



THE WEST COAST
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Draft
West Coast Regional
Public Transport Plan

For public consultation

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1. Introduction

This is the Draft Regional Public Transport Plan for the West Coast 2023 – 2033 (the Plan). The Plan is a statutory document developed under the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA). It sets out the Council’s intentions and policies regarding public transport throughout the West Coast region over the coming years.

The West Coast does not have a comprehensive public transport network, due to its small and dispersed population base. As there are no subsidised public transport bus services in the region, this plan instead focuses on those services that are funded and subsidised by the Regional or District Councils of the West Coast, primarily the taxi services and the Total Mobility Scheme.

While these subsidised services are the focus of this draft Plan, this does not preclude the community from exploring other potential future public transport services for the region. Any such proposals would need to be accompanied by a strong business case supporting future change.

The Plan is prepared by the West Coast Regional Council (WCRC). As part of the preparation of the draft Plan, consultation will be undertaken with the Regional Transport Committee, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Rūnanga, and the Grey, Buller and Westland District Councils.

This Plan replaces the last plan adopted in 2015.

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The LTMA states that the purpose of the Plan is to provide:

- A means of encouraging Council and public transport operators to work together in developing public transport services and infrastructure; and
- An instrument for engaging with the public in the region on the design and operation of the public transport network; and
- A statement of:
 - The public transport services that are integral to the public transport network; and
 - The policies and procedures that apply to those services; and
 - The information and infrastructure that support those services.

The Plan takes into account all relevant national and local policies, and the public transport funding that is likely to be available to Council.

The Plan is set out as follows:

- Section 2 provides the strategic context
- Section 3 sets out the policy context
- Section 4 details the objectives, policies and actions for the delivery of public transport on the West Coast;
- Section 5 sets out the services, and how they are to be funded, through this Plan
- Section 6 sets out the monitoring and review to be undertaken and the policy to determine significance, for the purpose of consultation on variations to this Plan

1.2 Period of the Plan

Section 126 of the LTMA states the RPTP must, at all times, be kept current for a period not less than 3 years in advance, but not more than 10 years in advance. The Council may review the Plan from time to time, however, it must be reviewed and, if necessary, renewed or varied, after the public transport service components of a RLTP are approved or varied.

2. Strategic Context

2.1 Our region

The West Coast is New Zealand's most sparsely populated region, stretching over 600km from north to south. It is the country's fifth largest region by land area, but the smallest by population size.

Approximately half of the population resides in the three main towns of Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika. The remaining population is dispersed in small towns and rural areas throughout the region, largely connected by the State Highway.

Our region's resident population of 32,700 (Infometrics) experienced a 0.6% decrease in growth in 2022. The West Coast is one of the few regions in New Zealand projected to have a decline in population over the next two decades. While official projections indicate potential decline, anecdotal evidence would suggest that more people are moving to the region.

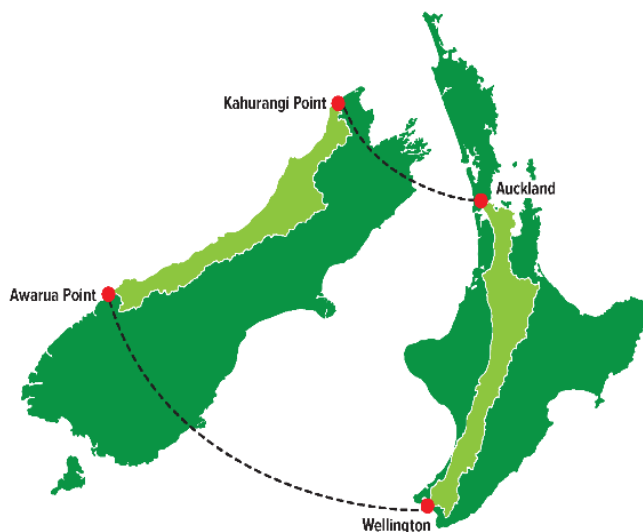
Demographically, the West Coast's population is not dissimilar to the rest of New Zealand, although it does have a slightly smaller proportion of school age and younger children and a slightly higher proportion of the population of retirement age.

