

Total Mobility Review Terms of Reference

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of the Total Mobility Scheme review is to investigate how Total Mobility operates and how it can be improved to create better outcomes for disabled people. The review will primarily explore four key areas:
 - The purpose of Total Mobility
 - How the Total Mobility Scheme can be made more accessible for disabled people
 - How aspects of the Total Mobility Scheme's operations can be improved
 - Sustainable funding mechanisms for the Total Mobility Scheme
- 2 This review aims to ensure the human rights of disabled people are upheld, as outlined in New Zealand's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 3 This review will be underpinned by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and undertaken in a way which acknowledges and is considerate of Māori concepts of disability and wellbeing.

Background

- 4 The Total Mobility Scheme provides subsidised taxi services for people who have difficulty using buses, trains or ferries because of a physical, psychological, sensory or neurological disability. It aims to complement public transport services to ensure people are able to meet their daily needs in a safe and dignified manner, and to enhance community participation.
- 5 A 75 percent discount applies to Total Mobility fares until a maximum subsidy is reached. The maximum subsidy varies between regions and is set by the relevant public transport authority (PTA). The funding of Total Mobility trips is made up of:
 - 50 percent subsidy funded through a combination of the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) and local government's regional rates (60 percent NLTF funded and 40 percent local council funded)
 - 25 percent subsidy funded by the Crown (this additional subsidy was announced as permanent by Cabinet in December 2022)
 - The remaining 25 percent is funded by the Total Mobility user (and any additional costs above the maximum regionally adjusted cap).

- 6 Total Mobility has other costs, such as funding grants to encourage investment in wheelchair accessible vehicles, which are either funded in a similar co-funding arrangement, or solely through the NLTF. Trips requiring a wheelchair hoist use also qualify for an additional flat-rate payment to compensate the taxi for the additional loading and assistance time required.
- 7 The Scheme operates in the majority of regions using an electronic card with photo ID, with the remaining regions operating a paper-based trip management system. In 2021/22 there were approximately 89,000 Total Mobility cardholders. In 2022, approximately 1.6 million Total Mobility trips were made across New Zealand.
- 8 This review gives effect to New Zealand’s commitments to the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention). Of particular importance from a transport perspective is Article 9 of the Convention – Accessibility:
- *To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, [...] to transportation, [...], and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas.*
- 9 The New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy), and the Disability Action Plan 2019-2023 (the Action Plan), support New Zealand’s implementation of the Convention. The vision of the Strategy is for New Zealand to be a non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- 10 The Action Plan aims to deliver on the eight outcomes in the Strategy, including *Outcome 5: Accessibility*. It does this by further advancing the implementation of the Convention through identifying priority work programmes across government. The Ministry’s work programme for the Action Plan includes a commitment to oversee a review into Total Mobility.
- 11 Improving accessibility for disabled people is one of the intended outcomes of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy), with a goal of enabling disabled people to be able to “get from one place to another easily and safely”. The review will provide the Ministry with an opportunity to ensure that Total Mobility is contributing towards the holistic transport needs of disabled people, as intended by the Strategy.
- 12 Reviewing Total Mobility will also support the Enabling Good Lives principles that were developed by the disability community in 2011 with the intent of increasing choice and control for disabled people. The eight principles are based on respect – disabled people and their families should be decision-makers in their own lives and have access to the support required for this.

Organisations involved in the administration of Total Mobility

- 13 **Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport** (the Ministry) is the nation’s steward of the transport system, and is responsible for providing policy advice to the Government regarding Total Mobility.
- 14 **Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency** is responsible for the operational administration of the Scheme, working with regional councils to administer and fund the Scheme.

- 15 **Public transport authorities** administer Total Mobility in their respective regions, and contract and co-fund the Total Mobility Scheme's services as part of their provision of regional public transport services.

Scope of the review

- 16 The review will consider how Total Mobility operates and how it can be improved to remove barriers and achieve better outcomes for disabled people, such as improving access to their communities, social networks, cultural needs, health services, education and employment opportunities.
- 17 To do this, the review will consider the following:

The purpose of Total Mobility:

The purpose of the Scheme

- 18 The review will consider what the purpose of Total Mobility is, including who Total Mobility is meant to serve and how the scheme operates in relation to other forms of transport (such as public transport services and private vehicle use). This will include consideration of the role of caregivers who support others travel.
- 19 The review will examine how the purpose of Total Mobility aligns with the human rights of disabled people under the Convention.
- 20 The review will consider whether the purpose of the Total Mobility Scheme should be to replace, or complement other forms of transport, or whether a hybrid model should be adopted.

