with Council's governance and delegation framework.

### **Workshop Approach**

26. A staged workshop approach is proposed to support policy development. Workshops will:
  - (a) provide a shared understanding of key issues and trade-offs
  - (b) test policy direction across funding scope, governance, and system interactions
  - (c) support alignment across governance bodies
27. Workshops will be advisory in nature and will inform, but not determine, formal policy decisions.

### **Policy Development Pathway**

28. The indicative pathway for policy development is:
  - (a) Workshop will be held with the WRC Transport Committee and the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee to consider policy alignment and system-level implications
  - (b) Council workshop to test policy intent and proposed funding approach
  - (c) Formal endorsement and adoption through Council governance processes

### **Next Steps**

29. Feedback from workshops will inform the development of a revised Community Transport Fund Policy.
30. The updated policy will be progressed through Council's governance processes.

## **WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

31. The Community Transport Fund has evolved into a significant investment, bringing new expectations and complexity.

32. Key issues relating to policy fitness, funding scope, governance, and integration with Total Mobility now require clear direction.
33. A workshop-led approach will support development of a revised policy that is robust, transparent, and both aligned and integrated with the Region's broader transport offerings.

## **ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS**

**Nil**

## 7.4 CONNECT2TAUPŌ UPDATE

<b>Rā   Date:</b>	<b>25 May 2026</b>
<b>Kaituhi   Author:</b>	<b>Katherine Simpson, Team Leader - Transport Planning</b>
<b>Kaituku   Authoriser:</b>	<b>Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections</b>
<b>Mana whakatau   Delegation Status:</b>	<b>Enter Delegation Status</b>

### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee's endorsement on the proposed service changes to the Connect2Taupōbus network, following completion of the 2025 service review and public consultation.
2. Since the previous report was considered in March 2026, implementation timeframes and stakeholder feedback have evolved. This report therefore provides an updated assessment of the proposed changes, including timing implications, stakeholder views, and future planning considerations, to support the Subcommittee in making an informed recommendation.

### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. This report seeks the Subcommittee's endorsement of a package of proposed service changes to the Connect2Taupōnetwork, designed to address capacity and reliability constraints within existing funding.
4. Since the March 2026 meeting, where no decision was made, several key factors have changed. The next opportunity for implementation is September 2026, shortly after the end-of-trial review is scheduled for submission to NZTA in August 2026. As a result, any changes in September will not have any time to materially influence trial outcomes. In addition, funding beyond June 2027 is not yet confirmed.
5. Engagement with Taupō District Council (TDC), including the Tūrangi ward representative, indicated limited support for the proposed changes due to concerns about reduced time in Taupō for Tūrangi residents. TDC has also confirmed it is not in a position to provide local funding for service enhancements over and above what is being proposed, although it has expressed a strong desire to continue working collaboratively to improve connections between Tūrangi and Taupō.
6. In response, Waikato Regional Council (WRC) has committed to undertaking further technical work ahead of the next Long Term Plan and funding period (2027–2030), including exploration of a commuter-focused Tūrangi–Taupō service.
7. While the recommended service changes remain operationally sound and aligned with the 2025 service review, these new timing constraints and stakeholder considerations introduce additional risk. Staff are therefore maintaining the recommendation but highlight that Committee members should carefully weigh these factors, alongside the previously identified trade-offs, when forming their final decision.

8. It is also noted that not proceeding with the proposed changes will limit potential improvements for the Tokoroa/Mangakino community, who would not receive an additional service under the current timetable.

**TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the report *Connect2Taupō Update* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 8 June 2026) be received.
2. That the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee endorses the Connect2Taupō service changes set out in Attachment 1, for implementation from September 2026.

**HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND**

9. The Connect2Taupō services were introduced in October 2022 following earlier community engagement that identified a preference for fixed-route transport options for Taupō District's rural and semi-rural communities.
10. Five routes were established:
  - (a) Acacia Bay (#34)
  - (b) Kinloch (#35)
  - (c) Tūrangi (#36)
  - (d) Tokoroa/Mangakino (#37) and;
  - (e) Wairakei (#38)
11. All operated by a single 12-seater shuttle allocated across different communities on different days of the week. This operating model has created inherent limitations in capacity, frequency, timetable flexibility, and on-time performance.
12. As the services are funded under the NZ Transport Agency's (NZTA) Low-Cost Low-Risk (LCLR) programme, the current trial period ends in 2026/27. Ahead of decisions on permanency, Waikato Regional Council undertook a comprehensive service review in 2025 (previously shared with the committee), analysing patronage trends, timetable performance, ticket types, revenue, customer feedback, and operational constraints.
13. The review found significant variation in demand across the network: Tūrangi and Tokoroa/Mangakino demonstrated strong sustained patronage and recurring capacity issues, whereas Acacia Bay, Kinloch, and Wairakei showed lower and less consistent usage despite receiving a greater number of weekly services in some cases.
14. The service review identified several structural challenges:
  - (a) the 12-seater shuttle constrains patronage growth on high-demand routes;
  - (b) reliance on a single vehicle forces trade-offs between communities and limits the ability to adjust timetables and;
  - (c) the current trip timings do not fully align with local needs, particularly for commuters and users requiring longer time in Taupō.

15. Despite these challenges, overall patronage across the network grew by 8% in the 12 months to April 2025, indicating clear community reliance on the services.
16. As part of the mid-2025 review, three potential timetable and vehicle allocation options were developed with the review and timetable recommendation presented to Regional Transport Committee in June 2025 for endorsement to begin consultation. Consultation subsequently commenced in November 2025.
17. Feedback from 183 respondents highlighted strong support for improving capacity and increasing service days on high-demand routes, particularly Tūrangi and Tokoroa/Mangakino, while also acknowledging the need to rationalise services in lower-demand areas such as Acacia Bay and Wairakei. A number of suggested improvements - such as commuter-timed services, additional layover time in Taupō, weekday frequency increases, and upgrades to larger vehicles - were noted but are not deliverable within current fleet and funding constraints.
18. The final recommended package of service changes now brought to the Subcommittee for endorsement represents a balance between community preferences, operational feasibility, and available funding. These changes can be delivered within existing operating budgets as part of the September 2026 network update.

## TE TAKE | ISSUE

### Problem definition and current constraints

19. The Connect2Taupō (C2T) network is designed to connect dispersed communities to Taupō using a single shared fleet, which inevitably creates hard trade-offs between frequency, capacity, and timetable flexibility. Demand has strengthened on the longest corridors while several smaller routes remain lightly used, leading to systemic reliability pressure and unmet need where growth is strongest. This section outlines those constraints and why a reallocation is required now to stabilise service delivery and protect the credibility of the trial.
20. The C2T network is currently operated by a single 12-seat shuttle that rotates across five routes on different days of the week. This model has reached its practical limits. High-demand routes (Tūrangi and Tokoroa/Mangakino) regularly experience capacity issues and do not have enough service days to meet the demonstrated and growing demand. Conversely, some lower-demand routes (Acacia Bay, Kinloch, Wairakei) receive more service provision than usage justifies. The result is a network that cannot fully meet community needs, suppresses potential growth on busy routes, and offers limited flexibility for timetable improvements or reliability enhancements.
21. A further operational constraint relates to the availability of a larger bus. The larger bus proposed to be used is not new fleet but is drawn from the existing Taupō Connector service, where it currently operates peak morning and afternoon commuter trips. As a result, the bus is only available for use on C2T services during the off-peak window between the morning and afternoon peaks. This limits how early services can depart, how late they can return, and how much time can be provided in Taupō for long-distance routes. While the use of this bus provides valuable additional capacity where it is most needed, its restricted availability means timetable improvements must be carefully designed around these fixed operational boundaries.

22. A detailed service review completed in 2025 confirmed these constraints. It highlighted strong sustained patronage on the longest routes, capacity-related barriers to growth, and a mismatch between available fleet and customer expectations for more commuter-friendly trip times and longer layovers in Taupō. At the same time, overall patronage across the network grew by 8% in the past year signalling the value of the service.
23. Public consultation in late 2025 received 183 responses across all communities. Feedback clearly supported additional service days and increased capacity on the strongest routes and was generally accepting of targeted reductions on the lowest-demand routes as long as essential access was maintained.

#### What is proposed

24. The recommended package concentrates limited resources where they will have the greatest impact, while maintaining a minimum service level everywhere. It draws on the service review, operator input, and community feedback.
25. The recommended package of changes (*see **Attachment 1***) balances consultation feedback, operational feasibility, and available resources. The changes aim to improve access where demand is strongest while maintaining a minimum level of service for all communities. They include:
  - (a) **Tūrangi (#36)**: increase to three return trips per week and operate all days with a larger bus to alleviate capacity constraints, along with implementing the refined timetable (including 2 hour stay in Taupō).
  - (b) **Tokoroa/Mangakino (#37)**: increase to three return trips per week by adding a Wednesday service, continue operating with the shuttle, and implement the revised timetable without diverting via Kinloch (which was proposed during consultation).
  - (c) **Acacia Bay (#34)**: reduce from three to two return trips per week by removing the Wednesday service.
  - (d) **Wairakei (#38)**: reduce from five to four return trips per week by removing Friday, align Tuesday's timing with other days and, operate two days with a larger bus and two with the shuttle.
  - (e) Kinloch (#35): retain one weekly return trip with a minor timing adjustment and do not divert the Tokoroa service via Kinloch until a larger vehicle becomes available.
26. These recommendations represent the most effective deliverable improvements within the constraints of a single shared fleet.

#### Trade-offs and mitigations

27. Because the fleet is finite, achieving more seats and more service days requires targeted reductions and some timetable compromises. This section explains the key trade-offs (time in town vs frequency/capacity; equity between communities vs network performance; vehicle size vs timetable feasibility) and sets out practical mitigations, monitoring, and triggers for adjustment post-implementation.
28. Time in Taupō vs. improved frequency and capacity: To enable more service days and, where possible, larger vehicles, the proposed timetable reduces layover time in Taupō on the Turangi service. While this may be inconvenient for some users, it addresses the two most critical issues raised - service availability and seating capacity. Staff will monitor impacts and explore opportunities to extend layovers if additional fleet time becomes available.

29. Community equity vs. whole-network efficiency: Service reductions in Acacia Bay and Wairakei free up vehicle time needed to increase frequency where demand is highest. Although these reductions may concern some residents, essential access is maintained and aligns with both usage patterns and community feedback. Staff will continue to monitor patronage and revisit frequency if demand increases.
30. Vehicle size vs. operational feasibility: A larger bus can be allocated to Tūrangi but not to Tokoroa/Mangakino due to timetable constraints and commitments for the bus on the Taupo Connector service. Maintaining the shuttle on Tokoroa ensures service reliability and enables the addition of Wednesday services without compromising other parts of the network.
31. Kinloch diversion vs. capacity protection: Diverting the Tokoroa route via Kinloch (an option that was considered during consultation) would risk displacing Tokoroa and Mangakino passengers on an already-full shuttle. This option is deferred until a larger vehicle can be allocated.

#### Timing, funding, and decision-making context

32. Since the original recommendation was developed, the implementation timeframe has shifted from May 2026 to September 2026. This has the following implications:
  - (a) Limited evaluation period: With the end-of-trial review scheduled for August 2026, the proposed changes would not be able to materially influence performance data and outcomes.
  - (b) Social licence considering the funding uncertainty: As ongoing funding for the service beyond June 2027 is not guaranteed, the proposed changes may only be in effect for a short period before broader decisions are required. There is therefore a risk of introducing an unpopular (for some communities) change with the service then being withdrawn completely should ongoing funding not be received.
33. In addition to timing constraints, stakeholder support has evolved since the March report:
  - (a) Engagement with Taupō District Council, including the Tūrangi ward representative, indicates concerns about the reduced time in Taupō and limited support for the proposed changes in their current form.
  - (b) Taupō District Council has confirmed it does not have funding available to contribute to service enhancements over and above what is being proposed and is not progressing earlier discussions on locally funding a dedicated Tūrangi service.
  - (c) Correspondence from the Mayor emphasises a preference for changes that improve usability and patronage, particularly for commuter and day-trip purposes, and signals interest in further collaborative work to refine options (**Attachment 2**).
34. These factors introduce additional uncertainty and risk to proceeding with the proposed changes at this time.
35. At the same time, there are network-wide implications to consider. Not proceeding with the changes would mean that the Tokoroa/Mangakino community does not receive the proposed additional service, delaying benefits to an area that has demonstrated strong demand. At the time of writing, the views of South Waikato representatives on the current proposal are not confirmed.

#### Cost and funding

36. The recommended changes result in an increased annual operating cost of approximately \$38,924. This cost is within the existing approved operating budget for the contract and is still achievable taking into account recent increased fuel costs. Implementation can occur as part of the September 2026 network update.
37. As the recommended service change is not withdrawing completely from any community, nor is it going to any new community or location, there is considered to be no rates implications as a result of any of the proposed changes.

#### Expected outcomes

38. The package is designed to produce immediate, measurable benefits where users feel them most: fewer “left behind” events, an extra service day on the busy corridors, and better alignment between provision and actual demand. This section summarises the near-term improvements we expect to see in reliability, access, and utilisation.
39. These changes are anticipated to:
  - (a) Improve reliability and reduce the likelihood of passengers being left behind on the longest and busiest routes.
  - (b) Provide additional service days where communities clearly indicated they would use them.
  - (c) Better align service levels with actual demand, improving the efficiency of the trial network.
  - (d) Strengthen patronage, utilisation, and evidence to support decisions on the future of the service in 2026/27.

#### Implications for recommendation

40. While the proposed service changes remain operationally justified and aligned with the service review, the combination of shortened implementation timeframe, funding uncertainty, and evolving stakeholder positions means that the decision now involves a greater level of strategic judgement.
41. Staff are therefore not fundamentally changing the recommended option but are explicitly highlighting these factors so that the Subcommittee can consider whether proceeding at this time remains the most appropriate course of action.

#### Future work still required

42. These changes are an interim step, not the end state. A fuller response - commuter-timed trips, improved layovers, further potential vehicle upsizing, and integration with the wider Taupō network - requires additional resources and further planning. This section signals the next tranche of work and dependencies that will inform future decisions as funding and fleet opportunities arise.
43. While the proposed package addresses immediate constraints, it does not resolve structural issues that would require further planning work which is currently not programmed or fully resourced. This includes:
  - (a) Developing commuter-oriented timetables on most, if not all, routes (earlier arrivals and later returns).
  - (b) Reviewing layover times in Taupō and options for providing longer town access, particularly on longer routes.

- (c) Reassessing Acacia Bay frequency and Kinloch connectivity if an additional vehicle becomes available.
- (d) Further work on vehicle strategy, including opportunities to upsize vehicles permanently on high-demand routes.
- (e) Undertaking a broader Taupō and South Waikato network review, including a diversion on the Taupō Connector service to the airport and whether the Tokoroa Connector could extend to Mangakino or support the Tokoroa-Taupō corridor.

#### **TE URUTAI KI TE HURIHANGA ĀHUARANGI | ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 44. This decision will increase the ability of the Council or region to proactively respond to the impacts of climate change now or in the future.
- 45. Any public transport service has the ability to reduce the number of motor vehicles on the roads, thereby reducing emissions and assisting in Councils ability to proactively respond to climate change.
- 46. The decision is sensitive to higher emission scenarios or more rapid climate change.

#### **TE WHAKAMAURU – TE WHAKAHEKE I NGĀ PĀNGA KI TE ĀHUARANGI | MITIGATION – REDUCING IMPACTS ON THE CLIMATE**

- 47. This decision is likely to result in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **TE HAUTŪ ĀHUARANGI | CLIMATE LEADERSHIP**

- 48. This decision supports Council’s climate leadership by strengthening access to public transport on high-demand corridors, helping reduce private vehicle use and associated emissions in the Taupō District and Waikato Region.

#### **TE AROMATAWAI I TE HIRANGA | ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **TE HOROPAKI Ā-TURE | LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

- 49. The RLTP and the RPTP is prepared under the direction of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA). The recommendations presented in this report are considered to meet the requirements of the LTMA

#### **KŌWHIRINGA I MANAKOHIA | PREFERRED OPTION**

- 50. That the RTC Public Transport Subcommittee endorses the proposed changes to the Connect-2-Taupō for implementation in September 2026 as outlined in **Attachment 1** and described above.

**NGĀ WHAIWHAKAARO KAUPAPAHERE | POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

51. To the best of the writer’s knowledge, this decision is not significantly inconsistent with, not is anticipated to have consequences that will be significantly inconsistent with any policy adopted by Council or any plan required by the LGA or any other enactment

**TE TIRITI O WAITANGI | THE TREATY OF WAITANGI**

52. The Committee is obligated under the LGA to recognise and respect the Crown’s responsibility to take appropriate account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.
53. The Connect2Taupōservice will provide equitable transport options that enable Māori to access locations and services in the Taupo District. Approval is sought to implemented changes to the services which will improve access on high-demand services.

**WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

54. The proposed service changes to the Connect2Taupō network remain a balanced and evidence-based response to the operational constraints identified through the 2025 service review. They continue to offer clear benefits in terms of improved capacity, reliability, and alignment of services with demand, particularly on the highest-use routes.
55. However, since the March 2026 report, the context for decision-making has shifted. The revised implementation timeframe, limited opportunity to influence end-of-trial outcomes, uncertainty regarding future funding, and evolving stakeholder views — particularly from Taupō District Council — introduce additional considerations that were not previously present.
56. While staff maintain that the recommended changes are operationally sound, these factors increase the importance of carefully weighing the trade-offs, including whether the benefits of implementing the changes for a limited period outweigh the risks and constraints now identified.
57. The Subcommittee is therefore asked to consider not only the merits of the proposed changes themselves, but also the timing, strategic context, and implications for future planning when forming its final recommendation.