Ngāi Tahu are the tangata whenua that hold the mana of the West Coast and further parts of the South Island. There are two rūnanga who are the kaitiaki (guardians) of the West Coast region. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae is the mandated representative body of Ngāti Waewae, a hapū of Ngāi Tahu. The takiwā of Ngāti Waewae is centred on Arahura and Hokitika and extends from the north bank of the Pouerua River to Kahurangi and inland to the main divide. Ngāti Waewae shares the area between Hokitika and Pouerua with Ngāti Māhaki.

Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio is the mandated representative body of Ngāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio, a hapū of Ngāi Tahu. Their takiwā is centred at Makaawhio (Jacobs River) and Mahitahi (Bruce Bay) and extends from the south bank of the Hokitika River to Piopiotahi and inland to the main divide. Ngāti Māhaki share the area between Pouerua and Hokitika with Ngāti Waewae.

Recognised for its Untamed Natural Wilderness, the region has a number of natural and physical advantages lending itself to a strong tourism and primary industry-based economy.

Our region has one regional council – the West Coast Regional Council – and three district councils: Buller, Grey and Westland.



The West Coast region stretches the equivalent distance of that between Auckland and Wellington

Issues and opportunities for public transport on the West Coast	
Population change and an ageing population	Static population growth - approximately 32,000 across a long and narrow region 23% population 65+ compared to national average of 16%
Fuel prices	Increasing cost of fuel. Forecasts indicate prices will increase sharply beyond 2030 as accessible world supplies diminish.
Deprivation and affordability	West Coast household income is approximately 73% of the New Zealand median
Increasing use of technology	Technology is changing the patterns of employment, commuting, recreation and education.
A long narrow provincial region	Given the rural nature of many of the West Coast communities provision of alternative transport options can be difficult. Transport is often raised as a barrier to community participation by those without a car.

Although extensive in area, the West Coast is the most sparsely populated region in New Zealand. Much of the region is characterised by rugged landscapes, extensive areas of conservation estate and rural land, dispersed travel patterns, and low population densities. This pattern of development presents a unique set of challenges to the provision of sustainable public transport. Issues include practicality and whether it is economic, in terms of the cost of providing public transport in relation to the benefit that may be derived.

Who are the transport disadvantaged on the West Coast?

People who face transport barriers due to limited affordability, and/or a lack of available transport options that they are able to use. This includes people who live in rural areas with no vehicle, low-income households, elderly people, people with disabilities.

Public transport can help to reduce transport disadvantages

Public transport enables mobility without a car

- Access to more opportunities
- Reduces the financial burden of owning a car

Public transport can be a back-up option if a car becomes unavailable, or if fuel prices rise

2.2 Current Public Transport Services

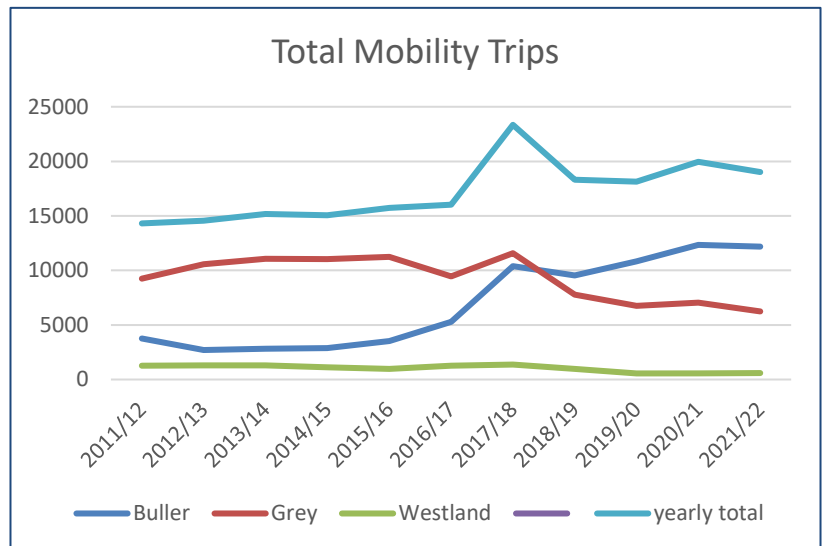
The West Coast does not have a comprehensive public transport network, due to its extremely small and dispersed population base and the cost of providing this from a very small rating base. Services currently available are described below.

