May 2023

To Auckland Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Auckland’s Future Transport Projects

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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**Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ**

**We work on systemic change for the equity of disabled people**

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a not-for-profit pan-impairment Disabled People’s Organisation run by and for disabled people.

**We recognise:**

* Māori as Tangata Whenua and [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
* disabled people as experts on their own lives;
* the [Social Model of Disability](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/guidance-for-policy-makes/) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
* the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) as the basis for disabled people’s relationship with the State;
* the [New Zealand Disability Strategy](https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/) as Government agencies’ guide on disability issues; and
* the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](https://www.moh.govt.nz/notebook/nbbooks.nsf/0/5E544A3A23BEAECDCC2580FE007F7518/%24file/faiva-ora-2016-2021-national-pasifika-disability-plan-feb17.pdf) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

* **Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.
* **Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.
* **Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.
* **Monitoring:** monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

DPA was influential in creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),1 a foundational document for disabled people which New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else. All state bodies in New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention. There are a number of UNCRPD articles particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Article 3 - General principles**
* **Article 9 - Accessibility**
* **Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community**
* **Article 20 - Personal mobility**

**New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy2 to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues. The vision is that New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of New Zealand works together to make this happen. It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision. There are a number of Strategy outcomes particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Outcome 5 – Accessibility**
* **Outcome 6 - Attitudes**

# The Submission

DPA welcomes the opportunity to engage with Auckland Council over the region’s transport future.

Disabled people are highly reliant on public transport given the significant proportion of disabled people who don’t drive and for affordability reasons.

Nevertheless, provision needs to be made to accommodate the transport needs of all disabled people and this includes for those who transport themselves via different modes including driving, bussing, walking, cycling, using taxis and trains.

In 2022, Waka Kotahi published independently commissioned research (in which DPA collaborated) entitled *Transport experiences of disabled people in Aotearoa New Zealand*.[[1]](#footnote-2)

This research illustrated the ongoing accessibility challenges faced by disabled people when using public transport. Disabled people’s main challenges included, for example, issues around using Total Mobility (TM), the inaccessibility of bus services, lack of footpaths and safe crossing points, and feeling excluded from the planning of sustainable city centres, as well as the disablist attitudes of some transport planners.

Disabled people also have issues with accessing train and ferry services in Auckland and these issues need to be prioritised as part of any ongoing investment as we will outline.

**Guiding principles**

DPA believes that high priority should be accorded to ensuring that Auckland’s transport network is well integrated, affordable, reliable, safe and accessible.

**Priority 1:** DPA believes that Council’s first priority should be that public transport remains affordable for all who use it. In DPA’s submission to the Auckland Council’s 2023-24 Budget, we highlighted the concerns of disabled Aucklanders who found Auckland Transport’s (AT’s) fare increases which came into effect on April 1 to be unaffordable for them, especially those disabled people who were able to use buses and rail. Disabled people are more likely to feel the impact of fare increases given Statistics New Zealand figures which show that disabled people are more likely to experience poverty due to living on lower incomes and facing greater living costs associated with disability.[[2]](#footnote-3)

For this reason, Auckland Council must continue to prioritise investment in the Total Mobility (TM) scheme which provides affordable transport for disabled people who cannot access ordinary public transport like buses. The recent increase in the fare discount by central government from 50% to 75% has provided more affordable transport for disabled Aucklanders using taxis and other specialist passenger services.

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| **Recommendation 1:** that Auckland Council retain existing levels of investment in the TM scheme alongside central government so that the fare discount remains at 75%. |

**Priority 2:** DPA believes that Council’s second priority needs to be improving the reliability and resilience of Auckland’s public transport system, especially at peak times and also enabling it to become more resilient to withstand extreme weather events and other emergencies. Interruptions to Auckland’s transport network can have serious consequences for disabled people as, for example, the possibility of being stranded with few accessible transport options in the event of an emergency or network failure can leave us without ready access to our homes, families/whanau or the supports we need to live.

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| **Recommendation 2:** That Auckland Council urgently work to improve the reliability and resilience of public transport services particularly at peak times and also during adverse weather events. |

**Priority 3:** DPA believes that the third priority should be accorded to improving transport accessibility for Aucklanders.

The accessibility of transport infrastructure, including train stations, ferry terminals, ferries, buses and trains is vital if disabled people are to have inclusive and equitable access to all modes of public transport.