**ĀPITIHINGA | ATTACHMENTS**

1. **2026 Connect2Taupō Survey Results & Proposed Service Changes (Doc # 34688303)** [↓](#)
2. **Letter from Taupō Mayor John Funnell on Tūrangi–Taupō Public Transport Services (Doc # 36045113)** [↓](#)

## Connect-2-Taupo 2025 survey results and proposed changes for bus routes #34, #35, #36, #37 and #38

In October 2022 five new ‘Connect-2-Taupo’ (C2T) bus routes were introduced in the Taupo District. These routes and their operating days are listed below:

- 1) Acacia Bay to Taupo (#34)
  - a. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday
- 2) Kinloch to Taupo (#35)
  - a. Wednesday
- 3) Turangi to Taupo (#36)
  - a. Monday and Thursday
- 4) Tokoroa to Taupo (#37)
  - a. Tuesday and Friday
- 5) Wairakei to Taupo (#38)
  - a. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

The service is currently operated by one 12-seater shuttle that interchanges between the different routes throughout the day. **Table 1** below shows this schedule. Having one vehicle operate between five separate routes and communities efficiently and effectively can be difficult to manage and makes any timetable or route changes complicated.

**Table 1. The current vehicle and route schedule**

Monday	Acacia Bay 8.30 - 9.25	Wairaki 9.35 - 10.20	Turangi 10.45 - 12.35	Wairaki 13.30 - 14.15	Acacia Bay 14.45 - 15.40	Turangi 15.50 - 17.40
Tuesday	Wairaki 7.00 - 7.45	Tokoroa 8.00 - 11.14	Wairaki 12.15 - 13.00	Tokoroa 13.15 - 16.34		
Wednesday	Kinloch 8.20 - 9.35	Wairaki 9.35 - 10.20	Acacia Bay 10.35 - 11.30	Wairaki 13.30 - 14.15	Kinloch 14.30 - 15.45	Acacia Bay 15.50 - 16.45
Thursday	Acacia Bay 8.30 - 9.25	Wairaki 9.35 - 10.20	Turangi 10.45 - 12.35	Wairaki 13.30 - 14.15	Acacia Bay 14.45 - 15.40	Turangi 15.50 - 17.40
Friday	Wairaki 7.00 - 7.45	Tokoroa 8.00 - 11.14	Wairaki 12.15 - 13.00	Tokoroa 13.15 - 16.34		

Following community feedback and the upcoming decision by Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) on the permanency of the C2T services, a review of the service was undertaken in mid-2025 to assess the service and recommend service changes (see “*Connect-2-Taupo 2025 Service Review for bus routes #34, #35, #36, #37 and #38*” Discover ID #32202945). Following the service review and proposed recommendation for service changes, WRC went out for public consultation on the proposed changes with all six communities for three weeks in November 2025. This document analyses the survey results and suggests final recommendations for proposed service changes on the Connect-2-Taupo service.

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# 1 Summary of Proposed Changes

The proposed changes to the Connect-2-Taupo (C2T) services that were consulted on are summarized in the following sections. Minor changes to the proposed timetable that was shown in the *Connect-2-Taupo 2025 Service Review for bus routes #34, #35, #36, #37 and #38* document were made prior to consultation as detailed timetable work resulted in vehicle utilisation adjustments. Timetables were also run past the operator (Tranzit) who raised a few concerns regarding adequate layover time, particularly when utilising the spare Taupo Connector bus as it needed to arrive or return to Taupo with adequate time before/after its scheduled Taupo Connector trips.

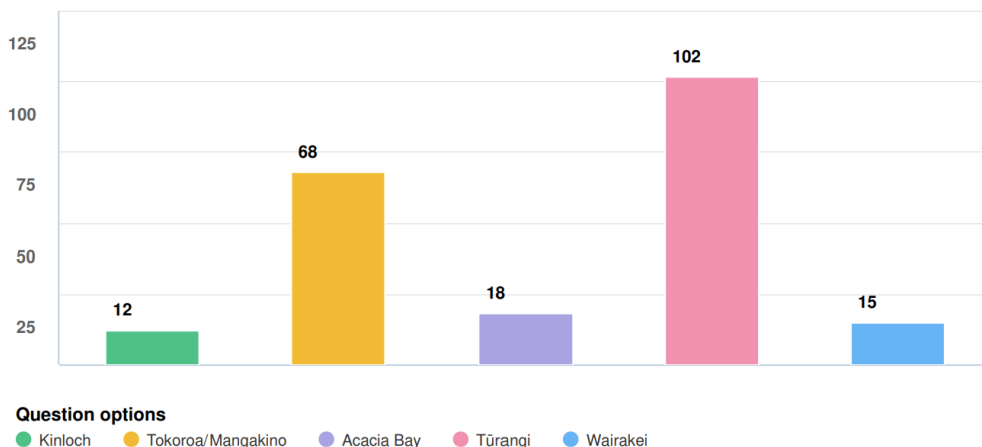
Overall, the proposed changes involve:

- Increasing trips on routes with higher demand (Tokoroa/Mangakino and Tūrangi)
- Reducing trips on routes with lower demand (Acacia Bay and Wairakei)
- Introducing a larger bus to better serve busy routes and where it is possible to do so
- Adjusting trip times to allow better vehicle utilisation and passenger travel times

The following sections break down the changes per route and summarise the feedback on the proposed changes.

# 2 Survey Results

Overall, we received 183 responses split by the below routes.



Mandatory Question (183 response(s))

## 2.1 #34 Acacia Bay

Currently, Acacia Bay receives three return trips a week: Monday, Wednesday and, Thursday. In response to increasing demand on the Tokoroa and Tūrangi routes, we proposed reallocating vehicles. For Acacia Bay, this included removing Wednesday services between Taupō and Acacia Bay, reducing the number of return trips from three to two per week. Patronage data showed Wednesday was the least-used travel day, so we aimed to retain the higher-performing Monday and Thursday services, largely at their existing times. The proposed timetable we consulted on is shown below.

### Acacia Bay timetable

The proposed timetable is below.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Taupō to Acacia Bay	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Taupō	8.20	2.45	No service	No service	No service	No service	8.20	2.45	No service	No service
Acacia Bay	8.50	3.15					8.50	3.15		
Acacia Bay to Taupō										
Acacia Bay	8.55	3.20					8.55	3.20		
Taupō	9.11	3.36					9.11	3.36		

When asked “have you used the Acacia Bay service in the last six months?” 70.6% (12) respondents answers “no” while 29.4% (5) respondents answered “yes”. When asked “What do you usually use this service for (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 3 responses for ‘shopping’,
- 3 responses for ‘social and leisure’,
- 2 responses for ‘medical’,
- 1 response for ‘work’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘education’ or ‘other’.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Acacia Bay service more often? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 3 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 2 responses for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’,
- 2 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 1 response for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 1 response for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’ and,
- 1 response for ‘No barriers for me’
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’, ‘I didn’t know this service existed’ or, ‘other’.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Acacia Bay service? (Select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 5 responses for ‘The service is too infrequent’,
- 3 responses for ‘The service day(s) don’t suit me’,
- 3 responses for ‘The service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 2 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 2 responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,
- 2 responses for ‘Other (please specify)’,
- 1 response for ‘No barriers for me’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’ and ‘I don’t feel safe using it’

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above, respondents (5 in total) highlighted that the proposed timetable is a barrier, with services only operating two days a week and large gaps between morning and afternoon trips. One noted the schedule does not suit working hours, making it impractical for commuting. One mentioned uncertainty about the timetable, while two indicated potential use for family or holiday home visitors. There was also interest in weekend services for visiting family.

When asked "Would the removal of Wednesday trips negatively impact you?" 69.2% (9) of respondents said "no" while 30.8% (4) of respondents said "yes". Finally, we asked if the respondents had any further feedback on the service. Five comments were received where respondents expressed concern that the current timetable is unsuitable for many potential users and that the survey may not fully reflect demand. There were calls to avoid further service reductions, improve publicity, and consider routing via Taupō Airport for better connectivity.

### 2.1.1 Overall Comment and Recommendation

Based on sustained low patronage (311 passengers over 2.5 years) and survey evidence indicating limited recent use (70.6% have not used the service in the last six months), we recommend removing the Wednesday Acacia Bay return trip and retaining Monday and Thursday at their proposed times. This change is justified on two grounds:

1. Efficiency and alignment with demand: Wednesday is the least-used day, while Monday and Thursday perform comparatively better. Consolidating services onto the higher-performing days maintains access for the core use cases (shopping, social/leisure, medical) while enabling necessary vehicle reallocation to meet higher demand on the Tokoroa and Tūrangi routes. Notably, most respondents (69.2%) indicated that removing Wednesday would not negatively impact them.
2. Resource constraints and operational practicality: With one vehicle covering five routes, we are constrained in our ability to add trips or re-time services at present. Reallocating capacity now is required to maintain overall network reliability and respond to demand growth elsewhere, without incurring additional cost or compromising performance.

While timing and frequency are cited barriers, these do not negate the need for immediate reallocation. Instead, they set the direction for future improvements. We will consider timetable adjustments - targeting reduced gaps between trips and better alignment with working hours - when vehicle utilization allows. In the interim, we will aim to improve publicity for the retained services and monitor patronage to assess the impact of this change and identify feasible enhancements, including potential weekend options or airport connectivity if evidence supports them. This recommendation balances local access with whole-of-network efficiency and is proportionate to demonstrated demand, operational constraints, and respondent feedback.

## 2.2 #35 Kinloch

The Kinloch service currently operates one return trip per week connecting with Taupō on Wednesdays. Due to low usage, we proposed two possible timetable options moving forward:

- Option one retained a one-day-a-week service on Wednesdays with a slight change in trip times, giving customers less time in Taupō - four hours as opposed to five.
- Option two increased the service to three return trips per week by re-routing the Tokoroa to Taupō service via Kinloch. This option involved significant changes to arrival and departure times, with customers having the choice of either six hours in Tokoroa and two hours in Taupō.

We sought feedback on which option was preferable and invited suggestions to improve usage, noting that the long-term viability of the service may be at risk without increased demand. The proposed timetables we consulted on are shown below.

### Timetable option one

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Taupō to Kinloch	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Taupō	No service		No service		7.45	1.00	No service		No service	
Kinloch					8.25	1.40				
<b>Kinloch to Taupō</b>	No service		No service				No service		No service	
Kinloch					8.30	1.45				
Taupō					9.00	2.15				

### Timetable option two

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday					
Taupō to Kinloch	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM				
Taupō	No service		7.50	1.40	7.50	1.40	No service		7.50	1.40				
Kinloch			8.10	2.00	8.10	2.00			8.10	2.00				
Tokoroa			9.32	3.22	9.32	3.22			9.32	3.22				
<b>Kinloch to Taupō</b>			No service		No service				No service		No service			
Tokoroa	9.45	3.35					9.45	3.35					9.45	3.35
Kinloch	11.20	5.10					11.20	5.10					11.20	5.10
Taupō	11.40	5.30					11.40	5.30					11.40	5.30

When asked “have you used the Kinloch service in the last six months?” 66.7% (8) respondents answers “no” while 33.2% (4) respondents answered “yes”. When asked “What do you usually use this service for (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 2 responses for ‘shopping’,
- 1 response for ‘social and leisure’,
- 1 response for ‘medical’,
- 1 response for ‘work’,
- 1 response for ‘education’ and,
- 1 response for ‘other’

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Kinloch service more often? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 4 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 2 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,

- 1 response for 'I didn't know this service existed',
- 0 people indicated responses for 'the service day(s) don't suit me', 'I don't feel safe using it', 'The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home', 'The bus isn't big enough (not enough seating)' or 'No barriers for me'

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above, one respondent noted that the morning service works well but the afternoon service is too early for commuters who work a full-time job while another respondent requested the service to remain. When asked "What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Kinloch service more often? (select all that apply)", responses included:

- 5 responses for 'the service day(s) don't suit me',
- 4 responses for 'the service is too infrequent',
- 3 responses for 'the service time(s) don't suit me',
- 2 responses for 'The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home',
- 1 response for 'The bus isn't big enough (not enough seating)',
- 1 response for 'No barriers for me',
- 1 response for 'other' and,
- 0 people indicated responses for 'I don't feel safe using it' or 'I didn't know this service existed'.

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above, two respondents suggested that they would use the service if it operated on weekends while another noted that they wouldn't use a Kinloch to Taupo service at all. When asked "Looking at the timetable options above, which would you prefer?", responses included:

- 36.4% (4) respondents answered "Option one: One day a week service with more time in Taupō"
- 36.4% (4) respondents answered "Neither option works for me (please explain)"
- 27.3% (3) respondents answered "Option two: Three day a week service but less time in Taupō AND a connection to Tokoroa"

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above, one respondent noted that the current timetable has too long in Taupo and also suggested additional stops (eg. By Pak 'n Save) in Taupo while another respondent requested that the return trip to Taupo leave later, around 3pm.

The service has had only 142 passengers since launch (Nov 2022-April 2025)

### 2.2.1 Overall Comment and Recommendation

Given the extremely low patronage and operational constraints, we recommend retaining a one-day-a-week service on Wednesdays with a slight timetable adjustment to allow four hours in Taupō (Option One). While Option Two offers the advantage of testing demand under more realistic conditions before the trial ends, the capacity limitations of the 12-seater shuttle present a significant operational risk. Diverting via Kinloch could result in Tokoroa passengers losing seats to Kinloch riders, creating frustration and undermining confidence in the service. Given that the Tokoroa–Taupō route already experiences capacity issues, introducing an additional boarding point without increasing vehicle size would likely exacerbate these problems. It is also not possible at this point to increase the vehicle size on the Tokoroa–Taupō service.

Therefore, the recommendation is to retain Option One – a one-day-a-week service for Kinloch with improved time in Taupō - while implementing targeted measures to boost awareness and monitor demand. This approach avoids compromising the Tokoroa service, which is already under pressure, and ensures reliability for existing users.

WRC staff consider this to be the best approach for the below reasons:

1. Demand does not justify expansion: With only 142 passengers over 2.5 years and most respondents indicating infrequency and timing as barriers, increasing to three days per week would significantly increase costs and complexity without clear evidence of improved uptake.

2. Capacity risk outweighs trial uplift benefits: Testing demand through Option Two would be valuable, but not at the cost of leaving Tokoroa passengers behind or creating inequity between communities. Service reliability is critical for maintaining trust and usage.
3. Operational constraints are fixed: The inability to upgrade to a larger vehicle (due to school transport commitments) means we cannot mitigate the capacity issue in the short term. Adding Kinloch to the Tokoroa route without increasing capacity introduces a high likelihood of negative user experience.
4. Trial objectives can still be met: While we cannot test frequency uplift for Kinloch now, we can strengthen evidence through improved publicity, monitoring, and targeted engagement. This will help inform the final assessment without risking disruption to other routes.
5. Alignment with feedback: While some respondents requested weekend services and later return times, these changes cannot be implemented immediately due to vehicle utilization limits and available budgets. However, the proposed adjustment under Option One improves time in Taupō and maintains a connection for essential trips, which aligns with the most preferred option among respondents.
6. Future scenario remains open: If additional resources or vehicle flexibility become available before the trial ends, Option Two could be reconsidered. For now, the priority is network stability and equitable access.

Moving forward, we aim to monitor patronage closely to assess whether demand changes following timetable adjustments, improve publicity for the service to increase awareness and will continue to consider future enhancements - such as weekend trips, later return times, and additional stops - when resources allow and if demand supports these changes. This recommendation balances maintaining access for Kinloch residents with the need to manage resources efficiently across the network.

### 2.3 #36 Tūrangi

In response to increasing demand and capacity constraints, we proposed the following changes for Tūrangi:

- Increasing the number of weekly return services between Tūrangi and Taupō from two to three, with the additional trip scheduled for Friday.
- Operating all service days with a larger bus instead of the existing smaller shuttle.
- Introducing new times for all trips.

The proposed timetable we consulted on is shown below. *Note that since consultation minor changes to these times have been made in response to feedback from the operators. These changes are not considered to impact the quality of the feedback.*

#### Tūrangi timetable

The proposed timetable is below.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Taupō to Tūrangi	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Taupō	8.30	1.00	No service	No service	No service	No service	8.30	1.00	8.30	1.00
Tūrangi	9.32	2.02					9.32	2.02	9.32	2.02
Tūrangi to Taupō										
Tūrangi	9.37	2.04					9.37	2.04	9.37	2.04
Taupō	10.39	3.06					10.39	3.06	10.39	3.06

When asked “have you used the Tūrangi service in the last six months?” 51% (50) of respondents answers “no” while 49% (48) of respondents answered “yes”. When asked “What do you usually use this service for (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 31 responses for ‘shopping’,
- 18 responses for ‘social and leisure’,
- 11 responses for ‘medical’,
- 7 responses for ‘work’,
- 2 responses for ‘education’ and,
- 5 responses for ‘other’

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Tūrangi service more often? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 26 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 22 responses for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’
- 15 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 11 responses for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’
- 4 responses for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’,
- 2 responses for ‘No barriers for me’,
- 2 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 1 response for ‘other’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current timetable and service frequency. Key themes include:

- Need for weekday commuter service: Multiple comments requested buses operating five days a week, with early departures (around 7:00–8:00 am) to reach Taupō by 8:00–9:00 am and return trips around 5:30 pm to accommodate workers.

