



**Submission on Tasman District/Nelson
City Council's
Regional Public Transport Plan**

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Introduction

1. Nelson Marlborough Health (Nelson Marlborough District Health Board) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH appreciates the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Tasman District Council/Nelson City Council's Regional Public Transport Plan.
2. NMH makes this submission in recognition of its responsibilities to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.
3. This submission sets out particular matters of interest and concern to NMH including around accessibility, affordability and frequency of bus services.

General Comments

4. NMH would like to commend NCC and TDC for being very bold with the revised Regional Public Transport Plan (the Plan) to create a reliable, attractive public transport service that services the broad area of Nelson and Tasman.
5. Overall, NMH supports the Plan which introduces a raft of changes relating to fares, route design and bus stops. As noted in the Plan, the local population is growing and also ageing, and it is important that the bus services can cater to the changing population. It is pleasing to see that the intended changes will result in a larger proportion of the region's residents having access to bus services.
6. Public transport is important because it provides people with an affordable and safe means of transport. The provision of public transport has a range of benefits by
 - a. increasing people's fitness and health, enabling people to more easily reach their daily physical activity targets as bus patrons are more likely to combine bus travel with walking or cycling as part of their commute.
 - b. reducing the need for individuals to own personal vehicles thus reduces vehicle emissions that affect respiratory health and contribute to greenhouse gases and climate change which will improve air quality.
 - c. reducing congestion, and creating a safer and more efficient road network.
 - d. enabling those who do not drive access employment, education, family and friends.
7. NMH does wish to express its concerns around frequency. The proposed changes on the current Route 1 & 2 in relation to frequency at peak times will result in a reduced level of service for six years for those existing bus patrons. NMH discusses the potential ramifications of this below.

Specific Comments

Stage 1- 2023

8. NMH would like to express its gratitude to the Councils for enabling NMH to have early engagement in the Plan.

9. In regards to the timetable, NMH is pleased to see that there will be extended weekend services. However, NMH considers that restricting the bus timetable to 7am-7pm continues to be a barrier for those people who work early morning/evening shifts. American research¹ show that those working on shifts outside of 8.30-5 are employed in lower paying positions compared the median wage for day shift workers. Lower wages make it difficult for workers to afford and run cars. Therefore, NMH advocates for extended bus timetabling so that a greater number of people have access to bus services. In addition, an extension of the evening services would increase the transport options for those wishing to dine out thus supporting the hospitality sector.

10. NMH also notes that in the public transport survey that 45% of respondents noted that Times and Timetabling was what they disliked most about the current public transport service. Extension of service times aligns with the actions of the Future Development Strategy to support more frequent public transport services.

Recommendation: that the bus timetable is extended to 6am - 9pm (Stage one).

11. NMH notes that 85% of total bus patronage is on Routes 1 & 2. The Plan states that new timetable will reduce the effective frequency on the Main Road Stoke-Salisbury corridor (Route 1 & 2), in addition that all buses on the four routes will depart from key nodes at the same time every 30 minutes. The Plan notes that frequency is particularly critical to mode shift. Currently, at peak times, the frequency is every 15 minutes. The Plan will result in reduced frequency at peak times which will potentially result in fewer bus patrons. As noted on page 26 of the Plan, performance is assessed on six attributes, one of which is "convenience" – *whether services enable people to travel when they want to, swiftly and reliably*. If services operate at low frequency, waiting times are long and if transfers are required, bus travel may not be the most desirable transport option. By contrast, higher frequency lines offer a system that competes with the car.² If buses only travel every 30 minutes, that person may be more inclined to drive as a result. However if the buses ran every 10-15 minutes, then the bus routes will be more attractive. Fifteen minutes is the minimum frequency at which the service is usually considered good enough for travellers to turn up without consulting a schedule^{3,4}.

Recommendation: that at peak times, the Richmond Superstop and Nelson Superstop are serviced by buses every 10-15minutes (Stage one).

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edgarsten/2019/09/04/late-shift-workers-stuck-with-few-transit-options-says-study/?sh=7b94fd7e5914>

² <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/616/RR-616-Assessing-the-value-of-public-transport-as-a-network.pdf>

³ <https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2019/07/29/the-cost-of-more-frequent-buses/>

⁴ https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-make-public-transport-an-attractive-option-in-your-city?language=en_US

12. NMH supports the route changes to Route 1 & 2 as these will result in greater bus coverage across Richmond and Stoke. The new changes to Route 1 will result in only Route 2 buses travelling past the Aquatic Centre. An additional bus stop servicing Route 2 is required at the Champion/Salisbury corner that can be easily accessed by supermarket/Aquatic centre/Garin College patrons.
Recommendation: a new bus stop is installed near the Salisbury/Champion intersection.
13. NMH supports the route changes to Route 3 because they will result in better access to the Hospital from northern Nelson.
14. NMH supports the Route 4 which will give residents access to the Airport. If possible, the Airport bus stop should be located close to the main airport building's exit so public transport is easily accessible to airport users. This is the approach Auckland Airport has taken. Frequency of bus services should be reviewed regularly to see if services are keeping up with demand. Consideration needs to be given to integrated Tahunanui bus stop where Route 4 patrons can easily transit to Route 2.
Recommendation: There is easy access to the Airport bus stop
Recommendation: Frequency of airport services is regularly reviewed
Recommendation: That patrons can easily transfer between Route 2 and 4
15. NMH supports longer weekend hours of service at all areas and higher weekend frequency (Stage one)
16. NMH supports a new Stoke Link service that provides a route between Monaco, Marsden and Ngawhatu Valleys. Further clarification on a "demand-responsive" service is required especially in regards to pricing. Also further details are needed on how people, especially older people, can access this service.
17. Saxton Field receives a high number of visitors as a result of after school activities and weekend sport. Consideration should also be given to running bus services into Saxton Field. Currently there is a bus stop located near Bunnings but this is located a distance from the places of interest within the Saxton Field grounds especially for younger children.
Recommendation: that bus services provide service to Saxton Field key locations.
18. NMH supports the introduction of regional commuter services to Motueka and Wakefield
19. NMH supports the introduction of high quality super stops at the sites proposed including Nelson Hospital. In regards to the Nelson Hospital site, NMH is interested in a superstop subject to agreement on any encroachment on the DHB campus. NMH need to reserve the right to decline especially on the hospital side of Waimea Rd until we have established the interim work around the emergency dept.
20. NMH supports the formalisation of bus stops on all routes, and supports the installation of shelters with seating at bus stops.