Total Mobility

The Total Mobility scheme provides subsidised fares to people who have an impairment that prevents them from undertaking one or more of the following five components of a journey unaccompanied, on a bus, train or ferry (or could not if these public transport modes were available) in a safe and dignified manner:

1. Getting to the place from where the transport departs
2. Getting on to the transport
3. Riding securely
4. Getting off the transport
5. Getting to the destination.

The scheme is administered by the West Coast Regional Council and funded through the general rate (40%) and subsidies from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (60%). The Regional Council applies for a set funding allocation each year based on anticipated demand. Fares are subsidised at 50% of the cost up to a maximum of \$30 per trip. The scheme operates in the three main centres of Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika providing subsidised door-to-door transport for 820 registered clients. 19,132 trips were undertaken in 2021/2022.



In addition to the subsidised fares, the Total Mobility scheme also subsidises services capable of carrying clients in wheelchairs. The subsidy provides an extra \$11.50 per trip to cover the additional time and cost to operators of providing this service.

The region has four taxi companies operating in the three main population centres of the West Coast. The Buller and Westland District Councils receive a subsidy to support the taxi services in Westport and Hokitika.

Trip numbers declined slightly during COVID. These are anticipated to bounce back and to gradually increase as more clients join the scheme due to an aging population. Fuel price rises has resulted in an increase in fares. These factors are leading to an increase in the funding required to provide the Total Mobility service across the region into the future.

Non-contracted transport services

Although the Council has no direct involvement in these services, it does have an interest in ensuring they are maintained, as they contribute towards the core objectives of the West Coast Regional Land Transport Plan. These include:

- Commercial operators – including Intercity, East West Coaches and Atomic Shuttle - provide connections between the regional towns and urban centres in other regions.
- School bus services are currently run under contract to the Ministry of Education.
- Various communities provide transport options through community van services.
- Tour operators cater for tourists through services that are non-scheduled and concentrated around peak season or organised tour programmes.
- The TranzAlpine Rail service provides a connection between Greymouth and Christchurch though this is primarily a tourism experience as opposed to a commuter service. The region does not have any other public passenger rail services.
- Airports at Westport and Hokitika currently provide commercial services through Sounds Air and Air NZ respectively.

3. Policy Context

3.1 National legislation, strategies and plans

Land Transport Management Act

The Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA), was amended in 2013, repealing the Public Transport Management Act 2008 and bringing the relevant provisions into the LTMA. The purpose of the LTMA is *to contribute to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system in the public interest*¹. The LTMA requires a regional council to adopt a Regional Public Transport plan if it intends to:

- a) Enter into any contract for the supply of any public transport service; or
- b) Provide any financial assistance to any operator or user of:
 - A taxi service
 - A shuttle service.

This means the West Coast Regional Council must prepare a plan because it contracts, administers and rates for the Total Mobility scheme, and for the District Councils to continue to subsidise the taxi services in Westport and Hokitika.

Transport Outcomes Framework

In 2018, the Ministry of Transport worked with other government agencies to develop a Transport Outcomes Framework for the transport system. This framework takes a strategic, long term and integrated approach to transport and makes clear what government is aiming to achieve through the transport system in the long-term. It is an enduring document meant to last beyond government of the day change. From a public transport perspective, the framework goes on to say that greater attention needs to be given to public transport and active transport modes in order to:

- Improve inclusive access;
- Support healthy and safe people;
- Reduce carbon emissions; and
- Make urban environments more liveable overall.

Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

The Government Policy Statement (GPS) sets out the government's desired outcomes and funding priorities for the land transport sector and is the policy document that directly influences decisions on how funding from the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) is invested for the next three year period.