- More flexibility and additional runs: Suggestions included multiple trips per day for appointments, errands, and visitors, as well as later return times for school activities and shorter visits.
- Hospital and town access: Calls for routing via Taupō Hospital and key destinations (e.g., Spa Road, Pak'nSave) to improve usability.
- Current timetable issues: The proposed new schedule was criticized for allowing only 2.5 hours in Taupō, which is seen as insufficient. Some respondents noted the need for Tuesday or Wednesday runs and mentioned specific use cases (e.g., Gold Card discounts on Tuesdays).
- Capacity concerns: Limited seating means some passengers miss out, especially when the bus is already full from Motuoapa.
- Safety and comfort: One comment raised concerns about driver behavior and heating on the bus.
- Community engagement: Strong sentiment that the service needs better consultation.

Overall, feedback emphasizes greater frequency, better timing for commuters, improved routing, and increased capacity, with frustration over the current limitations and urgency for meaningful improvements.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Tūrangi service? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 22 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 16 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 14 responses for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’,
- 9 responses for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’,
- 9 responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,
- 7 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 4 responses for ‘other’,
- 1 response for ‘No barriers for me’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’.

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above respondents highlighted several key issues and suggestions:

- Capacity and seat availability: The service is often full, leaving passengers from SH1 villages (e.g., Motuoapa, Kuratau) without seats. Some suggested a pre-booking system to guarantee seats.
- Need for a larger bus and more time in Taupō: Current time in Taupō is considered too short, limiting usefulness for errands and appointments.
- Commuter-friendly scheduling: Strong calls for weekday services with early morning departures (around 7:00 am) and late afternoon returns (around 5:30 pm) to support workers. Current timings are seen as catering mainly to retirees.
- Additional frequency and flexibility: Suggestions for two return trips per day or weekend services for markets and recreation.
- Awareness and accessibility: Some respondents were unaware of the service and requested better advertising. Others noted the importance of the service for those without cars or with health conditions.
- Routing and stops: Requests for stops in Motuoapa and consideration of hospital access.
- Community isolation concerns: Feedback emphasized the importance of reliable public transport for reducing isolation and supporting future needs.
- Other comments: One respondent suggested council staff use the service to fill seats and reduce costs.

Overall, feedback underscores capacity issues, insufficient frequency, poor alignment with work schedules, and low awareness, alongside strong demand for a more practical and inclusive service.

Regarding the additional day of service, we asked the community “Please pick which additional day(s) you would use the Tūrangi service if they became available (Select all that apply)” (the service currently operates Monday and Thursday). 67 people selected Friday, 58 selected Wednesday, and 45 selected Tuesday. Subsequently, it appears that the proposed additional service day being on a Friday is the preferred option.

We asked the community “Looking at the above proposed timetable, will your use of this service be negatively impacted by the proposed change in timetable?”. 77.1% (64) of respondents answered ‘no’ while 22.9% (19) of respondents answered ‘yes’.

Lastly, we asked the community “if you have any further comments about the Tūrangi service, please include them”. Feedback strongly reinforced the importance of the Tūrangi–Taupō service to the community, particularly for those without access to private vehicles, older residents, and people needing access to employment, health services, and shopping in Taupō. Many respondents described the service as valuable, economical, and well-operated, with frequent praise for drivers. However, several recurring concerns were raised:

- Timing and suitability for work: Current and proposed times were widely seen as unsuitable for commuters, with repeated requests for early morning departures and later afternoon or evening return trips.
- Capacity constraints: A dominant theme was the need for a larger bus, with many reporting being turned away due to lack of seats, particularly after Motuoapa pickups.
- Risk of being stranded: Some respondents avoid using the service altogether due to concern about not securing a return seat.
- Frequency and permanence: Calls were made for more frequent services, weekend trips (including Saturdays), and for the service to be made permanent rather than trial-based.
- Routing and stops: Suggestions included stops at Motuoapa, Taupō Hospital, Taupō Airport, and improved or clearer bus stop locations.
- Equity and isolation: Respondents emphasized Tūrangi’s relative isolation and the role of the service in supporting mobility, ageing in place, employment access, road safety, and emissions reduction.
- Awareness and engagement: Some requested better communication, clearer information on pickup/drop-off points, and stronger engagement with the Tūrangi community.

Overall, while the service is highly valued and seen as having significant potential, feedback indicates that capacity, timing, and frequency are currently limiting its effectiveness, particularly for working-age residents.

### 2.3.1 Overall Comment and Recommendation

Consultation feedback showed strong community value for the Tūrangi–Taupō service, particularly for people without private vehicles, older residents, and those accessing shopping, medical appointments and social connections in Taupō. Use in the last six months was relatively evenly split (49% yes / 51% no), suggesting both an established user base and a sizeable group of potential users who are currently constrained by service design.

Across the survey, the most consistent barriers were infrequency (26 responses) and insufficient capacity (22 responses), followed by timetable fit (times and days). The free-text feedback reinforced these themes, with frequent reports of people being turned away due to full vehicles - especially when boarding after Motuoapa - and concern about being stranded in Taupō if a return seat is not available. Respondents also expressed a strong desire for commuter-oriented timing (early departures and later returns), additional service days (including Tuesday/Wednesday for SuperGold users), weekend services, and improved access to key destinations such as Taupō Hospital and the airport.

While these requests highlight unmet need, they also exceed what is operationally feasible at this time given vehicle and driver constraints, and the requirement to maintain reliability across the wider network.

#### Recommended Service Change Package

It is recommended that the following changes to the Tūrangi–Taupō service are implemented:

1. Increase service frequency from two to three return trips per week: Add an additional return service on Friday, resulting in services operating Monday, Thursday and Friday.

2. Operate all Tūrangi service days using a larger bus (replacing the shuttle): Transition all trips on the Tūrangi route to a larger vehicle to address persistent capacity constraints and reduce the incidence of passengers being left behind.
3. Implement the revised timetable (including minor post-consultation refinements): Proceed with the consulted timetable, noting that minor changes have been made following operator feedback. These amendments do not materially change the intent of the proposal or the feedback received.

#### Rationale for Recommendation

The recommended package prioritises the two most significant barriers identified through consultation: service frequency and insufficient seating capacity.

- Capacity and reliability are the most urgent issues to address: Survey results and open comments indicate frequent instances of the vehicle reaching capacity which discourages use and increases concern about being stranded in Taupō. Deploying a larger bus is the most direct and effective response to this issue.
- Friday is the most supported additional service day and is operationally feasible: When asked which additional day(s) would be used, Friday received the highest level of support. While some respondents (including SuperGold users) expressed a preference for Tuesday, the vehicle is scheduled to operate elsewhere on Tuesdays. Friday therefore represents the best alignment between community preference and operational availability.
- Timetable constraints reflect fleet utilisation and school transport commitments: Consultation feedback strongly requested earlier departures from Tūrangi and later returns from Taupō to support employment travel. These changes are not feasible at this time due to vehicle utilisation requirements:
  - Earlier inbound trips would require the vehicle to remain in Tūrangi overnight, which is not possible as the vehicle is used on other services.
  - As the service is moving to a larger bus to resolve capacity constraints, that bus must also meet school transport commitments in Taupō in the early morning and late afternoon, limiting the ability to extend operating hours.
- Shorter time in Taupō is a trade-off to achieve additional frequency and capacity: The revised timetable proposes approximately a two-hour layover in Taupō, compared to just over 3.5 hours currently. This change reflects the operational trade-off required to deliver a larger bus and an additional service day while maintaining fleet availability for school services. The recommendation therefore prioritises seat availability, reliability, and network deliverability over longer dwell time in Taupō.
- Airport access is better addressed through local Taupō services rather than the regional connector: While an airport stop was suggested, routing the Tūrangi service via Taupō Airport would create an unnecessary detour and reduce travel efficiency on a route intended to connect Tūrangi and Taupō as directly as possible. Airport connectivity should be considered through the local Taupō network or connecting services where detours can be accommodated more efficiently.

## 2.4 #37 Tokoroa / Mangakino

In response to increasing demand and capacity constraints on the Tokoroa–Mangakino corridor, we proposed increasing the number of weekly services between Tokoroa and Taupō from two to three, with the additional trip scheduled for Wednesday. We also proposed new trip times for all services, noting that trips *may* route via Kinloch, which would add approximately seven minutes to the journey. All trips were proposed to continue operating with the existing shuttle as a larger bus is unable to complete the return trips and be back in Taupō in time to meet school transport commitments on the Taupo Connector service.

The proposed timetable we consulted on is shown below.

The proposed timetable is below.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Taupō to Tokoroa	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Taupō	No service		7.50	1.40	7.50	1.40	No service		7.50	1.40
Kinloch			8.10	2.00	8.10	2.00			8.10	2.00
Mangakino			8.56	2.46	8.56	2.46			8.56	2.46
Whakamaru Village			9.07	2.57	9.07	2.57			9.07	2.57
Tokoroa			9.32	3.22	9.32	3.22			9.32	3.22
Tokoroa to Taupō			No service							
Tokoroa	9.45	3.35			9.45	3.35	9.45	3.35		
Whakamaru Village	10.15	4.05			10.15	4.05	10.15	4.05		
Mangakino	10.34	4.24			10.34	4.24	10.34	4.24		
Kinloch	11.20	5.10			11.20	5.10	11.20	5.10		
Taupō	11.40	5.30			11.40	5.30	11.40	5.30		

When asked “Have you used the Tokoroa/Mangakino service in the last six months?” 52.2% (35) of respondents answered “no” while 47.8% (32) of respondents answered “yes”. When asked “What do you usually use this service for (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 23 responses for ‘shopping’,
- 16 responses for ‘social and leisure’,
- 8 responses for ‘medical’,
- 3 responses for ‘work’,
- 2 responses for ‘other’ and,
- 0 responses for ‘education’

We then asked “Which of the following trips would you take using the Tokoroa/Mangakino service? (Select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 16 responses for “To Taupō from Mangakino”
- 15 responses for “To Mangakino from Tokoroa”
- 14 responses for “To Mangakino from Taupō”
- 13 responses for “To Tokoroa from Mangakino”
- 7 responses for “To Taupō from Tokoroa” and,
- 5 responses for “To Tokoroa from Taupō”

The pattern of intended trips suggests the Tokoroa/Mangakino service is primarily being used (or is most valued) as a connector for Mangakino residents travelling to and from Taupō and Tokoroa. Interest in end-to-end travel between Tokoroa and Taupō is notably lower than travel involving Mangakino, indicating that the service functions more as two linked local markets (Mangakino–Taupō and Mangakino–Tokoroa) rather than a single inter-town route dominated by full corridor trips. Because this was multi-select, the counts reflect *relative interest* rather than a clean split of riders. But the ranking and gaps are still meaningful for interpreting travel behaviour.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Tokoroa/Mangakino service more often? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 10 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 9 responses for ‘No barriers for me’,
- 8 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 8 responses for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’
- 6 responses for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’
- 2 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 1 response for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’,
- 1 response for ‘other’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above respondents highlighted the high personal value of the Tokoroa–Mangakino–Taupō service, particularly for individuals without access to a car, enabling them to attend medical appointments and complete essential shopping. However, several issues were raised:

- Insufficient time in Taupō: The current two-hour layover is seen as too short, especially given the long travel time, creating stress and limiting the ability to complete shopping or appointments. Some respondents suggested even a modest increase (e.g. 30 minutes) would help.
- Capacity constraints: The shuttle can be full on return legs, particularly when travelling from Tokoroa back toward Mangakino and Taupō, leading to concern about securing a seat.
- Travel efficiency concerns: Respondents noted the imbalance between long travel times and short periods at the destination.
- Suitability for different users: Long waits were highlighted as particularly difficult for older passengers, while others noted they use the service only occasionally.
- Interest in expanded service: Suggestions included weekday connections aligned with working hours and the possibility of weekend services.

Overall, feedback reflects strong reliance on the service for essential trips, but indicates that short dwell times, long travel durations, and occasional capacity issues reduce its practicality and comfort, particularly for older and vulnerable users.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Tokoroa/Mangakino service? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 11 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 9 responses for ‘No barriers for me’,
- 7 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 7 responses for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’,
- 6 responses for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’,
- 6 responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,
- 6 responses for ‘other’,
- 5 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 1 response for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’.

When asked to provide context to any of their answers to the question above respondents indicated that the short time allowed in Taupō is the main barrier to using the service. With travel times of around two hours each way, the current timetable leaves less than two hours in Taupō, which many feel is insufficient for appointments, shopping, or other activities—particularly for older users without private transport. Several respondents suggested a later return or at least an extra hour in Taupō to make the trip worthwhile. Additional feedback included calls for better public awareness of the service, clarity on pickup locations and accessibility, interest in weekend services, and questions about additional stops such as Mokaī.

Regarding the additional day of service, we asked the community “Please pick which additional day(s) you would use the Tokoroa/Mangakino service if they became available (Select all that apply)” (the service currently operates Tuesday and Friday). 47 people selected Wednesday (the proposed additional day), 32 selected Thursday, and 21 selected Monday. Subsequently, it appears that the proposed additional service day being on a Wednesday is the preferred option.

We asked the community “Looking at the above proposed timetable, will your use of this service be negatively impacted by the proposed change in timetable?”. 85.2% (52) of respondents answered ‘no’ while 14.8% (9) of respondents answered ‘yes’.

When asked for final comments on the service, feedback reinforced the high value of the Tokoroa/Mangakino service as an essential transport option for communities with limited access to private vehicles, particularly older residents, families, and disabled users. Many described the service as a lifeline, enabling access to shopping, healthcare, and social connections. The most consistent concerns were:

- Insufficient time in Taupō, with two hours widely viewed as too short to justify the long travel time. Respondents requested earlier arrivals and later departures (e.g. around 4:00 pm) to allow a meaningful day trip.
- Capacity and vehicle size, with frequent calls for a bigger bus, especially during peak periods such as summer, to avoid crowding and passengers missing out.
- Accessibility issues, including steep and narrow stairs that limit use by older people and those with mobility impairments.
- Service frequency, with suggestions for a Monday-to-Friday service and, in some cases, weekend operations to better support employment, errands, and family visits.
- Route and stop suggestions, including requests to serve Mokai and minimise looping or detours that reduce time at destinations.

#### 2.4.1 Overall Comment and Recommendations

Consultation feedback confirms that the Tokoroa–Mangakino–Taupō service provides essential access for communities with limited transport options, particularly older residents, disabled users, and those without access to a private vehicle. Almost half of respondents (47.8%) have used the service in the past six months, while the remaining responses indicate considerable latent demand constrained by service design rather than lack of need.

Current use is concentrated on Mangakino-based trips, with the service primarily functioning as a connector for Mangakino residents travelling to and from Taupō and Tokoroa. Interest in full end-to-end travel between Tokoroa and Taupō is comparatively lower, suggesting the route operates as two linked travel markets rather than a single inter-town commuter corridor. Across both quantitative and qualitative responses, the most consistently identified barriers were:

- Short time in Taupō, with the current layover of less than two hours widely viewed as insufficient given the long travel time.
- Infrequency, with strong support for additional service days.
- Capacity constraints, with multiple respondents experiencing or anticipating full vehicles, particularly on return trips.
- Accessibility challenges, including bus ingress/egress difficulties for older and mobility-impaired users.
- Desire for expanded service, including weekday commuter-style trips and weekend services, which reflect broader unmet mobility needs but extend beyond current operational constraints.

While these concerns are significant, it is notable that 85.2% of respondents indicated that the proposed timetable changes would not negatively impact their use, and there was clear support for adding an additional service day - Wednesday being the preferred option.

To note is that the proposed timetable that was used in the consultation included a diversion via Kinloch (see the Kinloch section), however, as per the subsequence recommendation to *not* divert via Kinloch due to capacity constraints, the final timetable is therefore different from what was proposed and is shown below.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Mangakino / Tokoroa										
Depart Taupo	No service		8:30	13:15	9:10	14:30	No service		8:30	13:15
Arrive Mangakino			9:29	14:14	10:09	15:29			9:29	14:14
Arrive Whakamaru Village			9:40	14:25	10:20	15:40			9:40	14:25
Arrive Tokoroa			10:05	14:50	10:45	16:05			10:05	14:50
Depart Tokoroa			10:15	15:00	10:55	16:15			10:15	15:00
Arrive Whakamaru Village			10:45	15:30	11:10	16:45			10:45	15:30
Arrive Managakino			11:04	15:49	11:44	17:04			11:04	15:49
Arrive Taupo			11:50	16:35	12:30	17:50			11:50	16:35

**Recommendation**

Based on the feedback received, we recommend proceeding with the proposed changes to the Tokoroa/Mangakino service as consulted (with minor timetable changes as explained above), with the following approach:

- Increase weekly services from two to three return trips, adding a Wednesday service: This responds directly to the most commonly identified barrier - service infrequency - and aligns with community preference, with Wednesday receiving the highest level of support as an additional service day.
- Implement the revised timetable, excluding the potential routing via Kinloch: The proposed timetable is supported by the majority of users and enables improved service coverage within existing operational constraints. As per recommendations identified in the Kinloch section of this report, the detour via Kinloch is not proposed due to capacity constraints.
- Continue operating the service using the existing shuttle: While feedback strongly favoured a larger vehicle, this is not operationally feasible at this time. The shuttle must continue to be used as a larger bus cannot complete the Tokoroa/Mangakino return trips and still return to Taupō in time to meet school transport commitments on the Taupō Connector service. Maintaining a reliable, deliverable service is therefore prioritised.
- Acknowledge the Taupō layover trade-off and monitor impacts: Feedback indicates a desire for longer time in Taupō. However, within current fleet and scheduling constraints, extending the layover would compromise service deliverability or frequency. The proposed changes prioritise additional service days and network reliability over longer dwell time. It is recommended that layover adequacy and customer impacts continue to be monitored for future review.
- Position further enhancements as future considerations: Feedback regarding weekend services, expanded weekday travel, improved accessibility, additional stops (e.g. Mokai), and increased awareness should inform longer-term planning, subject to fleet capacity, funding, and trial outcomes.

