



**CENTRAL  
HAWKE'S BAY**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# Submission on Hawke's Bay Public Transport Plan

30 August 2022

# Central Hawke's Bay District Council

## Submission on Hawke's Bay Regional Council Public Transport Plan

### Introduction

1. Central Hawke's Bay District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Hawke's Bay Regional Public Transport Plan. This submission has been approved by the Chief Executive and the Elected Council, through its Strategy and Wellbeing Committee.
2. Council broadly supports the proposal contained in the Hawke's Bay Regional Public Transport Plan as a good starting point for developing a public transport connection between Central Hawke's Bay and Hastings and Napier.
3. At a high-level, Council believes that there is likely to be good demand for such a service and welcomes the trial of a bus service to and from Central Hawke's Bay to Hastings. This is a positive step forward to offer an alternative transport option to Central Hawke's Bay residents (and visitors to Central Hawke's Bay), in particular at a time of cost-of-living pressures (including high fuel prices) and to make progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Through this submission, Council wishes to highlight several points made by Central Hawke's Bay residents and commuters, and to make recommendations to HBRC for its consideration on its proposed Regional Public Transport Plan.

### Context

5. During the development of Project Thrive<sup>1</sup> in 2017, the Central Hawke's Bay community clearly described a Thriving Central Hawke's Bay of the future. That is a proud and prosperous district made up of strong communities and connected people who respect and protect our environment and celebrate our beautiful part of New Zealand. Ensuring our community grows in a smart and sustainable way with facilities and infrastructure that are innovative and fit for purpose is critical to this.
6. In 2021 Central Hawke's Bay's population hit an all-time high of just over 15,500 residents, reaching levels of growth and optimism not seen since the 1960s. Fast forward to 2031 and despite the current economic challenges, that number is projected to increase to over 18,000 people – with over 1,400 homes forecast to be built in that same time – and rise to 32,300 by mid-century.
7. A report produced for Council by Squillions Ltd in 2022<sup>2</sup> also identified that 61% of wage and salary earners work for employers located outside of Central Hawke's Bay. While this figure includes remote workers, the data shows that the top external employer of Central Hawke's Bay District residents was Hastings, with approximately a quarter of Central Hawke's Bay residents deriving their income from Hastings District.
8. Despite these levels of current and future projected growth, and Central Hawke's Bay's relative proximity to Hastings and Napier as commuting destinations, there are currently no public transport options for residents of Central Hawke's Bay to travel to and from Hawke's Bay largest urban areas.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chbdc.govt.nz/our-council/about/project-thrive/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chbdc.govt.nz/assets/Document-Library/Responding-to-Growth/Demographic-and-Economic-Growth-Projections-CHBDC-2022-Update.pdf>

9. The Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC), through its Hawke's Bay Regional Public Transport Plan contained in the "Help us shape the future of public transport" consultation document, proposes to trial (between now and 2025) a commuter bus service between Central Hawke's Bay and Hastings Central. This service would run twice a day – 2 services in the morning to and from Central Hawke's Bay, and 2 services in the afternoon.
10. This submission presents Council's views on this proposal, and makes broader suggestions on how to improve it. To inform its submission and because HBRC's online submission form and consultation questions would not best describe the range of possible outcomes for people living in Central Hawke's Bay to provide their views on the proposals, Council undertook a survey that was shared on its social media platforms for one week from Monday 15 to Monday 22 August 2022. A total of 383 responses were received, showing the strong interest that exists on this topic from Central Hawke's Bay residents and commuters. The survey results are discussed in the submission points below.
11. The online survey ran for six days and was linked to Council's Facebook page and promoted by the Mayor and Councillors and by Council staff through community networks. The number of responses over the short survey period is reflective of the challenges that travel creates to and from the centres of Hastings and Napier, being a major barrier and inequality for many in our community, further reinforced with a growing commuting population in recent years.
12. The intention of the survey was primarily to gain quantitative and qualitative insights from that section of the population who identify themselves as having a personal stake in regional public transport. Statistically, if we were to assume that roughly one third of Central Hawke's Bay population fall into that category – ie 5,000 people – with a 5% margin of error, we could have had over 95% confidence in the results obtained had these respondents been contacted randomly. However, this was not intended to be a randomised poll, rather a way to quickly canvas the views of a specific subset of the Central Hawke's Bay population. When viewed as a customer feedback collection tool, this survey gives us valuable answers.