Journey purpose

- 21 The review will examine how Total Mobility is used by disabled people, and whether it is set-up in such a way that it can ensure people are able to travel independently and with dignity. As a part of this examination, comparisons will be made with regular public transport and private motor vehicle usage.
- 22 The review will also consider how the transport needs of disabled people have changed, and how they will continue to evolve over time. Subsequently, the review will consider how the delivery of Total Mobility services can reflect that change.

How the Total Mobility Scheme can be more accessible for disabled people:

Eligibility criteria and assessment

- 23 The review will consider the eligibility criteria of Total Mobility to ensure that they are still fit-for-purpose. Any consideration of eligibility will ensure that recommended changes are consistent with the Convention.
- 24 Total Mobility currently offers the same level of support for all Total Mobility users, irrespective of how their disability affects their ability to use other transport options (such as public transport). The review will consider the appropriateness of this and examine ways in which the eligibility criteria and assessment process could maximise the benefits of Total Mobility for those who need it the most.

- 25 The review will consider the assessment process of people applying for the Total Mobility Scheme, whether it is fit-for-purpose, and how it could be improved (including whether this aspect of Total Mobility should be centralised to ensure people across the country are getting the same level of support, and how the costs of assessments are/should be covered).
- 26 The review will determine the possible extent of fraud or misuse of the Scheme by users or operators, the reasons this may occur, and ways to mitigate it.
- 27 The review will also consider any possible funding from other government departments for similar support to ensure alignment and ease of access (such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, ACC or DHB funding).

Outreach

- 28 The review will consider the barriers that exist for people who are disabled to take advantage of the Total Mobility Scheme's services. It is important the review identifies what these barriers are and how those barriers could be removed or lessened. A key aim of this would be to improve the scheme's outreach across New Zealand.

Affordability

- 29 The review will consider whether affordability is a significant issue for users of Total Mobility, and whether the cost of services is prohibitive for users and as such, prevents Total Mobility from achieving its objective of giving effect to the Convention. If required, it will explore options for making Total Mobility more affordable. It will also consider how improving affordability would affect demand for Total Mobility services, and how that could be funded.
- 30 The review will investigate and take into account other possible costs faced by Total Mobility users while using the scheme beyond fare costs (such as card fees when paying for taxis and assessment fees).
- 31 The review will also examine any impacts of the introduction of permanent half price fares and the sustainability of this subsidy.
- 32 Any examination of affordability of Total Mobility will also consider affordability issues for public transport authorities and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.

The supply of Total Mobility services

- 33 The review will examine the supply of Total Mobility services, including the availability of specialist wheelchair accessible vehicles and drivers. If necessary, it will investigate options to increase the supply of services, so that Total Mobility services are reliable, timely and consistently available throughout the day and evening. As a part of this, it should examine alternative models for the delivery of Total Mobility services (including the safety of any alternative models). This would include:
 - how to take advantage of new and emerging transport services, such as on-demand public transport and community transport;
 - the possibility of and any barriers to incorporating owners of wheelchair accessible vehicles within the disability community into the Total Mobility Scheme as operators.

- 34 The review will consider whether profitability of providing services under the Total Mobility Scheme is an issue for service providers. If necessary, it will explore options for making Total Mobility more attractive for providers to encourage them to operate these services.
- 35 It will also examine how operators are compensated, and alternative models for the ownership and financing of equipment such as wheelchair hoists (see below). The review should identify opportunities and challenges with implementing alternative delivery models.
- 36 Any examination of the supply of services should also consider the Total Mobility Scheme's availability in rural areas and small towns, and possible ways to address the issue of a lack of supply in those areas.
- 37 The review will also consider the environmental impact of services offered to ensure these are sustainable overtime.

