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**To Waikato Regional Council**

Please find attached our submission on the regional public transport rating system

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:**

**Rangatiratanga / Leadership**: reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.

**Pārongo me te tohutohu / Information and advice**: informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.

**Kōkiri / Advocacy**: supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.

**Aroturuki / Monitoring**: monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

# The Submission

DPA welcomes this opportunity to feedback on the Waikato Regional Council’s (WRC’s) regional public transport system rating proposals.

DPA supports the proposals to fairly rate for public transport provision across the region, meaning that all ratepayers irrespective of where they reside and whether they use Total Mobility/buses or not will pay for its provision.

We expect that this will increase options in those rural areas of the Waikato where accessible public transport systems are either minimal or non-existent, especially for communities like Te Kuiti, Thames, Taupo and Tokoroa who we hope will be able to enjoy access to better public transport provision in the future.

Disabled people have historically faced numerous barriers to accessing public transport. 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 ableist attitudes of some transport planners.

However, DPA has been pleased to hear from our members in the Waikato who have successfully advocated to the WRC to introduce disability friendly transport initiatives, for example, the Bus It scheme enabling TM card holders and their support people to enjoy free bus travel in the Hamilton City area.

They are pleased that the WRC have responded positively to these and other calls by local disabled people for more affordable, accessible transport.

The opportunity now presents itself to extend public transport in a way that will address the Waikato’s growing population and climate change challenges.

For all the above reasons, we support the principles underlying these changes centred around:

* **Public transport is a public good:** Good public transport benefits everyone, so we all pay something, even if we don’t use it.
* **Fairness:** What people pay reflects the benefits, costs and affordability of rates.
* **Efficiency:** The rating model should be simple to administer.
* **Transparency:** People should be able to understand how their rates are calculated.
* **Future-fit:** The rating model should be able to adapt to future changes in the transport network.
* **Boundary-less:** Services should meet community needs, regardless of city and district boundaries.

We now answer the questions posed in the survey reflecting the views of our members in the Waikato region:

**Responses to questions 3, 4, and 5:**

Q.3) Regarding bus services, most of our members are aware of the existence of bus services and use them on the proviso that any buses operating on or near where they live are accessible.

Q.4) Regarding community transport services, most of our members are aware of the existence of community transport services where they exist, on the basis that as disabled people they can access them freely.

However, we also know that some members and disabled people are not aware of the existence of community transport services and that more needs to be done in this space around raising awareness of them.

Q.5) Regarding the Total Mobility scheme, most if not all our members know about it with almost all members being eligible to use it. DPA alongside the WRC and other disability organisations, do our utmost to promote the scheme’s existence to disabled people.

**Rating model options for public transport**

**DPA favours Option 3** where rates for public transport will differ depending on both the level of access to public transport services and the property type/use. Those properties with **greater access** to public transport services will pay more than those with less access.

**Sub-Options**

DPA favours option b, the capital-value based charge. This will mean that lower income ratepayers will not have to pay the same transport rate as higher income households.

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)