#### **Demand for public transport in Central Hawke's Bay**

13. The first question in Council's survey asked "Hawke's Bay Regional Council's public transport consultation document proposes 'Two services per day Monday to Friday to Hastings (morning) and Central Hawke's Bay (afternoon)'. How likely are you to use such a service?"
14. A total of 179 respondents indicated they would be likely to use this service (46.7% of respondents), 156 may use this service occasionally (40.7%), and 12.5% (48 respondents) indicated they would probably not use this service.
15. Most respondents therefore indicated they would likely use such a service, at least occasionally, which demonstrates that there is likely to be good demand for such a service.

#### **Frequency of service**

16. The second survey question asked "Based on the proposal, would 'two services per day Monday to Friday to Hastings (morning) and Central Hawke's Bay (afternoon)' be enough? What frequency would you like to see?"
17. A strong majority of respondents (230, or 61%) indicated they believe that two services in the morning and two services in the afternoon would be enough, with 77 indicating they would prefer three services in the morning and afternoon, and only a small minority (23 respondents) wanting more than 3 services per day.

18. Based on these results, Council submits that the proposal is appropriate as a starting point, and that the frequency of service is reviewed as the trial for the service progresses. Consideration should also be given to extending a service to weekends and public holidays.

#### **Mode of transport**

19. Council also sought views on which public transport options would be used to travel to and from Central Hawke's Bay if available. This question reveals that a bus service is not the preferred public transport option for respondents, and that there is very strong support for a passenger train service. 329 respondents were supportive of a passenger train service, followed by a bus service option (219 respondents), while a light rail service came as the third preferred option (205 respondents).
20. Qualitative information received through the survey, supported by commentary on social media and other anecdotal information, shows that there is strong support for a passenger train service to run between Central Hawke's Bay and Hastings / Napier. Anecdotally, we expect that this mode of transport is preferential because rail is perceived as reducing burden on the existing roading network, not seen to experience delays that currently occur on the State Highway Network and potentially as a more 'environmentally friendly' and modern form of transport.
21. We understand that HBRC has in recent years commissioned a report relating to the financial viability of a rail network for passengers, and if this is the case encourage HBRC to further outline in the Plan why rail is not a viable solution at this time and not included in the plan. Alternatively, if this is not the situation, Council therefore recommends that HBRC, Waka Kotahi and KiwiRail further assesses the viability of a passenger train service to and from Central Hawke's Bay.

#### **Potential users**

22. Through the survey, Council tested the 'type' of people that were interested in discussing public transport options for Central Hawke's Bay to Hastings / Napier. 117 respondents indicated they were commuters from Central Hawke's Bay to Hastings / Napier for work, 185 respondents would use public transport from Central Hawke's Bay for other reasons, for example shopping, while 16 were students at the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) and would therefore benefit from a public transport option from Central Hawke's Bay to the EIT campus in Taradale.
23. We are also aware of 50-60 college students who travel to Hastings each day for schooling. While a paid bus service is currently co-ordinated by the school, the addition of alternative return times that enables sport and other extra-curricular activities to occur would also further support these students.

#### **Destinations**

24. To the question "Thinking about the route of a new public transport service travelling to and from Central Hawke's Bay to Hastings/Napier - where in Central Hawke's Bay would you usually like to start or finish your trip?", the vast majority of respondents indicated that their trip would start/finish in Central Hawke's Bay's three main town centres (Waipukurau 46.6%, Waipawa 29.1%, Otane 11.3%). A small number of respondents would be starting/finishing their journey from Central Hawke's Bay's rural areas, including Takapau (5.1%) and Porangahau (2.7%).
25. Based on this information, Council therefore supports the recommendation that a public transport service should start / finish in Waipukurau, with stops in Waipawa and Otane. Council also recommends that HBRC gives further consideration to facilitate accessibility to the public transport service to people living outside of the 3 main urban areas.