The current GPS builds on the direction set in GPS 2018 and continues the Government's commitment to safety within the transport system, prioritising better travel options in our towns and cities, and supporting investments for improving freight connectivity through rail and coastal shipping. By including climate change as a strategic priority, the GPS highlights the Government's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transport system.

The four strategic priorities for GPS 2021 are:

Safety	Developing a land transport system where no-one is killed or injured.
Better Travel Options	Providing people with better transport options to access social and economic opportunities
Climate Change	Developing a low carbon transport system that supports emissions reductions, while improving safety and inclusive aspects
Improving Freight Connections	Improving freight connections for economic development

Arataki

Arataki presents Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's 10-year view of what is needed to deliver on the government's current priorities and long-term outcomes for the land transport system. The draft Arataki was released in 2022 to show the direction of the Agency at regions commence work on the Regional Land Transport Plan review. The passenger transport related directions below identify the most important issues Waka Kotahi consider need to be resolved during the next 10 years:

- Begin to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled in a way that's equitable and improves people's quality of life
- Support efforts to improve access to essential services, and social and economic opportunities
- Explore the potential for new and emerging technologies, such as on-demand services, to improve access to social and

¹ Section 3 LTMA

economic opportunities.

Regional Land Transport Plan for the West Coast 2020/2021 – 2030/2031

The role of the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) is to provide strategic direction to land transport and set out how the region proposes to invest to achieve its objectives. The purpose of the RLTP is to:

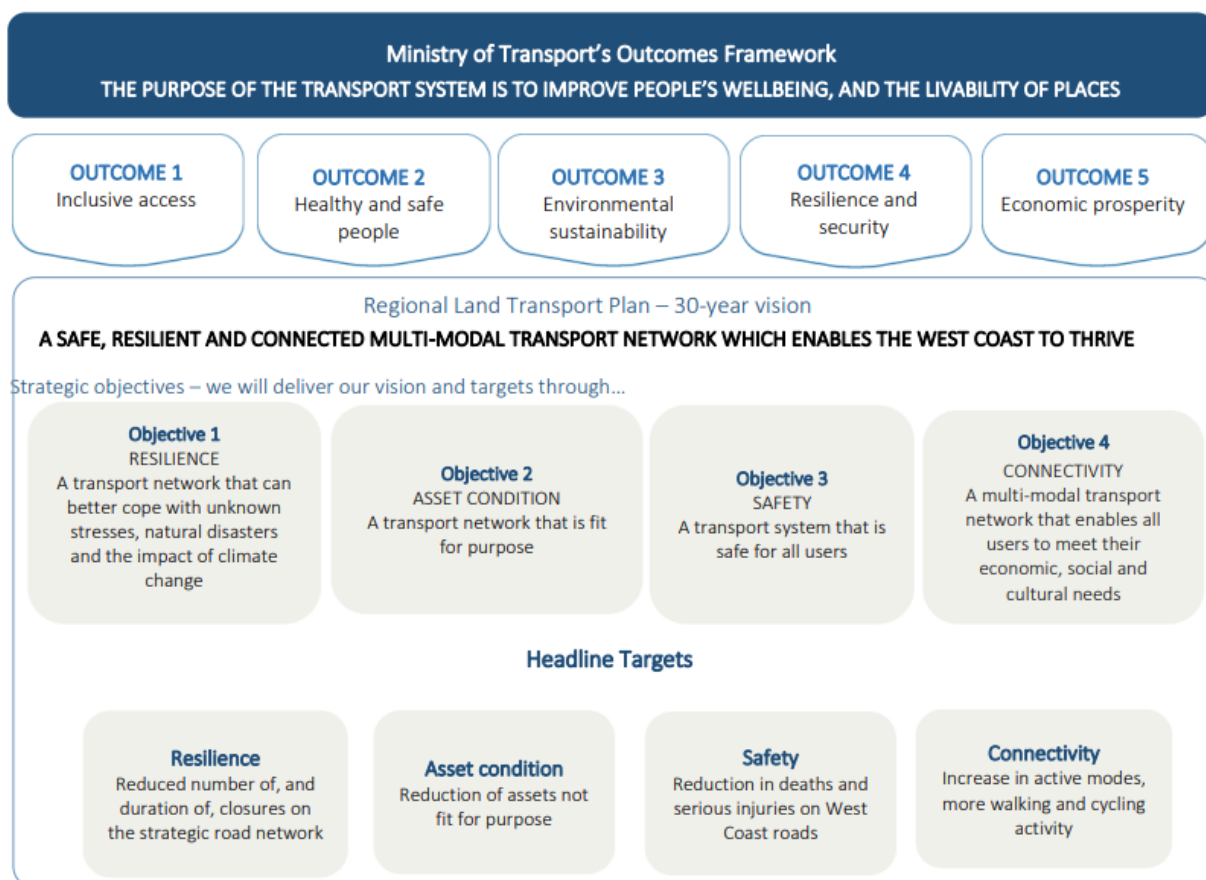
- Identify the key transport issues and challenges in the West Coast region and how land transport activities proposed in the Plan will address these issues
- Set out the region's land transport objectives, policies and measures for at least 10 financial years
- List land transport activities in the region proposed for national funding during the six financial years from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024
- Prioritise regionally significant activities
- Provide a ten-year forecast of anticipated revenue and expenditure on land transport activities.