**Rationale**

This recommendation strikes a deliberate balance between community need and operational feasibility. Feedback demonstrates strong reliance on the service for essential trips, particularly for Mangakino residents, and clear support for increased frequency. Adding an additional service day provides a meaningful improvement that is deliverable within current constraints, without compromising the reliability of other routes.

While concerns regarding dwell time, capacity and accessibility remain, these reflect structural constraints rather than issues that can be resolved immediately. Deferring frequency improvements in favour of attempting timetable perfection would limit the service’s usefulness for many users and fail to respond to the strongest signal from consultation - that more days matter most. Proceeding with the proposed changes therefore represents a proportionate and justified response to feedback, while creating a stronger evidence base for future decisions on service permanence and enhancement.

## 2.5 #38 Wairakei

Due to increasing demand on the Tokoroa and Tūrangi routes, we identified the need to reallocate vehicles across the network. For Wairakei, we proposed removing Friday services between Taupō and Wairakei, reducing the number of weekly return trips from five to four, and adjusting Tuesday’s service time to align with other operating days, as those times had demonstrated stronger usage. We also proposed operating two service days (Tuesday and Wednesday) with a larger bus, while retaining a shuttle bus on Monday and Thursday. Patronage data showed that Friday and Tuesday were the least-used days, so services were proposed to continue on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

The proposed timetable we consulted on is shown below.

The proposed timetable is below.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		
Taupō to Wairakei	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	
Taupō	9.45	1.30	9.45	1.30	9.45	1.30	9.45	1.30	No service		
Wairakei	10.10	1.35	10.10	1.35	10.10	1.35	10.10	1.35			
<b>Wairakei to Taupō</b>											
Wairakei	10.11	1.56	10.11	1.56	10.11	1.56	10.11	1.56			
Taupō	10.30	2.15	10.30	2.15	10.30	2.15	10.30	2.15			

When asked “Have you used the Wairakei service in the last six months?” 76.9% (10) of respondents answered “no” while 23.1% (3) of respondents answered “yes”. When asked “What do you usually use this service for (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 2 responses for ‘social and leisure’,
- 1 response for ‘shopping’,
- 1 response for ‘work’ and,
- 0 responses for ‘education’, ‘medical’ or ‘other’.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Wairakei service more often? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 2 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 1 response for ‘the service is too infrequent’, and
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’, ‘No barriers for me’, ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’, ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’, ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’, ‘I don’t feel safe using it’ and, ‘other’.

When asked to provide further information to the above question, one response supported making the trip times consistent throughout the week but flagged a preference for more time (4 hours) in Taupo. One respondent requested the timetable revert to its original/current timetable.

When asked “What barriers, if any, are there to you using the Wairakei service? (select all that apply)”, responses included:

- 4 responses for ‘the service time(s) don’t suit me’,
- 3 responses for ‘The bus stop is inaccessible/too far away from my home’,
- 2 responses for ‘the service is too infrequent’,
- 2 responses for ‘No barriers for me’,
- 1 response for ‘the service day(s) don’t suit me’
- 1 response for ‘The bus isn’t big enough (not enough seating)’
- 1 response for ‘I didn’t know this service existed’,
- 1 response for ‘other’ and,
- 0 people indicated responses for ‘I don’t feel safe using it’

When asked to provide more context to the above answers, respondents highlighted several issues influencing their ability to use the Wairakei service more often. Some noted a lack of awareness about bus stop locations, while others explained that the current timetable does not suit work hours, particularly for those commuting between Tūrangi and Wairākei on a 7am–4pm schedule. A desire for weekend services (e.g., for golf or leisure) was also mentioned. One respondent noted that the service is appreciated by older residents who do not use online tools, as it provides an important alternative when they are unable to drive or have vehicle difficulties, helping them feel connected rather than isolated.

When asked “would the removal of Friday trips negatively impact you?”, 57.1% (8) of the respondents answered ‘No’ while 42.9% (6) of the respondents answered ‘Yes’. When asked “Looking at the above proposed timetable, will your use of this service be negatively impacted by the proposed change in timetable?”, 78.6% (11) of respondents answered ‘No’, while 21.4% (3) of respondents answered ‘Yes’.

When asked to provide an overall comment on the Wairakei service, respondents expressed overall appreciation for the Wairakei service, noting that it provides an important travel option for residents who may not have access to a car. Several people praised the drivers as friendly and helpful and indicated they intend to use the service more. However, feedback also highlighted that the current timetable does not support work commuters, with strong suggestions to better align trips with standard working hours. One respondent opposed the removal of the Friday service, noting it is valuable to the community. There were also suggestions for routing improvements, including the possibility of the bus stopping at Wairakei on the way to Tokoroa.

### 2.5.1 Overall Comment and Recommendations

Feedback on the Wairakei service indicates that while overall usage is low, the service is valued by the community, particularly by residents without access to a private vehicle and older people who rely on it to remain connected and independent. Several respondents praised the drivers and expressed appreciation for the service continuing to operate. However, feedback also highlighted several key barriers that limit more frequent use:

- Service times do not align with standard working hours, particularly for people commuting between Wairakei and nearby areas like Tūrangi.
- Accessibility and stop location issues, with some respondents unaware of where bus stops are or finding them too far from home.
- Desire for weekend services for leisure and social trips.
- Mixed views on the removal of Friday trips, with 57.1% stating it would not negatively affect them and 42.9% stating it would.

Despite these concerns, the majority (78.6%) indicated that the proposed timetable changes would not negatively affect their ability to use the service. There was also support for having consistent trip times across the week, and feedback confirmed that Friday and Tuesday are the least-used days, aligning with the patronage data used to shape the proposal.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the proposed service changes for Wairakei proceed as consulted:

1. Remove Friday services, reducing weekly return trips from five to four. This reflects both patronage data (Friday being one of the two least-used days) and the majority of feedback indicating no negative impact.
2. Align Tuesday’s service time with the other operating days. This responds directly to feedback supporting consistent timing across the week and improves usability.
3. Operate Tuesday and Wednesday services with a larger bus, and Monday and Thursday with a shuttle. This balances vehicle availability and operational efficiency.

Rationale

This recommendation carefully balances community needs, service performance, and network-wide operational constraints:

- Vehicle reallocation is necessary due to growing demand on the Tokoroa and Tūrangi routes, both of which have higher patronage and more significant capacity challenges.
- Wairakei patronage is low, with only three respondents having used the service in the last six months, and use focused primarily on social and shopping trips rather than essential work or medical travel.
- Friday and Tuesday are the least-used days, consistent with both feedback and long-term patronage data, making Friday removal a proportionate and evidence-based adjustment. The timetable adjustment to align the Tuesday trip time with the other days of the week will hopefully improve patronage on Tuesdays while also ensuring a consistent Monday to Thursday timetable.
- The majority of respondents will not be negatively impacted by the proposed timetable, and feedback confirms that the core service remains useful and appreciated.
- Weekend and commuter-oriented services, while requested by some, cannot be delivered within current fleet and budget constraints, and broader improvements must be considered as part of future planning rather than immediate changes.

Overall, the recommended changes maintain access for those who rely on the Wairakei service, while enabling necessary vehicle redistribution to routes with higher demand pressures - resulting in a more efficient and effective network across Connect-2-Taupō.

### 3 Costs

To implement the proposed changes to the Connect-2-Taupo services (in particular - increasing service days on the two longest routes) does come at an increase in operating costs. Below is the indicative cost of these changes. Overall, it is expected that these changes will result in an increase of the annual operating cost of the contract by \$38,923.

This cost falls within the existing operating budget of the contract and is considered acceptable to WRC staff.

	Change to kms	Change to hours	Costs
Mankakino/Tororoa	20,073.09	332.93	\$ 28,345.38
Wairakei	-2,313.00	-80.97	-\$ 814.77
Kinloch	0.00	-8.67	-\$ 346.11
Acacia Bay	-1,750.32	-122.43	-\$ 6,200.15
Turangi	10,961.00	267.61	\$ 17,939.17
<b>Total changes and overall cost</b>	26,970.77	388.47	<b>\$ 38,923.53</b>

### 4 Next Steps and Implementation

Should WRC proceed with these changes, they can be implemented in May 2026 as part of Councils next network / GTFIS update.

### 5 Future Considerations

While the proposed service recommendations address the most immediate operational pressures within the Connect-2-Taupō network, they do not resolve all underlying challenges. Several communities continue to experience service limitations due to fleet constraints, competing demand pressures, and the need to prioritise reliability across the wider network. As funding and vehicle availability improve, a more comprehensive review will be required to determine long-term network design options that better support community needs, commuter travel patterns, and opportunities for growth.

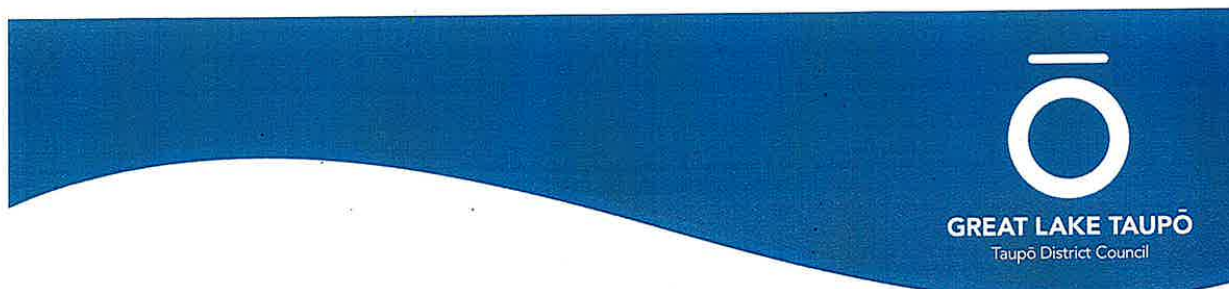
Acacia Bay is a key example where short-term adjustments have been driven by operational necessity rather than a lack of future potential. The reduction in service frequency is intended to free up vehicle capacity in response to growing demand elsewhere, but there remains a need to reassess long-term demand in the area. A return to three (or more) weekly trips should be considered if an additional vehicle becomes available, alongside a broader review of timetable performance and opportunities for enhancement.

For Kinloch, a future diversion of the Tokoroa service may be feasible, but only once a larger vehicle is introduced to that route. Similarly, both Tūrangi and Tokoroa/Mangakino show strong potential for more commuter-oriented timetables, daily service options, and improved layover or dwell times in Taupō. While the proposed changes improve service days for Tūrangi, they also reduce the available time in Taupō - an unavoidable trade-off under current resource constraints. This will need ongoing monitoring, with a view to restoring longer Taupō layover times as resources allow.

Communities such as Wairakei also warrant a future shift toward commuter-focused timetables, reinstatement of daily trips, and weekend options. In addition, wider network adjustments - such as reviewing the Taupō Connector to consider an airport diversion and exploring whether the Tokoroa

Connector could extend to Mangakino or help share the Tokoroa–Taupō travel load - will be important components of a more holistic network redesign.

Overall, while the current changes make the best use of limited resources, there remains significant opportunity to improve service coverage, capacity, and commuter suitability across the Taupō area. A more detailed network-wide assessment will be essential to support the next stage of development and public transport expansion and improvement for the area.



5 May 2026

Liz Stolwyk  
Chair  
Regional Transport Committee  
Waikato Regional Council  
Via email: [Liz.Stolwyk@waikatoregion.govt.nz](mailto:Liz.Stolwyk@waikatoregion.govt.nz)

Phone +64 7 376 0899  
30 Tongariro St, Taupō 3330  
Private Bag 2005, Taupō 3352

Dear Liz

**Re: Tūrangi-Taupō public transport services**

Thank you for our recent conversation and for your ongoing leadership as Chair of the Regional Transport Committee. I appreciate the continued engagement and the work underway to improve public transport outcomes across the Taupō District.

I am writing to reaffirm our strong interest in achieving a practical, reliable public transport connection between Tūrangi and Taupō. This remains an important issue for the Tūrangi community, and we are keen to continue working constructively with Waikato Regional Council to explore how best this can be delivered.

Many Tūrangi residents rely on regular travel to Taupō for work, education, and access to essential services. At the same time, Tūrangi has a resident population of around 5,000 people and plays a key role as a tourism gateway for the wider region. In our view, these factors together justify continued focus on improving connectivity along the Tūrangi-Taupō corridor.

We acknowledge and appreciate the work undertaken by your team on the Connect-2-Taupō service, and thank you for responding to our request to pause the proposed May 2026 changes. Our interest is in ensuring that any service changes strengthen overall usability and patronage. In particular, we remain cautious about changes that may reduce the practicality of the service for commuter or day-trip use, as this is an important driver of demand.

We are also keen to keep an open mind and look beyond traditional service models. There may be alternative or complementary approaches that could better reflect how the Tūrangi to Taupō route is used, such as more commuter-focused or flexible service options. We would welcome further discussion with the Regional Transport team on whether there are opportunities to test or refine different approaches within existing funding frameworks.

In that context, I want to be clear that Taupō District Council does not currently have funding available to contribute to service enhancements, and no formal funding request has been considered by Council. Our focus at this stage is on working collaboratively with WRC to help identify solutions that are effective, well-used, and sustainable over the long term.

We value the partnership with Waikato Regional Council and look forward to further engagement ahead of the June Subcommittee meeting, and to continuing to work together toward outcomes that best support the Tūrangi community.

Best regards



John Funnell  
Mayor  
Taupō District Council

Page 2

Taupō District Council



0800 ASK TDC (275 832)



info@taupo.govt.nz



www.taupo.govt.nz

## 7.5 PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATIONS UPDATE

**Rā | Date:** 25 May 2026

**Kaituhi | Author:** Melissa Smith, Network Monitoring Analyst

**Kaituku | Authoriser:** Phil King, Director, Regional Transport Connections

### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report provides an update to the committee on the performance of the public transport network and operational matters in 2026 Quarter 1 (January to March).

### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Patronage across all services (bus, passenger rail, and on-demand) is steady.
3. Patronage increased in the final month of the quarter (March 2026), aligning with increased interest in the role of public transport due to rising fuel prices.
4. Service reliability is unchanged, but there continues to be opportunity for optimisation.
5. The Passenger Experience Roadmap continues to drive positive operational initiatives, including the installation of dedicated rest and toilet facilities for drivers in Tokoroa, bus shelter lighting upgrades, and driver reward and recognition programs. Council is actively engaging with partners, including territorial authorities and event management teams, to deliver community outreach and coordinated regional transport options for special events.

### TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Public Transport Operations Update* (RTC Public Transport Subcommittee, 8 June 2026) be received.

### HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

6. This report covers general operational business, project updates, and network performance across the region, including bus services, FLEX On-Demand services, and Te Huia passenger rail services.