21. In Richmond, the only permanent bus stop is installed at the top of the shopping area. There is a drop off point outside 281 Queen Street but there is no timetabling information there and bus drivers do not pick up patrons. Given the proximity to the library, the Richmond Health Hub and the Ministry for Social Development, consideration for a permanent bus stop is recommended. This would better serve the needs of vulnerable populations who may find it difficult to walk to the main bus stop outside Tasman District Council located 550 metres away.

Recommendation: that pickups and drop offs occur at 281 Queen Street

22. There is a new cinema being built in Richmond which will become a key destination, therefore NMH advocates that a bus stop with a shelter is placed close to the cinema to enable easy and safe access.

23. *Recommendation:* that a bus stop is situated close to the new cinema

24. NMH supports the introduction of bus priority as this will make buses more attractive to bus patrons. Consideration should be given to shorter sections of the network where buses could be given priority in the short term. NMH notes that new traffic lights are being introduced on Waimea Road/Highview Drive, as this section already has two lanes, consideration could be given to introducing bus priority at this intersection. Drivers have not yet adapted to this change so it would be timely to introduce bus priority lanes at this stage.

Recommendation: that a bus priority lane is introduced on Waimea Road/Highview Drive

25. NMH supports the continuation of Council support for community transport schemes for Motueka, Golden Bay, Wakefield and Hira.

26. NMH supports the transition to low/zero emission buses. NMH would like to see the Councils investigate more options for greater bike carrying capacity. This space is in high demand so the ability to carry more bikes would be well-received by bus patrons.

Recommendation: that new buses have additional bike carrying capacity.

27. NMH supports the simplification of the public transport fares and the introduction of a single urban fare. NMH saw that one summary document of the Plan stated there could be a "\$2 fare for anywhere in Nelson/Richmond". NMH strongly supports the introduction of a \$2 fare because this will make bus journeys more affordable for a greater proportion of the Nelson/Richmond population.

28. NMH supports the revised 3 zone system that introduces Zone 2 (Ruby Bay/Wakefield) and Zone 3 (west of Ruby Bay)

Stage 2- 2026

29. NMH supports the introduction of 30 minute frequency for weekday off-peak and weekend services.

30. However, as stated earlier in this submission, NMH does not support the concept of a "7-7-7" timetable for all buses running every 30 minutes 7am-7pm. Frequency is cited

as a key concern of patrons in the Plan. Therefore buses need to run more regularly than every 30 minutes to be achieve mode shift. In addition, the buses need to operate for longer hours to cater for a greater number of people.

31. This Plan makes mention of a "7-7-7" memorable timetable however if buses are running at a high frequency then people will not need to remember the timetable because they have assurance that the bus will arrive in a relatively short time period.
32. NMH supports the introduction of a standalone Motueka and Wakefield services.
33. NMH supports the introduction of a limited stop express because this will give commuters an option that is comparable to driving times.
34. NMH supports the introduction of park and ride facilities. NMH recommends that these include toilets and covered bike parks that are fitted with CCTV cameras, to provide transport options for people.

Stage 3- 2029

35. NMH notes that the Plan seeks to improve peak service levels to 15 minutes in 2029. NMH strongly recommends that this is done in 2023 as this would encourage a greater number of commuters to use the bus. The proposed changes on the current Route 1 & 2 will result in a reduced level of service for six years for those existing bus patrons. This could potentially result in a cohort of current commuters driving and this is not in line with the objectives of this Plan and other related Strategic Plans.

Recommendation: the frequency of peak services is 15 minutes from 2023

36. NMH supports the introduction of weekend services for the Motueka and Wakefield Routes.
37. NMH supports the additional longer term improvements listed on page 40 of the Plan.

Summary of Recommendations

- a. that the bus timetable is extended to 6am - 9pm (Stage one).
- b. that at peak times, the Richmond Superstop and Nelson Superstop are serviced by buses every 10-15 minutes (Stage one).
- c. a new bus stop is installed on Champion Road to cater for Countdown/Aquatic centre/Garin College patrons.
- d. that there is easy access to the Airport bus stop
- e. that frequency of airport services is regularly reviewed
- f. that patrons can easily transfer between Route 2 and 4
- g. that bus services provide service to Saxton Field key locations
- h. that pickups and drop offs occur at 281 Queen Street
- i. that a bus stop is situated close to the new cinema
- j. that a bus priority lane is introduced on Waimea Road/Highview Drive
- k. that new buses have additional bike carrying capacity

Conclusion

38.NMH thanks the TDC/NCC for the opportunity to comment on the Regional Public Transport Plan. NMH is pleased to see that NCC/TDC are investing heavily into Public Transport in terms of coverage of service and reduction of fares.

39.NMH reiterates that frequency of service is vitally important for bus patrons and the proposed changes will result in a reduction of services for a number of patrons which may negate the gains made in other areas. Frequency of services needs to be revised in the Plan

40.NMH would like the opportunity to speak to this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lexie O'Shea', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lexie O'Shea

Chief Executive

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