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| **Recommendation 3:** that Council invest in making all transport services accessible, including to disabled people, throughout Auckland. |

**Priority 4:** DPA believes that Auckland Council’s fourth priority should be around investing in reducing carbon emissions from the transport sector. Already, disabled people are one of the population groups being disproportionately impacted by climate change,[[3]](#footnote-4)something that has become a reality for many disabled Aucklanders due to Cyclone Gabrielle and numerous flooding events in the first quarter of 2023.

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| **Recommendation 4:** that Council invest in accessible electric transport vehicles, for example, electric buses and trains, as a means of reducing carbon emissions. |

**Priority 5:** DPA believes that Council’s fifth priority should be improving the safety of the Auckland transport network. This is important across all transport modes, and especially in relation to footpath and road crossing networks.

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| **Recommendation 5:** that increased investment in modernising the city’s pedestrian network is undertaken to make it much safer through the inclusion of features such as raised pedestrian crossings, mobility kerb cuts, smoother footpaths, and audio signals throughout the city. |

**Priority 6:** DPA believes that council’s sixth priority must be the provision of transport infrastructure alongside new housing developments. We hope that any new housing developments around Auckland will include an increasing number of accessible homes for disabled people.

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| **Recommendation 6:** that the integrated transport network be extended to include new communities as well as existing ones which are either partially or not fully serviced by the transport network at present. |

**Integrated transport plan priorities**

DPA supports the proposal to invest in mass rapid transit projects, including the now much delayed Auckland Light Rail. The city’s new light rail network must be fully accessible to disabled people.

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| **Recommendation 7:** that investment in the new light rail network ensures that carriages include features such as spaces where wheelchair and mobility aid users can sit, wide aisle ways, audio announcements, good lighting, signage and information in accessible formats including, for example, New Zealand Sign Language, accessible websites and Easy Read as well as other accessibility features. |

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| **Recommendation 8:** that rail infrastructure including suburban railway and bus interchange stations be built to universal design accessibility standards. This includes having accessible features including ramps, lifts, toilets, accessible information, audio announcements, and seating which can accommodate everyone, including disabled people. |

DPA supports the need for investment in transport infrastructure to make it more accessible, safer, reliable and efficient.

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| **Recommendation 9:** that transport infrastructure including buses, rail carriages, bus and ferry terminals as well as railway stations are built to universal design accessibility standards. |

DPA believes that investment is needed in providing an accessible and safe pedestrian and cycling network which benefits everyone and reduces accidents and other adverse events for pedestrians.

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| **Recommendation 10:** that when investment decisions are made around pedestrian infrastructure including walkways and cycleways, there be an emphasis on the need for these to be built separate but parallel to one another to ensure the safety of pedestrians who travel by foot, wheelchair, or mobility aids (i.e., walkers). |

DPA believes in the need for Auckland to invest in a more accessible, environmentally friendly and affordable bus network.

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| **Recommendation 11:** that investment in creating a more modern, electrically powered, accessible bus service is undertaken with a view to removing the accessibility issues which plague much of the current network. |

DPA also acknowledges that the Auckland ferry network plays a crucial role in linking the city and its outlying populated islands and coastal communities including Waiheke and Great Barrier Islands and that this needs modernisation and improvement, including around its accessibility to disabled people.

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| **Recommendation 12:** that when the ferry service is electrified that accessibility upgrades are carried out both on the ferry network and its supporting infrastructure, such as terminals. |

**Need to involve disabled people in transport planning**

DPA believes that disabled people and our disabled people’s organisations (including DPA) need to be fully involved as co-design partners by Auckland Council and AT in all stages of the transport investment planning process, especially when it comes to developing the business cases and designs for each of the investments decided upon.

Again, we draw Council’s attention to Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD which specifically states why disabled people need to be involved in central or local government projects like this:

Article 4.3: General Principles

“In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.”

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| **Recommendation 13:** that Council involve disabled people and our representative disabled people’s organisations as co-design partners in all planning and decision making on future transport investments. |

1. Doran, B., Crossland, K., Brown, P., & Stafford, L. (2022). Transport experiences of disabled people in Aotearoa New Zealand (Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency research report 690). Retrieved from <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/reports/690> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Wilkinson-Meyers et al. (2015). To live an ordinary life: resource needs and additional costs for people with a physical impairment. Disability & Society, 30(7), 976-990.  [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Schulte, C. (2020, March 28). People With Disabilities Needed in Fight Against Climate Change. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/28/people-disabilities-needed-fight-against-climate-change#:~:text=People%20with%20disabilities%20are%20at,said%20in%20a%20recent%20report>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)