### **Connectivity, Accessibility and Equality**

26. Council also sought advice from respondents on where in Hastings / Taradale / Napier would be their final destination should a public transport service be established. A variety of destinations were provided as options in the survey, and respondents were also able to add other destinations as free text.
27. 191 respondents provided Hastings Central as their main destination (over half of respondents), followed by Napier Central (91 respondents), Ahuriri (18 respondents) and Taradale, to the EIT, (14 respondents). The other destinations included in responses included Hawke's Bay Hospital, Whakatu, Stortford Lodge and the Port.
28. Based on this information, Council suggests that while the main destination for the trialled bus service could be Hastings Central, due consideration must be given by HBRC to ensure that there is good public transport connectivity between Hastings Central and other destinations in Napier and Hastings, to ensure that the public transport option proposed is not restrictive for potential users. This would mean ensuring as a first step that bus timetables align, so that travellers from Central Hawke's Bay are able to take a 'connecting service' when they arrive in Hastings Central.
29. Council also recommends that HBRC ensures that, in the trial period for the service to/from Central Hawke's Bay, the buses used are accessible to people with disabilities and the elderly, and also that customers are provided with the option to bring a push chair and bicycles – again, to ensure the service is accessible to all, and also to provide an option for users to make their way to their final destination if outside of the Hastings Central area.
30. In the establishment of the service, Council also encourages HBRC to work with Council to identify other suitable pick up and park and ride localities for the services. While the proposed stops identified on page 43 of the plan are central, they do not have suitable vehicle parking close by that provides for all-day parking.
31. We note that Proposed Policy 48 of the Plan outlines the intention to investigate rural park and ride facilities long-term, however the District does not currently have facilities established where appropriate all-day parking exists for potentially 60-100 additional vehicles in centralised locations. Ensuring these localities are suitable will be critical for the services' short and long-term success. This is particularly important with many users potentially being rural and having no choice but to drive to pick-up/drop off locations in Waipukurau, Waipawa or Otane.
32. To this end, we recommend that the plan gives a timeline for the proposed investigation of rural park and ride facilities rather than leaving the Policy open ended.

### **Impacts on rating**

33. Several survey respondents, supported by commentary on social media and anecdotal evidence, expressed some concerns on the impact these proposals and / or alternatives might have on rating levels. Several respondents indicated they would not support paying additional rates for such a service, in particular if they were unlikely to be using such a service.
34. Council recommends that it is imperative that that HBRC undertakes a robust public consultation process on the rating impact of these proposals, including those relating to Central Hawke's Bay, as part of the next steps in developing the Regional Public Transport Plan. .

### **Timing**

35. We recommend that HBRC review the implementation date of the proposed commuter service outlined in Table 11 of the Draft Plan. The implementation of the service by 2025 is too late to tangibly support those in our community that have already expressed a clear desire for the

service to be established. We would therefore urge HBRC to take a stronger advocacy and leadership position and bring forward the trial to 2023 and to work with Council to identify other sources of potential funding to enable the trial in the short term in the event funding remains a barrier.

#### **Community Transport and the review of MyWay Trial**

36. We recommend the plan also includes community led public transport options for Central Hawke's Bay, recognising the significant growth and potential the community is experiencing. Identical to Wairoa, Central Hawke's Bay too has a strong need for co-ordinated local community transport. With over 25% of the population forecast to be 65+ by 2031 demand will continue to grow and with existing community services primarily focussing on travel primarily for health to and from Hawke's Bay Hospital, there is a need for strategic support to co-ordinate community transport locally.
37. Therefore we recommend that HBRC extend the Community Transport project for Wairoa to include Central Hawke's Bay also, as outlined in Table 11 for 2023.
38. We also recommend that based on the findings and review of the MyWay on demand public transport system currently underway, there may be an opportunity to implement a similar pilot in Central Hawke's Bay as an alternative to the creation of a Community Trust Transport model as outlined in the Plan. Based on the continued growth of the district, this model may be a more appropriate legitimised and professional approach to public transport for the long-term, rather than relying on community goodwill for the delivery of a core and essential service.

#### **Technology and Innovation**

39. We also encourage HBRC to be more ambitious and future-focussed in its co-ordination and leadership of public transport relating to technology in the plan. While technology is referenced in the plan primarily relating to ticketing, there is greater opportunity to add services and other offerings including ride-sharing and car-pooling apps. The plan is currently silent on these types of offerings, having missed opportunities to achieve reductions in vehicle kilometres travelled and emissions, while not substantially requiring HBRC to provide any significant additional servicing and investment.
40. Ultimately well promoted services could support and assist residents in rural communities throughout the region, not just Central Hawke's Bay, to co-ordinate and enable ride sharing. To this end, we recommend that this be a priority project for inclusion in the plan in the first year of its implementation.

#### **Conclusion**

41. Council again wishes to thank HBRC for the opportunity to provide its views on the Regional Land Transport Plan and looks forward to continuing to contribute to this important kaupapa.
42. Council welcomes the opportunity to speak to its submission, and to engage with HBRC officers further in the near future.