The overall vision for land transport on the West Coast is – *a safe, resilient and connected multi-modal transport network which enables the West Coast to thrive.*

The Regional Public Transport plan is prepared within the scope of the RLTP and must be consistent with this higher-level document. In this sense the strategic direction and priorities for public transport have already been broadly set by the RLTP. To do this the Regional Transport Committee held an investment logic mapping exercise to:

- Define the transport problems as they see them on the West Coast;
- Identify the benefits in addressing those problems;
- Form their strategic objectives to deliver their vision.

The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the Government's transport outcomes and strategic framework of the RLTP. There may be changes to the regional vision, objectives and headline targets as a result of the interim review of the RLTP which will come into effect from 1 July 2024.



Long-term Plans

The Council's Long-term Plan (LTP) describes how the Council is to deliver the outcomes agreed to by the local

community, the level of rates expected for the first three years of the LTP and other information pertinent to the community. One aspect of a LTP is to set out public transport activities and funding sources for the next ten years.

Te Tai o Poutini Plan (the combined District Plan for the West Coast)

The four Councils are also working collaboratively on a combined District Plan for the region, which will manage areas of urban development. However, this is not expected to impact on current requirements for public transport covered in this plan.

Ministry of Transport Review of Total Mobility

The Ministry of Transport are undertaking a review of the Total Mobility Scheme. At the time of drafting the Terms of Reference for the review were still in draft format and had not been released. Outcome so the review may need to be captured with future regional public transport plans.

4. Strategic Framework

This section contains the objectives, policies and methods for public transport in the region.

The provision of services is a balancing act between affordability for Council (in the use of its rates funding) while recognising that a key goal for the services provided are to improve the economic and social outcomes for communities and attempt to reduce deprivation.

Objectives, policies and action for public transport

Objectives to support public transport on the West Coast are designed to support relevant outcomes from the Regional Land Transport Plan 2021 – 2031. These are as follows:

1. To consider the needs of the transport disadvantaged and maintain accessibility for mobility-impaired persons.
2. To ensure the continuation of services that provide a public transport function which meet the needs of both the community and the transport disadvantaged.
3. Support other passenger transport services where appropriate.

The following tables contain the key policies and methods proposed for public transport in the region while giving effect to the objectives above. Collectively, these also put into practice the broader transport direction expressed in the Regional Land Transport Plan.

Implementation of the policies and depends on the availability of funding.

Objective 1: To consider the needs of the transport disadvantaged and maintain accessibility for mobility-impaired persons

Council does not hold a lot of information about demand for services required by the transport disadvantaged. More information is required to enable action should funding or other opportunities become available.

The primary focus of this plan is to ensure that the needs of those least able to travel to basic activities and services – the transport disadvantaged – are supported, enabling a level of independence for these community members. Subject to continued funding availability, the Council will therefore continue to support the Total Mobility scheme.