How aspects of the Total Mobility Scheme's operations can be improved:

Operator transport services

- 38 The review will consider the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles. It will consider:
- the appropriate processes to ensure that this specialised equipment is adequately and regularly inspected through the CoF process, maintained, and replaced when necessary. This would ensure that there is a consistent quality "floor" for equipment that is used by all operators within the Total Mobility Scheme.
 - alternative funding arrangements for the provision of equipment, with the aim of increasing the pool of possible operators (who may otherwise be put-off by the equipment's high initial costs as well as expensive ongoing maintenance).
- 39 The review will also consider elements of Total Mobility that relate to the delivery of services by operators. It will examine whether those elements are fit-for-purpose, including:
- operator training and certification (including how this can help to ensure customer safety);
 - the Total Mobility complaints mechanism; and
 - operator requirements, and whether those requirements avoid unnecessary barriers to entry.

Variability of delivery across the country

- 40 There are significant regional variations in how Total Mobility operates. This is because of how it is administered and how funding decisions made by public transport authorities shape regional policies around Total Mobility. The review will consider how the alignment of delivery can be improved, taking into account some scope for regional variation owing to population differences and environments.
- 41 Any alignment of services offered, including the level of financial support provided to the Total Mobility Scheme's users, should be considered in light of the scheme's ongoing sustainability, given the current reliance on local government co-funding.
- 42 The review will consider the ability of disabled people to travel across Aotearoa, and how the operation of different Total Mobility administration requirements in each region may impact on disabled travellers.
- 43 The review will also consider the opportunities that could come from centralising some administrative aspects of Total Mobility, such as its promotion and outreach.

Validity and timeliness of data to represent delivery, investment in and demand for Total Mobility

- 44 Individual councils own the data related to the Total Mobility Scheme. The review will examine how information can be better shared between operators, councils and Waka Kotahi, and how data can be better used for reporting purposes (taking into account privacy).
- 45 The review will examine the suitability of current technology platforms, including whether they are fit for purpose and any opportunities for improvement. It will also investigate possible other technology options that may be available.

Funding mechanisms for the Total Mobility Scheme:

- 46 The review will consider the appropriateness of current funding mechanisms for the Total Mobility Scheme, and if necessary explore possible alternative means of funding the scheme. Part of this process will include considering the sustainability of funding mechanisms to ensure the longevity of any changes to the Total Mobility Scheme that may result from the review.

Approach

- 47 The Ministry of Transport will undertake the review, working with independent contractors who will assist with certain elements of the review.
- 48 The review will be informed by research commissioned by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, [*Transport Experiences of Disabled People in Aotearoa New Zealand*](#). This report, published in August 2022, examined the experiences of disabled New Zealanders, including an examination of any barriers that exist for people wanting to use the Total Mobility Scheme. It also involved surveys and workshops with transport providers working in areas related to the provision of Total Mobility.

Engagement with stakeholders

49 The Ministry will engage regularly with Stakeholders throughout the review. These Stakeholders will include:

- The Disabled People’s Organisations Coalition
- The Office of Disability Issues (an office within Whaikaha – Ministry for Disabled People),
- Other Government agencies – such as Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency and Ministry of Education
- Age Concern NZ
- Tangata whaikaha Māori and services that support Māori, Iwi and whānau
- Pacifica disability services
- Agencies that undertake Total Mobility assessments
- Caregivers
- Existing technology and payment providers
- Representatives of public transport authorities
- Existing Total Mobility service operators

Governance

50 The Total Mobility review is being led by the Mobility and Safety team at Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport, reporting to the DCE System and Regulatory Design.

Key dates and report back

51 The Ministry has developed a timeline for the review which is set out below:

Action	Proposed timing
Minister agreement to the draft Terms of Reference for the review	Completed
Engage key stakeholders on the draft Terms of Reference, and incorporate feedback into a final Terms of Reference	Completed
Provide finalised Terms of Reference for Minister’s agreement	20 July 2023

Procurement of contractors	August 2023
Development of draft discussion papers with input from stakeholders	August 2023 – January 2024
First draft of discussion papers due	January 2024
Engagement with stakeholders on draft discussion papers	February – May 2024
Summary of feedback prepared and key themes shared with the Minister	June – July 2024
Final recommendations and review completed	Late 2024

Note: Over the course of the review the anticipated timeframes may change. Any substantial changes will be communicated to stakeholders.