### TE TAKE | ISSUE

#### Public Transport Network Performance

7. The full public transport operations dashboard is included as an appendix to this report.

#### Bus Performance

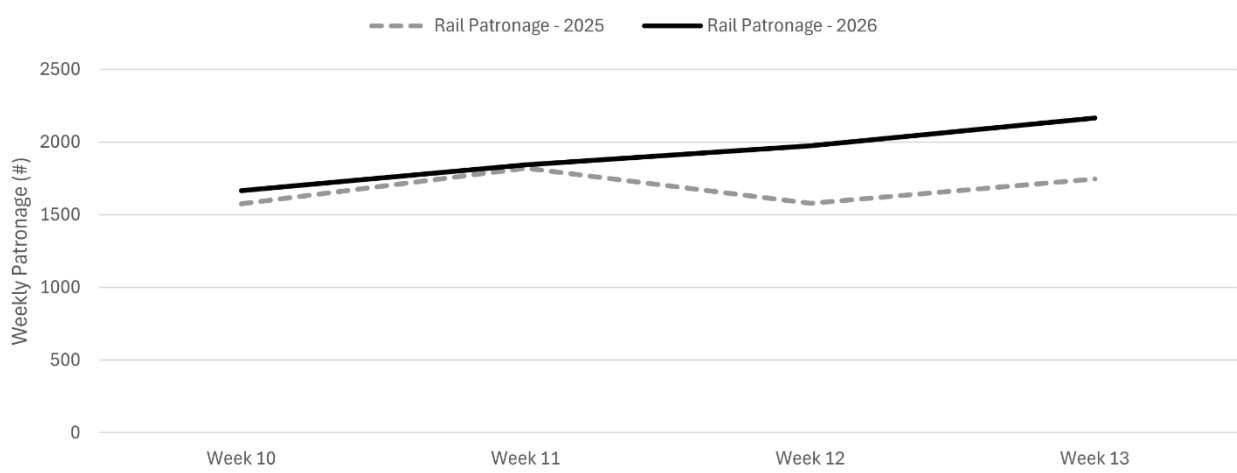
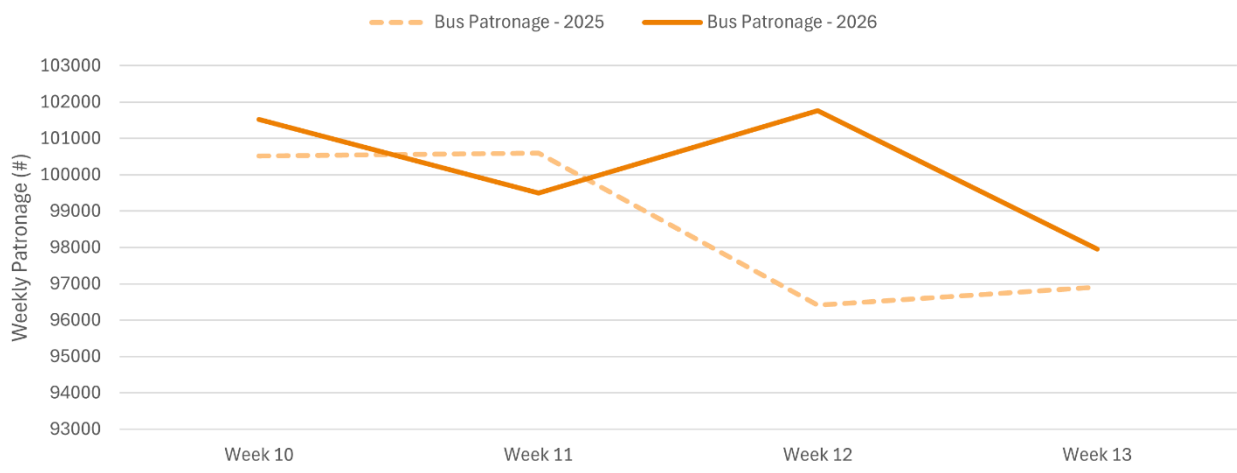
8. Patronage on bus has remained steady compared to the same quarter last year, with more than one million trips counted. The Cambridge service in particular reports a 20% increase in

patronage, and there is a doubling of passengers using promotional/special event trips (such as the ZURU Nightglow).

- 9. Timetable and runtime reliability remain consistent with previous reporting. On average, buses arrive at stops approximately one minute behind schedule, while overall runtimes continue to be faster than planned. Variability in arrival times and runtimes is slightly higher than ideal, indicating ongoing opportunities for improvement and optimisation.
- 10. High-frequency services—the Orbiter, the Comet, and the Meteor—continue to operate with high regularity and to the scheduled headway and report the largest patronage across the network.

*Impact of Fuel Price Increases*

- 11. Patronage increased in the final month of the quarter (March 2026), aligning with increased interest in the role of public transport due to rising fuel prices. Bus patronage has grown by approximately 1–5% week-on-week across services, while rail patronage has risen more sharply, increasing by 5–25% compared with the same period last year. This trend is shown in the figure below.
- 12. Staff will continue to monitor patronage trends to determine whether this trend is a natural fluctuation or indicative of wider behaviour change.



**Passenger Rail Performance**

- 13. Rail patronage has increased 24% compared to the same quarter in the previous year. Average daily patronage remains in the 250–260 range. This is likely a result of fewer rail closures as well as the introduction of a return Sunday service.

14. Track maintenance has impacted timetable availability, particularly in January, with only 60% of stations being serviced within five minutes of the scheduled arrival time.

#### FLEX On-Demand Performance

15. Patronage on the on-demand service remains steady at around 5,000 passengers for the quarter. Some optimisation opportunities persist, as a number of trips continue to be declined due to limited seat availability.

#### **Public Transport Operations Update**

16. As part of the Passenger Experience Roadmap, the team has worked collaboratively with South Waikato District Council (SWDC) and Waka Kotahi NZTA to secure driver safety funding to provide dedicated toilet and rest facilities for drivers in Tokoroa. An image of these new facilities is below. This initiative is supported by ongoing driver engagement through quarterly meetings with operators, where frontline staff are actively encouraged to share ideas and feedback to improve services.
17. Using a similar collaborative funding approach in Hamilton, the team has worked with Hamilton City Council (HCC) to deliver improved lighting at bus stops and shelters across the city, with positive results already evident.
18. The team has worked with operators to deliver reward and recognition initiatives that acknowledge drivers who consistently go above and beyond in providing outstanding customer service. This is particularly important given the significant impact of roadworks across Hamilton and surrounding areas, which are contributing to passenger frustration and service delays. Through small gift tokens and formal recognition, the Council acknowledges individuals' calibre, professionalism, and resilience in navigating the many challenges of their role—often while shouldering the full impact of customer agitation.



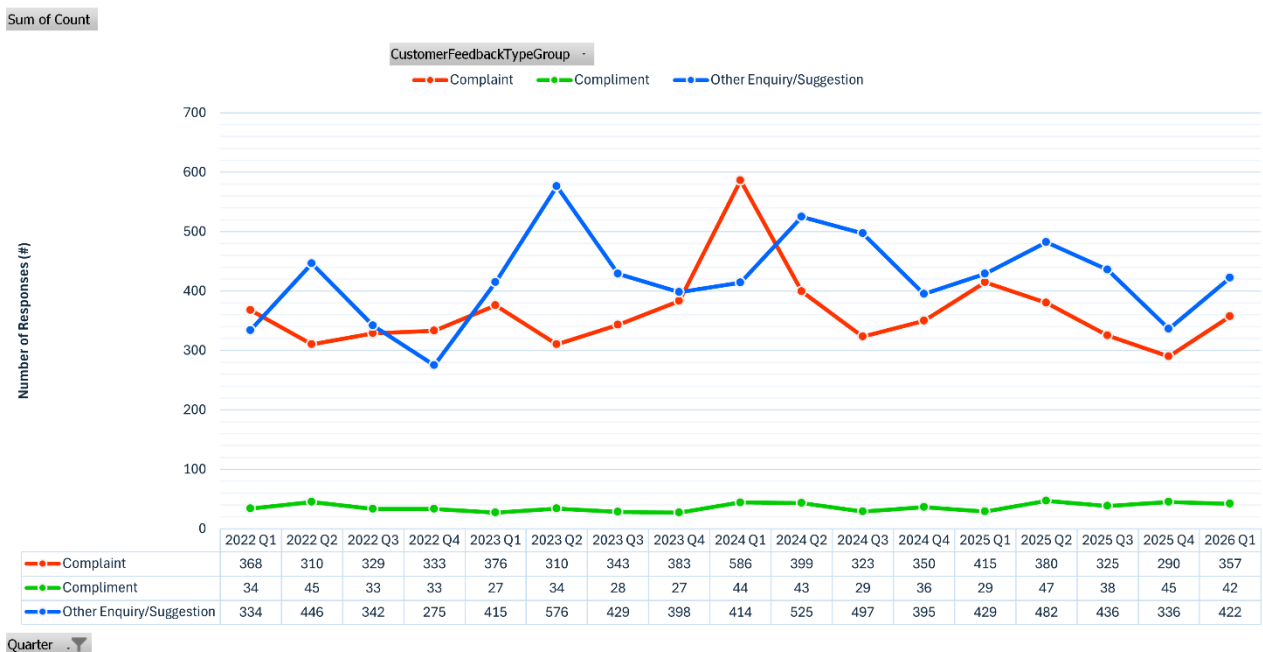
### Customer Engagement and Marketing

19. The partnership with Hamilton and Waikato Tourism has led to User Generated Content (UGC) campaigns for Te Huia this quarter, building on the success of the Raglan BUSIT to the Beach campaign delivered in the previous quarter.
20. Promotional content targeting Aucklanders to try Te Huia for a weekend away in Hamilton was published in late January 2026 following the holiday block of line reopening. The next campaign in production is Cambridge as a destination, accessible via a combination of train and regional bus services. Council also launched *Back to School, Take the Bus (Student and Rugby)*, and *Flex* campaigns.
21. Council has finalised targeted promotional assets for regional bus promotion, as well as a fuel shortage inspired collaborative campaign *Weekly Fare Cap* between BUSIT, WRC & HCC. These are launching in coming weeks.

### Process for Complaints, Compliments and Feedback

22. In the previous committee meeting, Elected Members requested additional information on the process for complaints, compliments, and feedback related to the public transport network. The process is summarised below.
  - (a) Typically, when a complaint, compliment, or suggestion is submitted, it is acknowledged within 48 hours and triaged to the appropriate operator or team.

- (b) Resolution is targeted within 72 hours. Should more time be necessary, parties may request an extension of up to 14 working days. Investigations are thorough, with outcomes shared both internally and with the customer.
  - (c) Feedback is closed in the system by the responsible party, with a clear record of the investigation’s outcome and any communication with the customer. If the outcome is unsatisfactory, the feedback is reopened, and the assigned team is required to address outstanding issues until a satisfactory resolution is achieved.
  - (d) Suggestions are directed to the Network Planning queue for further consideration, ensuring all feedback is valued and contributes to ongoing service improvements.
23. By following a consistent process—triaging, acknowledging, investigating, and transparently closing feedback—Council demonstrates its commitment to considering and acting on community input.
24. In the latest quarter, 357 complaints, 42 compliments, and 422 enquiries/suggestions were received. This is more or less consistent over the past four years. Going forward, the number of complaints, compliments, and suggestions will be included in regular reporting.



**Project Updates**

*Passenger Experience Roadmap*

25. Passenger Experience Roadmap implementation is on track and in line with outcomes agreed during a review and refinement session in January 2026. Improvements launched to date include Content Management Platform integration for service alerts, digitalised timetables and interactive maps on the BUSIT website, customer support model review, driver engagement, and PT Ambassador pilot initiatives.

*Public Transport Branding Refresh*

26. A workshop on the Public Transport Branding Refresh was delivered on 11 March to provide Elected Members with visibility of the strategic thinking and proposed naming direction for the Waikato public transport network. The Council was invited to consider whether proposed names and the overarching strategy feel representative of the Waikato region’s identity and future aspirations.

27. Council facilitated an introductory hui with Iwi representatives, ensuring the transport rebrand is informed by Iwi Māori perspectives, mātauranga Māori, and place-based narratives across the Waikato region.
28. Next steps will involve user testing, validating the proposed naming and branding concepts with end users, and assessing all elements for rollout.

### **Community Outreach and Special Events**

29. Council actively supported thirteen events during the quarter with combination of travel options, promotion, active in-person engagement, and initiatives to encourage patronage growth. Activities included Hamilton Arts Festival, Children's Day, Homegrown, Balloons over Waikato (Nightglow and Balloons visit South Waikato), Matamata Sustainability Fun Day, Senior Expo in Taupo, O-week), and visits to three tertiary education providers, two retirement villages and one high school.
30. Council is proactively collaborating with Waikato District Council and the World Surf League event management team to promote the May surfing championship tour in Raglan. Event delivery is supported through co-promotion and coordinated transport options.
31. Council will work in partnership with Waikato-Tainui to contribute to a coordinated regional transport approach to Te Matatini 2027, a premier cultural event showcasing kapa haka performance from across New Zealand and Australia. This was discussed with Elected Members during the 8 April 2026 meeting of the Waikato Raupatu River Trust and Waikato Regional Council Co-Governance Committee.

### **WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

32. This report provided an update to the committee on the performance of the public transport network and operational matters in 2026 Quarter 1 (January to March).
33. Patronage across all services (bus, passenger rail, and on-demand) is steady. Service reliability is unchanged, but there continues to be opportunity for optimisation.
34. An increase in patronage is observed at the end of the quarter corresponding to the rise in fuel prices. Staff continue to monitor patronage changes and the potential network impact of increasing fuel prices.
35. The Passenger Experience Roadmap continues to drive positive operational initiatives, including the installation of dedicated rest and toilet facilities for drivers in Tokoroa, bus shelter lighting upgrades, and driver reward and recognition programs. Council is actively engaging with partners, including territorial authorities and event management teams, to deliver community outreach and coordinated regional transport options for special events.

### **ĀPITI HANGA | ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Operational Performance Monitoring Report (2026 Quarter 1 – 1 January 31 March) – (Doc # 35482831)** [↓](#)

Quarter: 2026 Q1 Date Range: 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026

# Operational Performance Monitoring Report Commentary

## Key Points

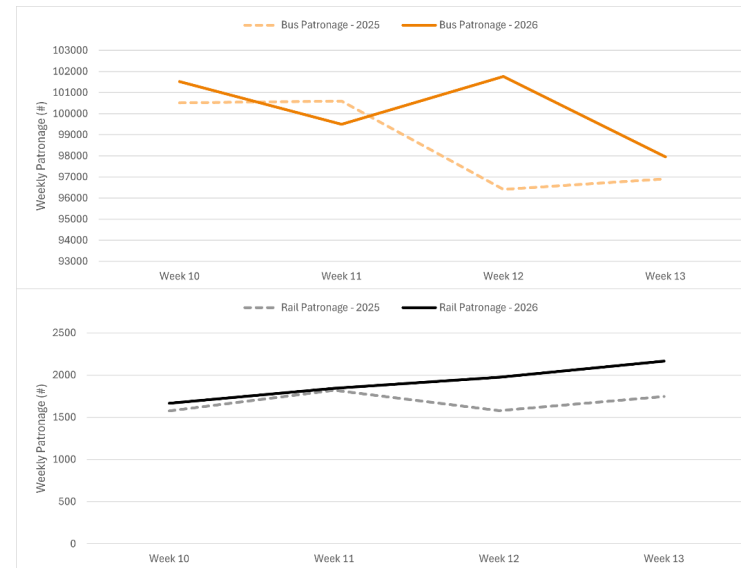
- Patronage on bus, rail, and on-demand services has remained steady with an increase observed in March 2026 corresponding to an increase in fuel prices. The Cambridge service reports a 20% increase in patronage, and there is a doubling of passengers using promotional/special event trips (such as for the ZURU Nightglow).
- Timetable and runtime reliability is unchanged from previous reporting. Bus stops are serviced on average one minute late relative to the timetable while services run fast compared to the scheduled runtime. Variation arrival time and runtimes are slightly larger than ideal. There is room for improvement and optimisation.
- High-frequency services—the Orbiter, the Comet, and the Meteor—continue to operate with high regularity and to the scheduled headway and report the largest patronage across the network.

## Patronage

**Definition:** How many trips are taken on public transportation?

- **Patronage is stable.** There are 1,017,432 trips taken on public transportation in this quarter, representing a 0.5% increase in patronage compared to the same quarter in the previous year (2025 Q1).

Doc # 35451645



- **There is a rise in patronage in the last month of the quarter (March 2026) corresponding to the increase in fuel prices.** Bus patronage week-on-week has increased by 1–5% and rail patronage has likewise increased by between 5–25% compared to the same period last year. Staff will continue to monitor patronage trends to determine whether this is natural fluctuation or indicative of wider behaviour change.

Date (week of the year)	Bus Patronage (#)		Rail Patronage (#)	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
Week 10	100,516	101,516	1,576	1,666
Week 11	100,599	99,499	1,820	1,844
Week 12	96,416	101,764	1,578	1,973
Week 13	96,902	97,957	1,745	2,165



- **The majority of patronage is within Hamilton City and surrounding districts.** The majority of trips are taken within Hamilton (Unit 1 and Unit 2), followed by Waipā (Unit 6A), and the Waikato (Unit 3 and Unit 5). There is a 8–11% increase in patronage in Waipā (Unit 6A) and Pokeno-Pukekohe (Unit 3A). There is a decrease of 24% decrease in patronage in Taupō (Unit 9).
- **The largest passenger group is Adults (449,957), followed by Youth (205,423) and Senior (141,567).** There is a significant increase in the “Other” passenger group in this quarter, corresponding to patronage associated with special events such as the ZURU Nightglow (Balloons Over Waikato).
- **High frequency services remain well patroned. The Cambridge regional service reports a 20% increase in patronage.** The most popular services remain the Orbiter (248,966), the Meteor (163,667), and the Comet (124,307). There is a slight decrease in patronage on the Orbiter and Comet (approximately 3%) and an increase in patronage on the Meteor (5%) compared to the same quarter last year. The next highest patroned services are the Northern Connector (50,079), followed by the Cambridge (42,103), and Te Awamutu (36,882), all of which report an increase in patronage compared to the same quarter as last year with the Cambridge service in particular reporting a 20% increase (6,859 trips). The most popular urban service is the Flagstaff service (31,327). This is broadly the same as in previous reporting periods.
- **Low frequency coverage services report low and decreasing patronage.** The Connect-2-Taupō services continue to report the lowest patronage of all regular services, with a collective 963 passengers (compared to 1,068 in the same quarter last year—a 9.8% decrease). Most Taupō services run at most twice per day up to three days per week. Patronage over the last year is shown in the figure below. Similarly, the Tokoroa services report relatively low patronage with a collective 5,445 compared to 5,835 in the same quarter in the previous year—a moderate 6.7% decrease. Meanwhile, the Te Kūiti Connector service, generally reporting low patronage, reported an increase in patronage of 6.7% in this quarter compared to the same quarter

in the previous year (2,376). The least patroned regular urban service is Bremworth/Templeview (7,928).