Policy 1	Actions
Understand and monitor demand for services to meet the needs of the transport disadvantaged.	Undertake investigation as to the demand for alternative transport options for consideration in the future.
Policy 2	Actions
Maintain and expand, where practicable, support for services to meet the needs of the transport disadvantaged who meet the Total Mobility eligibility criteria.	Continue to support and fund the Total Mobility Scheme, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contracting taxi and shuttle services to provide targeted services; ▪ Providing a discount on qualifying travel (up to a specified limit) and review of this subsidy as required; ▪ In eligible cases, assisting with accessing funding for the installation of hoists in specialist vehicles so that wheelchairs can be carried; ▪ Providing the ongoing administration of the service including response to questions of scheme users and other agencies; ▪ Managing the day-to-day operation of the scheme which is comprised of the 4 Councils, taxi companies and eligibility assessors; ▪ Continue to improve the administration of the scheme where practicable, and to meet any Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency requirements; ▪ Enabling new operators to join the Total Mobility scheme where appropriate.

Objective 2: Ensure the continuation of services that provide a public transport function which meet the needs of both the community and the transport disadvantaged

The subsidy from the Buller and Westland District Councils ensures that these services remain viable and continue to provide a public transport function, not just for the provision of the Total Mobility scheme, but for the community as a whole. The provision of the taxi service enables those without other forms of transport available to them to access shopping, health and other local services; providing for enhanced social connections within the community.

They also play an important role in providing an alternative form of transport to get home at night, as well as giving a safe transport option for the elderly and disabled.

Policy 2	Actions
Provide a subsidy to the taxi services within Westport and Hokitika to ensure the continuation of services such as Total Mobility, and for the community as a whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the relevant district councils to continue to fund the subsidy to support the taxi services of Westland and Hokitika.

Objective 3: Support other passenger transport services where appropriate

Transport is often raised as a barrier to community participation for those without a car. Various communities do operate community vans which provide transport to major service centres. Funding public transport services in addition to those identified in this plan has been beyond the scope of Council due to the size of the region, population size and availability of funding. However, Council does not currently have the information to ascertain the need or demand for public transport services.

Council will be seeking feedback from the community during the development of the Long-term Plan 2024-34 as to whether there is a desire to explore the potential for undertaking investigation for on-demand services through the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan. Should there be demonstrated demand to do this, further work will be required to investigate where services could operate including locations, days and times.

Policy 1	Actions
Support the provision of other passenger transport services where there is demand, taking into account funding availability and the sustainability of services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore the potential for undertaking investigation for on-demand services through the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan. ▪ Maintain a schedule of exempt services.

5. Operating and funding public transport

5.1 Total Mobility

Council will continue to administer and support the Total Mobility scheme (policies and methods for Total Mobility are included in Part 2).

Total Mobility funding is set regionally and funded by the Local Authority where the trip is generated. The funding subsidy for the West Coast is currently set at 50% of the fare with a maximum subsidy of \$15 per trip. However, this subsidy changed in 2022 when Government released its cost-of-living package providing an additional 25% discount to the fare. Government has signalled that this increased subsidy will become permanent from 1 April 2023. This means clients will only pay 25% of their fare up to a total of \$30 permanently.

The subsidy received by the client is funded 25% through the Regional Council's general rate and 75% from the National Land Transport Fund.

Review of the maximum fare and its subsidy amount will be undertaken as required. At this time there are very few total mobility trips undertaken which are in excess of the maximum fare.

The scheme also provides a subsidy for the use of hoist vehicles capable of carrying people in wheelchairs or mobility scooters. An extra \$11.50 subsidy is received per trip in recognition of the cost and time involved in carrying passengers using a wheelchair. This is currently funded by Waka Kotahi NZTA at 100%.

The Regional Council administers the scheme, with the District Council Offices in Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika responsible for the distribution of vouchers for use in the taxis. The Regional Council is responsible for payments to the taxi companies.

Because the scheme runs nationally, there are certain rules about how it is run that are set by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. Council will continue to comply with these rules and thus ensure West Coast members can continue to use the scheme elsewhere in New Zealand.

5.2 Westport and Hokitika taxi services

The Buller and Westland District Councils intend to continue with the provision of a subsidy to ensure the ongoing viability of the taxi companies within these townships.