## Timetable Adherence

**Definition:** How many stops are serviced within the “on-time” window (-1/+5 minutes) of the timetable?

- **Most stops adhere to the timetable, but the average arrival time has increased.** Across the network, approximately two-thirds of stops are serviced within the “on-time” window with an average arrival time of one minute and thirty-six seconds after the scheduled arrival time. The mean arrival time has increased 7.95% (7 seconds) compared to the same quarter last year. Passengers are waiting longer on average, but the actual increase is marginal.
- **Across all units, services arrive between thirty seconds to two minutes late compared to the timetable.** The best performing services are on average the Pokeno-Pukekohe (Unit 3A) services at twenty-four seconds and the worst performing services on average are South Waikato (Unit 7). Timetable adherence varies between 40–70%, with urban services reporting more “on-time” arrivals and Morrinsville/Paeroa (Unit 4), Taupō (Unit 9), and South Waikato (Unit 7) reporting less than half of stop arrivals within the “on-time” window.
- **Variability in arrival time across all units is larger than ideal.** The standard deviation of arrival adherence is between three and six minutes across all units. This means passengers generally have to arrive up to five minutes early and wait up to twelve minutes to be confident that a bus will arrive. This is larger than ideal and leaves room for improvement.
- **Regional services have worse timetable adherence performance.** The most adherent route is Bremworth/Templeview (82.7% with an average arrival time of one minute late) and the least adherence route is Connect-2-Taupo Tūrangi (33.7% with an average arrival time of ten minutes late).

## Runtime Adherence

**Definition:** How many trips are completed within five minutes (-5/+5 minutes) of the timetabled runtime?

- **The vast majority of services run within five minutes of the scheduled runtime.** Approximately 75% of services run no less than five minutes early and no more than five minutes late compared to the scheduled running time, with services running on average two minutes and forty-two seconds early. This is more or less steady from the previous reporting period.
- **Services are mostly running fast on average.** All units report more than half of services operating within the “on-time” window, with most services running between two and four minutes early on average. The exception is Taupō (Unit 9) which runs on average to the scheduled runtime and South Waikato (Unit 7) which runs three minutes late on average. There is opportunity for optimisation, but overall performance is acceptable. This result is more or less reflected in the route-by-route summary. Exceptions are the Hillcrest (running approximately five minutes early on average), Tokoroa Circuit (five minutes late), Flagstaff North (five minutes early), Te Kūiti Connector (eight minutes late), Connect-2-Taupo Kinloch (six minutes early), and Connect-2-Tūrangi (seven minutes late) services.
- **Regional services continue to report a relatively large variation in runtime.** The variation in running time is between three and six minutes, meaning that most services run up to ten minutes early and up to five minutes late. This is larger than ideal. This result is also more or less reflected in the route-by-route summary, with the Tokoroa Connector (a variation of eight minutes) and the Te Kūiti Connector (nine minutes) reporting larger variations.

## Excess Waiting Time

**Definition:** For high frequency services, how much longer than the scheduled

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headway do passengers need to wait for a service?

- **Excess waiting time is low.** Excess waiting time among all high frequency services is low, averaging less than one minute across all routes and operating times. The exception is off-peak Comet services, which are arriving two minutes early compared to the headway. Overall, the variation is small, and regularity is high.
- **Headway is more or less maintained across services.** Service is “provided like clockwork” for off-peak services. Vehicles are “slightly off headway” during Comet and Meteor on-peak operating times and “often off headway” during Orbiter on-peak operating times.

## Missed Stops

**Definition:** How many and which bus stops have missing data?

- Across the network, 2.4% of stops are missing performance data. This is an improvement compared to the previous reporting period, which may be a result of summer roadworks generally finishing.
- **Regional services continue to report higher than ideal proportions of missing data.** As expected, bus stops serviced by regional services, particularly South Waikato (Unit 7), Taupō (Unit 9), and Waipā (Unit 6A) report the largest proportion of missing data (approximately 6%). This is less than ideal but acceptable given that these services primarily operate regionally where there is reduced signal connectivity. Meanwhile, bus stops serviced by urban services report the lowest proportion of missing data (between 1–2%).
- **Road closures in Hamilton have impacted data availability.** The stops with the highest proportion of missing data are located in the Taupō region, Whakamaru, and Tokoroa. The stops on Silverdale Rd, Hamilton are also missing between 70–77% of data as a result of roadworks and road diversions.

3

## Te Huia

- **Rail patronage has grown.** There are 17,574 trips on the rail service during this quarter, which is a 24% increase compared to 14,147 trips in the same quarter last year. Average daily patronage remains in the 250—260 range. This is a good outcome and likely a result of more consistent timetabling as well as the introduction of a return Sunday service.
- **Track maintenance has impacted timetable reliability.** Reliability performance is low (61—88% arrival within five minutes of the schedule) during this quarter, especially during January. This is due to track maintenance causing delays to the service.

## Flex On-Demand

- **Patronage on the Flex On-Demand service continues to be stable.** The service carried 5,233 passengers during the reporting period, which is more or less the same as the same quarter in the previous year. Most passengers are transported between 11pm and 1am.
- **There are opportunities for improvement in service optimisation.** There are 1,162 proposals not accepted by users, affecting 2,538 passengers, and 420 trip requests rejected by the service due to seat unavailability, affecting 1,264 passengers. This indicates that there remains opportunity for optimisation to improve availability of the service for passengers.

# REGIONAL TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS

## Operational Performance Monitoring Report

For the period: 2026 Q1

1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026



# 1 Patronage

2026 Q1

*Definition: How many trips are taken on public transportation?*

1,017,432

Patronage (#)



0.50%

Patronage Change (%)

\*Compared to the same quarter last year.

Unit	Patronage (#)	Change (%)
Hamilton East (Unit 2)	439,376	-0.58%
Hamilton West (Unit 1)	389,849	0.46%
Waipa (Unit 6A)	78,985	11.89%
Huntly (Unit 3)	50,079	0.61%
Raglan (Unit 5)	22,839	-4.17%
Morrinsville/Paeroa (Unit 4)	13,983	-6.38%
Pokeno - Pukekohe (Unit 3A)	10,029	8.28%
South Waikato (Unit 7)	7,821	-2.99%
Taupo (Unit 9)	4,471	-24.10%

Ticket Group	Patronage (#)	Change (%)
Accessibility	104,871	3.50%
Adult	449,957	-2.13%
Child	56,337	-6.90%
Other	1,395	212.78%
Senior	141,567	9.76%
Tertiary	57,882	10.28%
Youth	205,423	-1.64%

**Definitions:**

Accessibility - Passengers travelling with an Accessibility concession.

Adult - All passengers between 19-64, including those travelling under third-party concessions (such as GENESIS, AA Corporate, Community Connect, etc.).

Child - Passengers between 5-12 years, including some school-based concessions.

Other - Passengers who do not conform to other categories, such as passengers travelling with promotional tickets.

Senior - Passengers travelling with a Supergold concession.

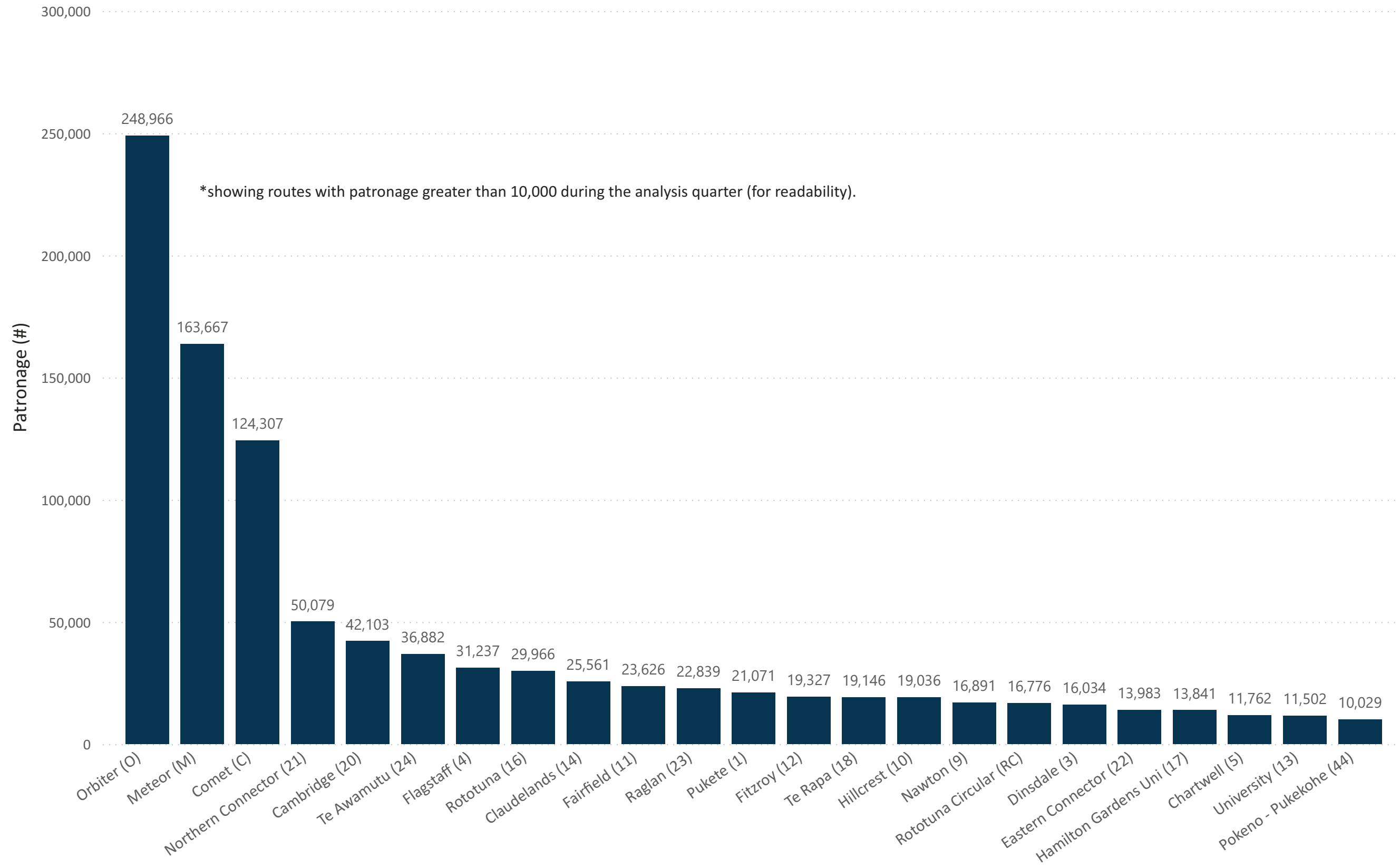
Tertiary - Passengers travelling with a university-based concession, e.g., University of Waikato.

Youth - Passengers between 13-18 years.

**\*Note:** Te Huia, Thames Connector (70) and Taumarunui Hospital Service (25) are excluded. Te Huia is reported elsewhere and Thames Connector/Taumarunui Hospital Service do not have standard ticketing machines and are reported elsewhere.

# 1 Patronage - by Route

2026 Q1



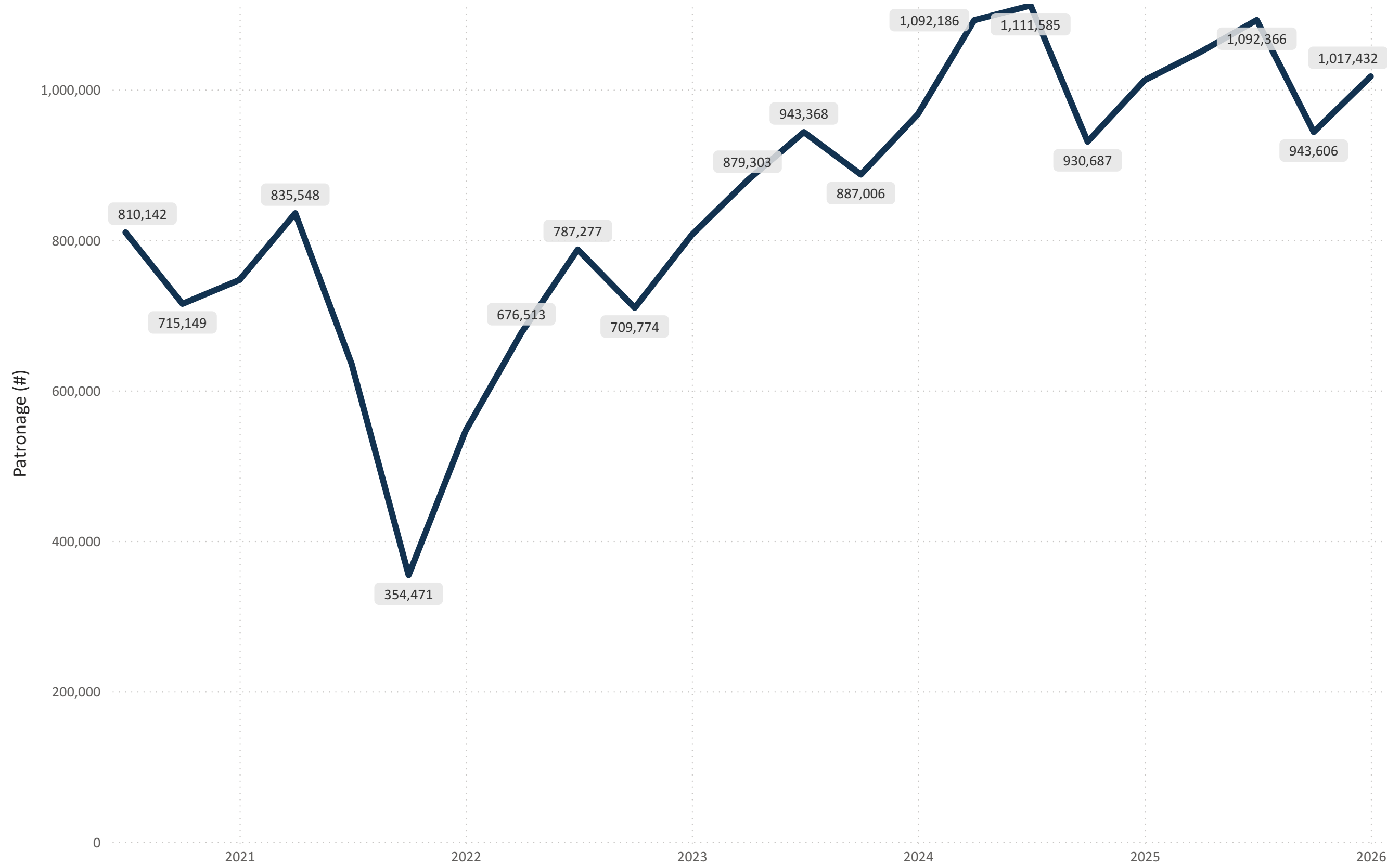
# 1 Patronage - by Route

2026 Q1

Route	Patronage (#)	Change (%)
Orbiter (O)	248,966	-3.42%
Meteor (M)	163,667	5.26%
Comet (C)	124,307	-3.04%
Northern Connector (21)	50,079	0.61%
Cambridge (20)	42,103	19.70%
Te Awamutu (24)	36,882	4.12%
Flagstaff (4)	31,237	3.05%
Rototuna (16)	29,966	0.60%
Claudelands (14)	25,561	7.70%
Fairfield (11)	23,626	1.80%
Raglan (23)	22,839	-4.17%
Pukete (1)	21,071	1.20%
Fitzroy (12)	19,327	-2.60%
Te Rapa (18)	19,146	-1.64%
Hillcrest (10)	19,036	9.89%
Nawton (9)	16,891	-1.07%
Rototuna Circular (RC)	16,776	2.97%
Dinsdale (3)	16,034	-4.71%
Eastern Connector (22)	13,983	-6.38%
Hamilton Gardens Uni (17)	13,841	1.96%
Chartwell (5)	11,762	9.93%
University (13)	11,502	0.81%
Pokeno - Pukekohe (44)	10,029	8.28%
Bremworth / Templeview (19)	7,928	-9.50%
Flagstaff North (4N)	7,103	-8.91%
Taupo Connector (33)	3,508	-27.28%
Te Kuiti Connector (26)	2,376	6.69%
Tokoroa Connector (32)	2,240	-11.01%
Tokoroa Circuit (30)	2,215	-7.63%
Tokoroa District (31)	990	7.61%
Tamahere/Matangi (28)	964	-12.84%
Tauwhare Pa (27)	514	4.05%
Connect2Taupo - Mangakino/Tokoroa (37)	469	-6.39%
Connect-2-Taupo Turangi (36)	353	-10.63%
Connect-2-Taupo Wairakei (38)	115	-19.01%
Connect-2-Taupo Acacia Bay (34)	26	-10.34%

# 1 Patronage - by Date

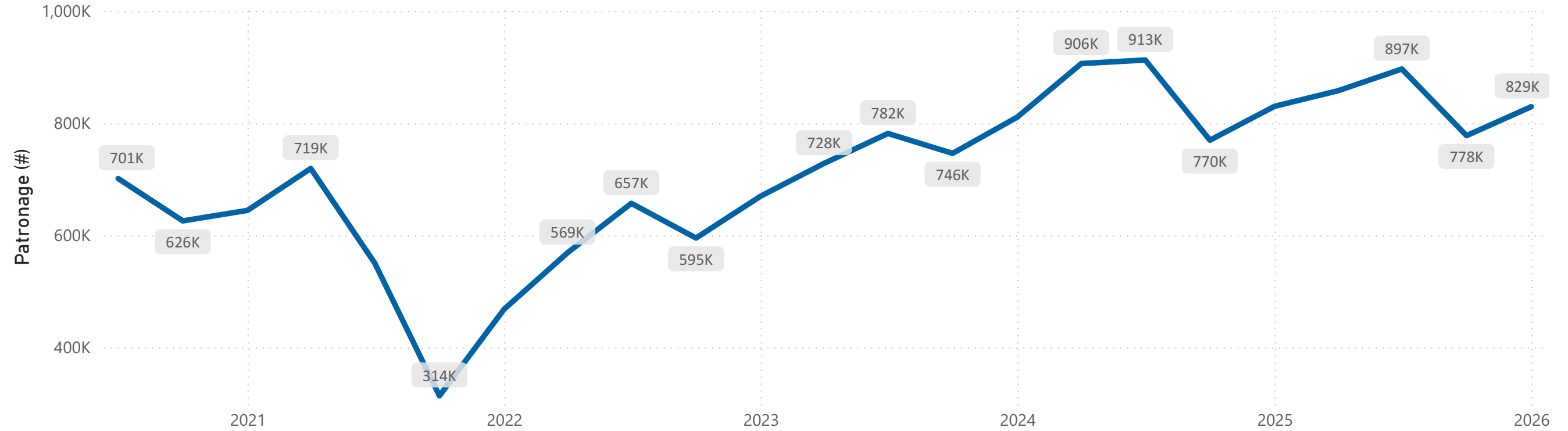
2026 Q1



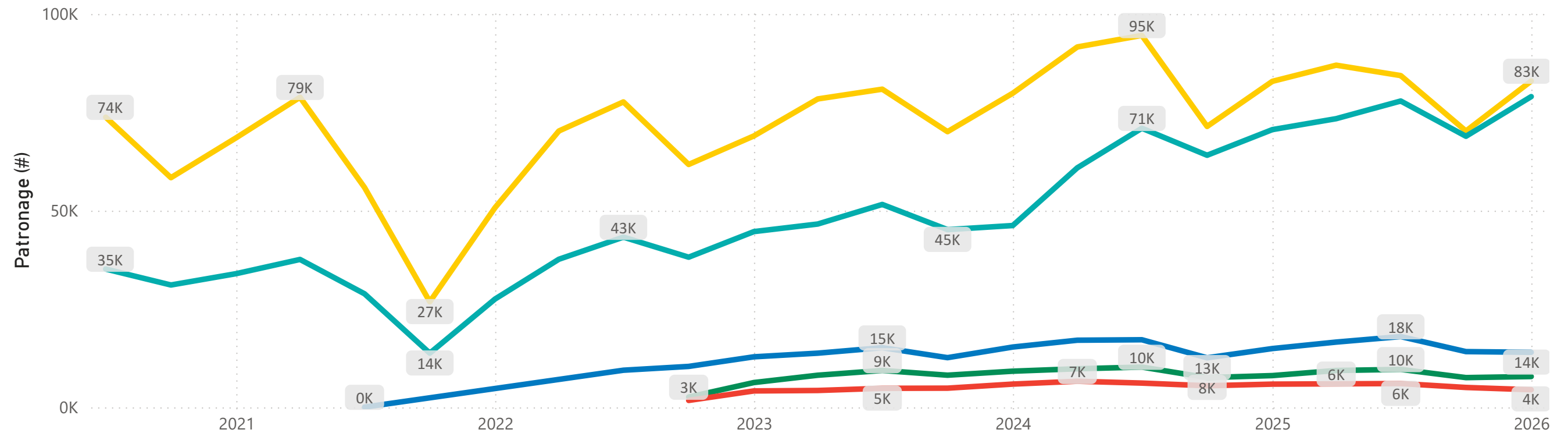
# 1 Patronage - by Date/Territorial Authority

2026 Q1

Territorial Authority ● Hamilton City



Territorial Authority ● Matamata-Piako/Hauraki Districts ● South Waikato District ● Taupo District ● Waikato District ● Waipa (Cambridge/Te Awamutu) District



# 2 Timetable Adherence

2026 Q1

*Definition: How many stops are serviced within the "on-time" window (-1/+5 minutes) of the timetable?*

\*Compared to the same quarter last year.

**67.65%**

Overall Timetable Adherence (%)

**1 min 36 secs**

Overall Mean Timetable Adherence (mins)

**▲ 7.95%**

Mean Timetable Adherence Change (%)

Unit	Timetable Adherence (%)	Mean Timetable Adherence	Standard Deviation of Timetable Adherence
Hamilton East (Unit 2)	71.00%	2 mins 0 secs	3 mins 48 secs
Waipa (Unit 6A)	68.21%	2 mins 6 secs	3 mins 42 secs
Hamilton West (Unit 1)	66.95%	1 min 6 secs	3 mins 30 secs
Huntly (Unit 3)	60.92%	0 mins 42 secs	3 mins 54 secs
Pokeno - Pukekohe (Unit 3A)	53.90%	0 mins 24 secs	3 mins 24 secs
Raglan (Unit 5)	53.16%	1 min 24 secs	4 mins 36 secs
South Waikato (Unit 7)	49.90%	2 mins 24 secs	5 mins 18 secs
Taupo (Unit 9)	47.50%	2 mins 6 secs	4 mins 24 secs
Morrinsville/Paeroa (Unit 4)	41.80%	1 min 30 secs	6 mins 42 secs

# 2 Timetable Adherence - by Route

2026 Q1

Route	Timetable Adherence (%)	Mean Timetable Adherence	Standard Deviation of Timetable Adherence
Bremworth / Templeview (19)	82.70%	1 min 6 secs	2 mins 18 secs
Fitzroy (12)	82.20%	1 min 48 secs	2 mins 36 secs
Dinsdale (3)	82.17%	1 min 24 secs	2 mins 48 secs
Fairfield (11)	79.27%	2 mins 18 secs	2 mins 60 secs
Hamilton Gardens Uni (17)	79.07%	1 min 36 secs	2 mins 42 secs
University (13)	78.94%	0 mins 48 secs	2 mins 24 secs
Te Rapa (18)	77.95%	1 min 18 secs	2 mins 48 secs
Nawton (9)	77.54%	1 min 54 secs	2 mins 48 secs
Flagstaff (4)	75.30%	2 mins 0 secs	3 mins 24 secs
Chartwell (5)	74.55%	1 min 12 secs	3 mins 30 secs
Hillcrest (10)	71.74%	0 mins 6 secs	2 mins 36 secs
Rototuna (16)	70.58%	2 mins 18 secs	3 mins 42 secs
Cambridge (20)	70.32%	1 min 36 secs	3 mins 36 secs
Claudelands (14)	70.22%	1 min 24 secs	3 mins 30 secs
Orbiter (O)	67.78%	2 mins 24 secs	4 mins 12 secs
Pukete (1)	67.56%	0 mins 24 secs	3 mins 6 secs
Rototuna Circular (RC)	65.56%	2 mins 42 secs	4 mins 54 secs
Te Awamutu (24)	65.34%	2 mins 54 secs	3 mins 48 secs
Tauwhare Pa (27)	65.29%	4 mins 18 secs	5 mins 48 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Wairakei (38)	64.30%	0 mins 0 secs	2 mins 12 secs
Comet (C)	63.05%	0 mins 48 secs	3 mins 30 secs
Northern Connector (21)	60.92%	0 mins 42 secs	3 mins 54 secs
Meteor (M)	58.06%	0 mins 54 secs	3 mins 48 secs
Tamahere/Matangi (28)	56.35%	4 mins 0 secs	6 mins 18 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Acacia Bay (34)	56.23%	-3 mins 42 secs	8 mins 24 secs
Tokoroa Connector (32)	54.02%	4 mins 12 secs	5 mins 42 secs
Tokoroa Circuit (30)	53.90%	0 mins 54 secs	3 mins 54 secs
Pokeno - Pukekohe (44)	53.90%	0 mins 24 secs	3 mins 24 secs
Raglan (23)	53.16%	1 min 24 secs	4 mins 36 secs
Connect2Taupo - Mangakino/Tokoroa (37)	52.50%	1 min 30 secs	3 mins 42 secs
Flagstaff North (4N)	49.32%	0 mins 42 secs	5 mins 24 secs
Taupo Connector (33)	46.79%	2 mins 12 secs	3 mins 54 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Kinloch (35)	43.59%	3 mins 24 secs	6 mins 6 secs
Eastern Connector (22)	41.80%	1 min 30 secs	6 mins 42 secs
Tokoroa District (31)	40.78%	-2 mins 42 secs	3 mins 24 secs
Te Kuiti Connector (26)	37.30%	6 mins 12 secs	6 mins 0 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Turangi (36)	33.76%	10 mins 54 secs	14 mins 12 secs

# 3 Runtime Adherence

2026 Q1

*Definition: How many trips are completed within five minutes (-5/+5 minutes) of the timetabled runtime?*

\*Compared to the same quarter last year.

**76.77%**

Overall Runtime Adherence (%)

**-2 mins 42 secs**

Overall Mean Runtime Adherence (mins)

**▲ 15.59%**

Mean Runtime Adherence Change (%)

Unit	Runtime Adherence (%) ▼	Mean Runtime Adherence	Standard Deviation of Runtime Adherence
Hamilton West (Unit 1)	82.15%	-2 mins 42 secs	3 mins 30 secs
Hamilton East (Unit 2)	76.01%	-2 mins 42 secs	4 mins 24 secs
Raglan (Unit 5)	76.00%	-1 mins 6 secs	4 mins 18 secs
Pokeno - Pukekohe (Unit 3A)	73.22%	-2 mins 12 secs	3 mins 36 secs
Taupo (Unit 9)	70.21%	0 mins 30 secs	3 mins 42 secs
Waipa (Unit 6A)	65.77%	-1 mins 0 secs	6 mins 36 secs
Morrinsville/Paeroa (Unit 4)	63.95%	-1 mins 12 secs	6 mins 48 secs
Huntly (Unit 3)	62.51%	-4 mins 48 secs	4 mins 18 secs
South Waikato (Unit 7)	54.75%	3 mins 0 secs	6 mins 24 secs

# 3 Runtime Adherence - by Route

2026 Q1

Route	Runtime Adherence (%)	Mean Runtime Adherence	Standard Deviation of Runtime Adherence
Bremworth / Templeview (19)	91.42%	-2 mins 12 secs	2 mins 6 secs
Fitzroy (12)	90.98%	-2 mins 54 secs	2 mins 42 secs
Nawton (9)	89.80%	-2 mins 18 secs	2 mins 30 secs
Chartwell (5)	89.60%	-2 mins 54 secs	3 mins 12 secs
Dinsdale (3)	88.06%	-3 mins 54 secs	2 mins 30 secs
Hamilton Gardens Uni (17)	87.51%	-1 mins 36 secs	3 mins 6 secs
Tamahere/Matangi (28)	86.82%	1 min 24 secs	3 mins 6 secs
Tauwhare Pa (27)	86.35%	0 mins 54 secs	3 mins 54 secs
Pukete (1)	86.26%	-2 mins 42 secs	2 mins 60 secs
Fairfield (11)	85.73%	0 mins 12 secs	3 mins 42 secs
University (13)	85.38%	-3 mins 36 secs	2 mins 30 secs
Comet (C)	84.88%	-2 mins 54 secs	3 mins 24 secs
Claudelands (14)	83.92%	-1 mins 48 secs	4 mins 0 secs
Taupo Connector (33)	83.87%	0 mins 60 secs	3 mins 12 secs
Tokoroa District (31)	81.47%	-3 mins 42 secs	2 mins 18 secs
Te Rapa (18)	80.63%	-3 mins 42 secs	3 mins 0 secs
Flagstaff (4)	78.16%	-1 mins 18 secs	4 mins 12 secs
Raglan (23)	76.00%	-1 mins 6 secs	4 mins 18 secs
Rototuna (16)	76.00%	-1 mins 18 secs	4 mins 30 secs
Pokeno - Pukekohe (44)	73.22%	-2 mins 12 secs	3 mins 36 secs
Orbiter (O)	70.10%	-2 mins 36 secs	5 mins 6 secs
Meteor (M)	67.33%	-2 mins 42 secs	4 mins 48 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Wairakei (38)	67.24%	-2 mins 6 secs	1 min 48 secs
Cambridge (20)	66.30%	-2 mins 54 secs	6 mins 48 secs
Te Awamutu (24)	65.26%	-1 mins 12 secs	6 mins 18 secs
Eastern Connector (22)	63.95%	-1 mins 12 secs	6 mins 48 secs
Rototuna Circular (RC)	63.15%	-1 mins 6 secs	5 mins 24 secs
Northern Connector (21)	62.51%	-4 mins 48 secs	4 mins 18 secs
Connect2Taupo - Mangakino/Tokoroa (37)	61.96%	0 mins 30 secs	4 mins 54 secs
Hillcrest (10)	56.60%	-5 mins 30 secs	2 mins 48 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Acacia Bay (34)	48.57%	-2 mins 0 secs	1 min 6 secs
Tokoroa Circuit (30)	47.70%	5 mins 0 secs	2 mins 36 secs
Flagstaff North (4N)	43.89%	-5 mins 30 secs	5 mins 42 secs
Tokoroa Connector (32)	40.00%	2 mins 42 secs	8 mins 30 secs
Te Kuiti Connector (26)	35.45%	8 mins 12 secs	9 mins 24 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Kinloch (35)	12.50%	-6 mins 54 secs	0 mins 60 secs
Connect-2-Taupo Turangi (36)	10.87%	7 mins 54 secs	5 mins 42 secs

# 4 Excess Waiting Time

2026 Q1

**Definition:** For high frequency services, how much longer than the scheduled headway do passengers need to wait for a service?

\*Compared to the same quarter last year.



Route	Time of Day	Scheduled Waiting Time	Excess Waiting Time	Level of Service Description
Orbiter (O)	Off-Peak	22 mins 60 secs	0 mins 18 secs	Service provided like clockwork
Comet (C)	On-Peak	10 mins 6 secs	0 mins 30 secs	Vehicles slightly off headway
Meteor (M)	On-Peak	7 mins 30 secs	0 mins 36 secs	Vehicles slightly off headway
Orbiter (O)	On-Peak	7 mins 24 secs	0 mins 48 secs	Vehicles often off headway
Meteor (M)	Off-Peak	27 mins 48 secs	0 mins 6 secs	Service provided like clockwork
Comet (C)	Off-Peak	36 mins 18 secs	-1 mins 60 secs	Service provided like clockwork

**\*Note:** "On-Peak" services are defined as services running between 7am and 6pm during the week (i.e., excluding weekends and public holidays).

# 5 Missed Stops

2026 Q1

**Definition:** How many and which bus stops have missing data?  
 Data may be missing due to equipment/GPS failure, road works, or poor signal.