5.3 Exempt services

The Land Transport Management Act 2003 requires all exempt services in a region to be registered before operation. For the West Coast this relates primarily to inter-regional public transport services. There are registered commercial services that operate without any financial support from The Council. These are set out in Part 1 of this plan. As these services operate independently, operators can set fares, timetables and routes as they see appropriate.

5.4 Future improvements

Due to the geographical and funding challenges, and limited demand for public transport services, no major plans for changes or new services are proposed in this plan. However, this does not preclude the possibility of any new services in the future tailored to the needs of individual communities and those who use the services, for example community vehicle trusts from becoming established.

Council will explore the potential for undertaking investigation into new passenger transport services through the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan and seek feedback from the community on this activity.

Future improvements are likely to be focus on the administration of the Total Mobility scheme, although there are no major issues with the provision of this service at this time.

6. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring is an important component of the decision-making process. It establishes a process to check on the progress being made towards the achievement of this plan, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the options that have been chosen.

Future reviews will be undertaken following the adoption of the Regional Land Transport Plan. The review of the Regional Public Transport Plan may determine that no significant change to the Plan is necessary (having regard to the Significance Policy).

6.1 Monitoring

Monitoring of the Plan will be undertaken using the following key performance indicators:

- Patronage – total trips undertaken by Total Mobility clients
- Cost to Council of providing the services.

6.2 Amendments and variations to this Plan

This Plan can be varied at any time. However, if a variation is found to be ‘significant’ under the Significance Policy, consultation will be required. The approach to consultation will reflect the level of significance of any proposed variation. Consideration will be given to the costs and benefits of any consultative process or procedure, and the extent to which consultation has already taken place.

If the significance threshold is not met, the special consultation procedure will not need to be followed.

6.3 Significance Policy

This policy sets out how to determine the significance of proposed variations to the Plan, as required by section 120(4) of the LTMA. The level of significance determines the consultation that will be undertaken for any proposed variation to the plan.

General determination of significance

The significance of variations to this plan will be determined by Council on a case-by-case basis. When determining the significance of a variation, consideration must be given to the extent to which the variation:

- Signals a material change to the planned level of investment in the public transport network;
- Impacts on the purpose of the Land Transport Management Act 2013;
- Affects residents (variations with a moderate impact on a large number of residents, or variations with a major impact on a small number of residents will always have greater significance than those with a minor impact);
- Affects the overall integrity of this plan, including its overall affordability;
- Has already been the subject of consultation with affected parties.

Significant and non-significant matters

Matters that will always be considered ‘significant’ are:

- Any variation that amends this policy on significance;
- Any major change to existing services, or the introduction of a new service (other than changes to or the introduction of trial services), for which no consultation regarding the change or introduction has occurred.

Matters that will usually be considered ‘not significant’ are:

- Minor amendments to this Plan;
- Minor amendments to subsidy levels in accordance with the Regional Land Transport Plan;
- The introduction, alteration or deletion of trial services.

Where the Council determines that a proposed variation is not significant, Council may undertake targeted consultation. For example, any proposals for changes that affect only a sector of the community or the industry (such as a change to the Total Mobility scheme) will be worked through with those most likely to be affected, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Note that this policy does not preclude the Council from a more comprehensive consultation process for a variation that does not meet the significance threshold if the benefits of that consultation are considered to outweigh the costs.

Appendix A: Current Services

Total Mobility

The Total mobility scheme caters to those people with impairments by providing access to suitable transport. The Council intends to continue providing the service throughout the West Coast where approved transport providers operate. Area where approved operators are based are:

Area	Approved transport provider
Westport	Buller Taxis Westport Cabs East West Coaches
Greymouth	Greymouth Taxis
Hokitika	Hokitika Taxis

Exempt Services

InterCity <https://www.intercity.co.nz/south-island-buses>
 East West Coaches <https://www.eastwestcoaches.co.nz/>
 Atomic Shuttles <https://www.atomictravel.co.nz/>

Appendix B: Consultation Summary

[To Be Completed]