3,023,618

Sum of StopsServed

72,363

Sum of StopsMissed

2.39%

Sum of MissedPercentage

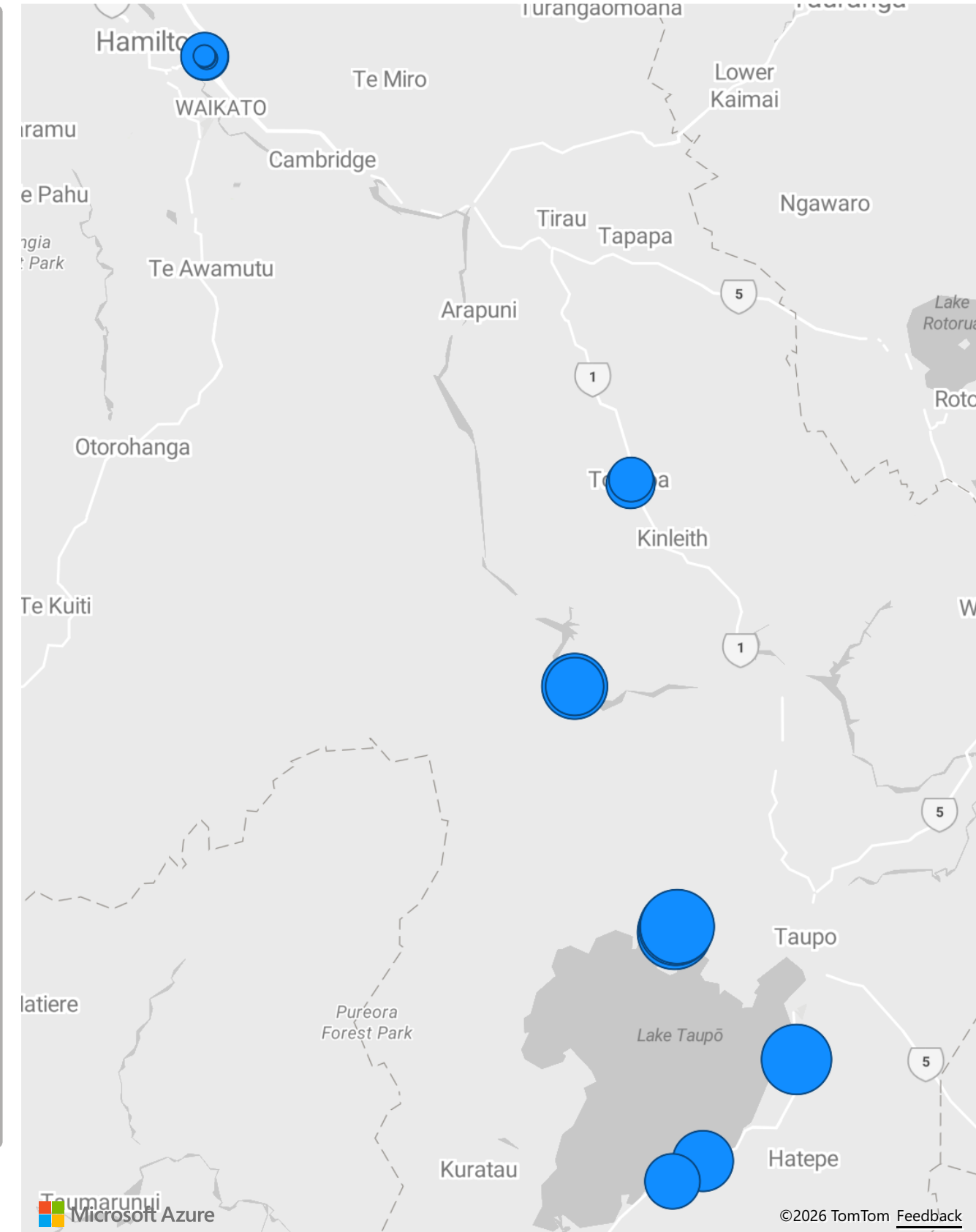
UnitLabel	Missed Stops (#)	Missed Stops (%)
South Waikato (Unit 7)	1,148	6.77%
Taupo (Unit 9)	3,094	6.73%
Waipa (Unit 6A)	11,038	6.15%
Pokeno - Pukekohe (Unit 3A)	2,054	4.67%
Hamilton East (Unit 2)	28,243	2.12%
Hamilton West (Unit 1)	24,581	2.00%
Huntly (Unit 3)	1,681	1.36%
Morrinsville/Paeroa (Unit 4)	281	1.08%
Raglan (Unit 5)	243	0.89%

**\*Note:** Missing bus stops are already excluded from previous calculations.

# 5 Missed Stops - by Stop (Top 14)

2026 Q1

StopName	Missed Stops (%)
53 Marina Tce, Kinloch	100.00%
Kinloch Rd, Kinloch (opp Seagers Cl)	100.00%
Kinloch Rd, Kinloch (outside Community Booth)	100.00%
Waitahanui, Five Mile Bay-Waitahanui (opp Te Kura O Waitahanui)	95.65%
Whakamaru Store, Whakamaru (Northbound) (hail2ride)	91.30%
Motutere Bay, Motutere (opp Holiday Park)	86.96%
Tihoi Rd, Whakamaru (Whakamaru Store)	84.78%
Waitetoko, Oruatua-Te-Rangiita-Waitetoko (opp Marae)	82.61%
Bridge St, Tokoroa (New World)	78.43%
57 Silverdale Rd, Hamilton (Silverdale Normal School)	77.59%
Opp 60 Silverdale Rd, Hamilton	77.59%
Chambers St, Tokoroa (Tokoroa Club)	76.15%
60 Silverdale Rd, Hamilton	70.69%
62 Silverdale Rd, Hamilton (Silverdale Normal School)	70.69%



# 5 Missed Stops - by Route

2026 Q1

Route	Missed Stops (#)	Missed Stops (%)
Connect-2-Taupo Kinloch (35)	117	37.50%
Connect-2-Taupo Turangi (36)	293	37.47%
Connect2Taupo - Mangakino/Tokoroa (37)	451	20.86%
Tamahere/Matangi (28)	2,846	16.69%
Te Awamutu (24)	8,468	11.14%
Connect-2-Taupo Acacia Bay (34)	85	11.04%
Tokoroa Circuit (30)	1,019	10.46%
Connect-2-Taupo Wairakei (38)	121	8.69%
Taupo Connector (33)	2,027	5.00%
Pokeno - Pukekohe (44)	2,054	4.67%
Fairfield (11)	3,786	3.59%
Tokoroa District (31)	41	3.53%
Rototuna (16)	3,153	3.38%
Tauwhare Pa (27)	209	3.34%
Claudelands (14)	2,667	3.02%
Hamilton Gardens Uni (17)	1,964	2.53%
Cambridge (20)	2,570	2.49%
Flagstaff (4)	2,444	2.23%
Meteor (M)	8,749	2.18%
Te Kuiti Connector (26)	67	2.10%
Rototuna Circular (RC)	1,387	1.83%
Comet (C)	5,796	1.82%
Dinsdale (3)	1,292	1.76%
Orbiter (O)	10,472	1.72%
Pukete (1)	1,962	1.72%
Bremworth / Templeview (19)	837	1.57%
Hillcrest (10)	914	1.48%
Chartwell (5)	826	1.40%
Northern Connector (21)	1,681	1.36%
Te Rapa (18)	1,106	1.35%
University (13)	625	1.27%
Fitzroy (12)	1,004	1.26%
Eastern Connector (22)	281	1.08%
Nawton (9)	780	0.96%
Raglan (23)	243	0.89%
Tokoroa Connector (32)	21	0.73%
Flagstaff North (4N)	5	0.08%

# 6 FLEX - Patronage and Status

2026 Q1

*Definition: The number of trips requested and completed for the weekend on-demand FLEX service.*

\*Compared to the same quarter last year.

**5,233**  
Patronage (#)

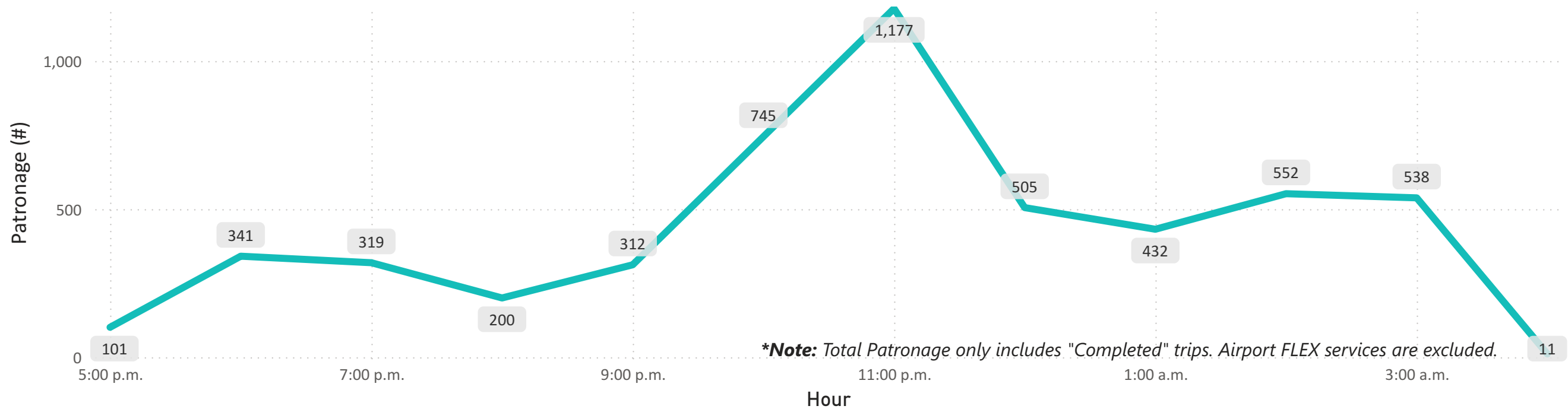


**0.15%**  
Patronage Change (%)

## Status of Requests

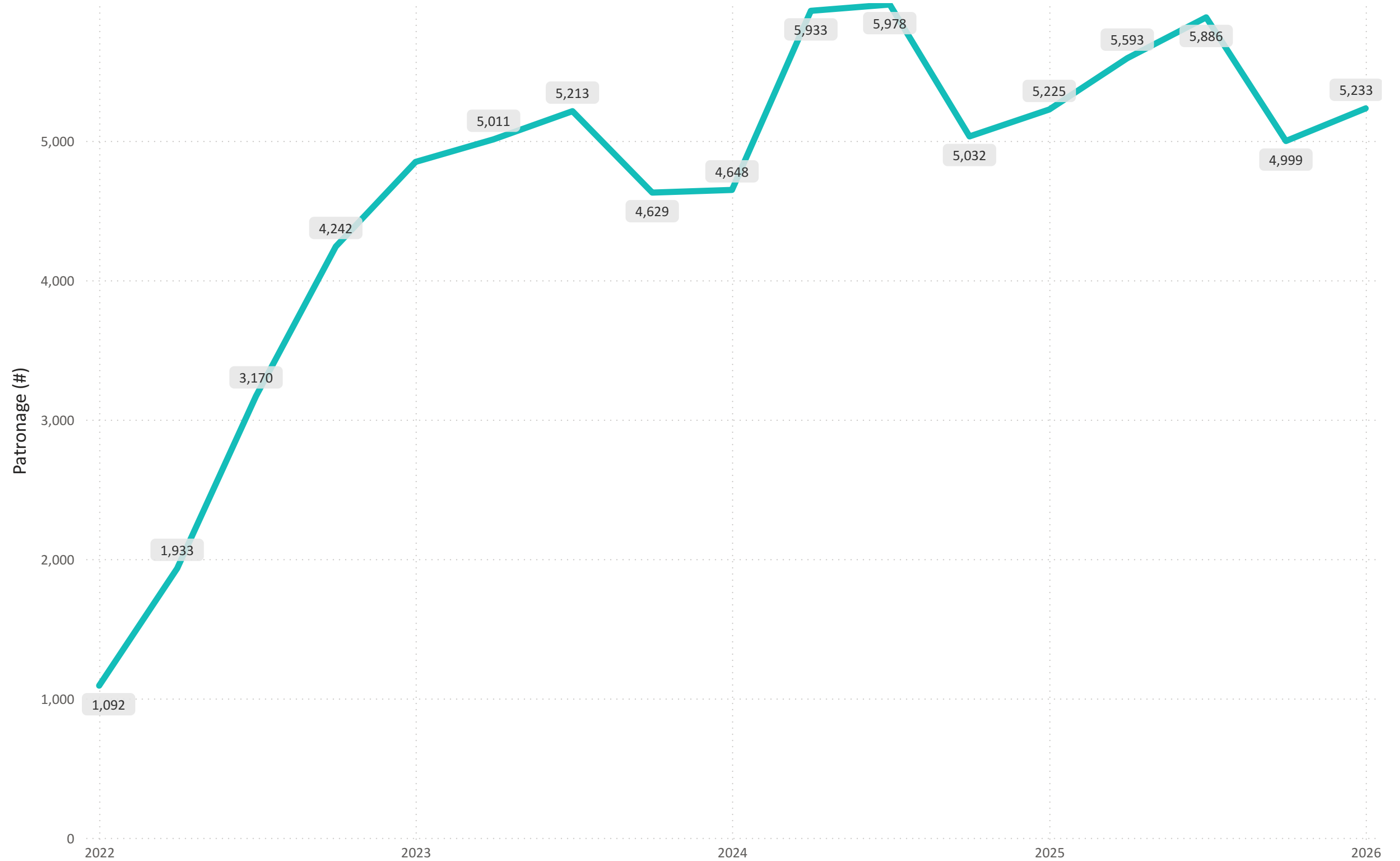
Requests (#) Patronage (#)

Status	Requests (#)	Patronage (#)
Completed	2,186	5,233
Unaccepted Proposal	1,162	2,538
Seat Unavailable	420	1,264
Cancel	203	521
Invalid or Other Error	87	278
No Show	58	160

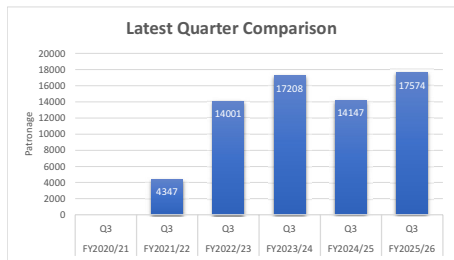
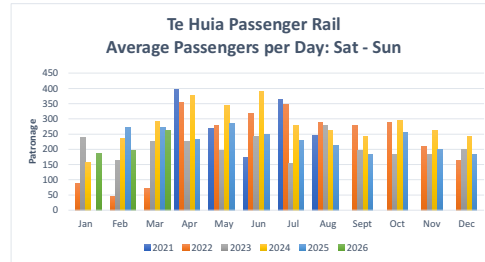
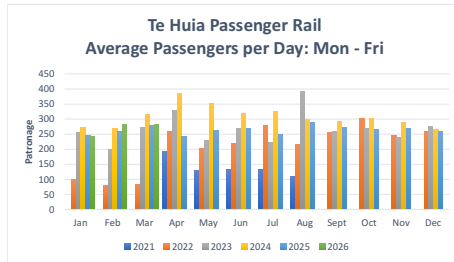


# 6 FLEX - Patronage by Date

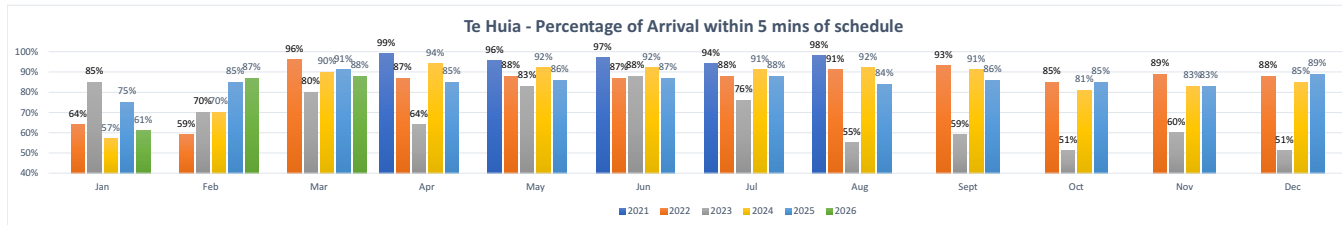
2026 Q1

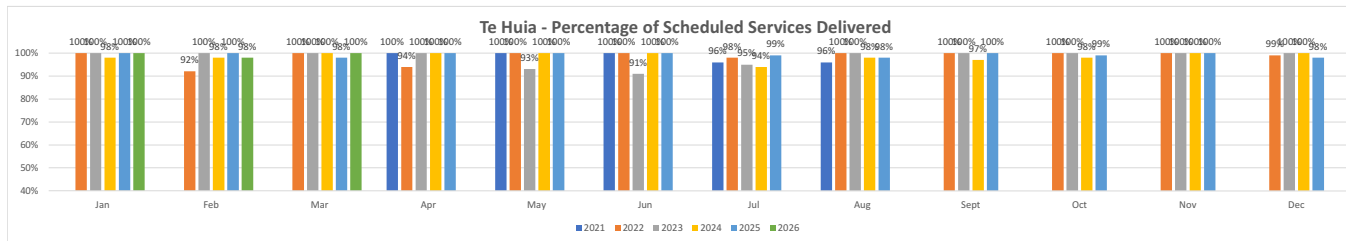
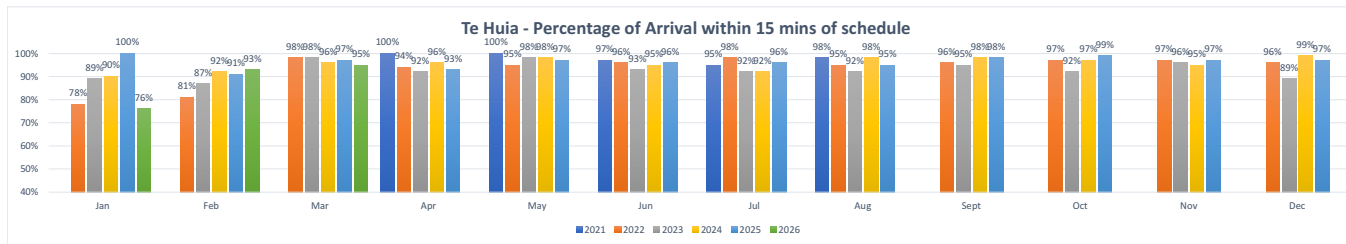


**Te Huia Patronage Performance:**



**Te Huia Reliability Performance:**





**Te Huia Appendix:**

Te Huia Patronage By Quarter Table:

Patronage	2021				2022				2023				2024				2025				2026				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Patronage by quarter		9733	5439		4347	16606	20122	18294	14001	18212	19665	17501	17239	25560	23489	20089	14147	14855	17138	18718	17574				
% change compared to same quarter a year prior					71%	270%		222%	10%	-2%	-4%	23%	40%	19%	15%	-18%	-42%	-27%	-7%	24%					
Average daily patronage by quarter		152	143		81	237	258	261	237	253	255	250	283	355	297	283	267	261	256	250	262				

**8 KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA**

**Unuhia, unuhia**

**Unuhia mai te uru tapu nui**

**kia wātea, kia māmā,**

**te ngākau, te tinana, te hinengaro,**

**i te ara takatū**

**Koia rā e Rongo**

**e whakairia ake ki runga**

**kia tina! TINA!**

**Haumi ē, hui ē, TĀIKI ē!**

**Draw on, draw on,**

**Draw on to the supreme sacredness**

**To clear, to free**

**our heart, body and soul**

**Our pathway prepared**

**Lo, there is peace**

**suspended high above**

**manifest!**

**draw together!**

**Affirm!**