

Land Transport New Zealand General Circular No. 05/07

Improvements to the Total Mobility Scheme

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Programmes

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Purpose

To inform regional councils of decisions made by the Minister of Transport regarding improvements sought for the Total Mobility Scheme.

Background

The review of the Scheme commenced in 2002 as part of the Passenger Transport Social Services Review undertaken by Transfund New Zealand (now known as Land Transport New Zealand). The Review was extended into a second phase in September 2004 when the Minister of Transport agreed to new Terms of Reference "to identify options to improve the *adequacy, consistency, portability, sustainability and coverage* of the Scheme." A final report outlining findings and recommendations, as part of the second phase of the Review, was submitted to the Minister of Transport on 4 August 2005 by Ministry of Transport officials.

The Minister of Transport and Minister of Disability Issues made an announcement on Tuesday 30 August regarding improvements sought for the Total Mobility Scheme, along with additional central government funding (through Land Transport New Zealand) for regional councils to implement these improvements.

Improvements

The Minister of Transport is seeking a significant number of improvements for the Total Mobility Scheme, as such the implementation of these improvements have been organised into phases over the next two years.

Phase one

Recommendation:

For those local authorities that implement the recommended changes to the Total Mobility Scheme as outlined below, central government (through Land Transport New Zealand) will increase its share of funding assistance for the Scheme to 50%. This additional assistance will be subject to local authority Scheme funding not falling below budgeted 2005/06 levels. This increase to a 50% financial assistance rate will apply from 1 July 2005.

Phase one consists of the following recommended changes:

- 1 The following Total Mobility Scheme purpose statement is nationally agreed and applied: 'The Total Mobility Scheme is to assist eligible people with impairments to access appropriate transport to enhance their community participation. This assistance is provided in the form of subsidised door-to-door transport services wherever Scheme transport providers operate.'
- 2 The founding central tenet¹ of the Total Mobility Scheme, and the role of local authorities in providing the Scheme, is supported and strengthened.
- 3 The Total Mobility Scheme parameters² are clearly defined.
- 4 The following Total Mobility Scheme eligibility criteria are nationally agreed and applied:
'An eligible person must have an impairment that prevents them from undertaking any one or more of the following five components of a journey unaccompanied, on a bus, train or ferry in a safe and dignified manner:
 - i. Getting to the place from where the transport departs
 - ii. Getting onto the transport
 - iii. Riding securely
 - iv. Getting off the transport
 - v. Getting to the destination.'

¹ The provision of a subsidised transport service to eligible people with impairments is consistent with local government responsibilities to the transport disadvantaged, and part of core business. For further information see page 10, Ministry of Transport final report.

² For further information see page 11, Ministry of Transport final report.

- 5 People with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme, and are able to use bus, train or ferry services some of the time, but not all of the time, should be eligible for the Scheme (eg people with impairments such as epilepsy or arthritis).
- 6 People who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme and have an impairment that has lasted, or is expected to last for six months or more, should be eligible for the Scheme.
- 7 Children with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme should be eligible for the Scheme.³
- 8 People with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme and live in residential care should be eligible for the Scheme.⁴
- 9 The fare subsidy for the Total Mobility Scheme should be nationally consistent and standardised at 50%.
- 10 The Total Mobility Scheme should have no minimum fare threshold.
- 11 There are no restrictions on the purpose of the trip for the Total Mobility Scheme.

Phase two

Recommendation:

For those local authorities that implement specified recommended changes to the Total Mobility Scheme as negotiated with Land Transport New Zealand, central government (through Land Transport NZ) will increase its share of funding assistance for the Scheme to 60%. This is subject to local authority funding to the Scheme not falling below budgeted 2005/06 levels. The increase in financial assistance rate to 60% will be operative commencing from 1 July 2006.

Phase two consists of the following recommended changes:

- 1 Local authorities determine maximum subsidised fares for the Total Mobility Scheme in negotiation with Land Transport NZ, taking into account the NZ Travel Survey, and review them annually.
- 2 Town boundary travel restrictions for the Total Mobility Scheme be removed and replaced with a maximum subsidised fare.
- 3 The number of allocated subsidised trips for the Total Mobility Scheme take into account the self-assessed needs of individual Scheme members, be adjusted by local authorities to manage their budgets, and negotiated with Land Transport NZ.
- 4 Land Transport NZ develops guidelines for contracts between local authorities and assessment agencies to ensure high quality and consistent assessments.

³ It is not intended the Scheme be a substitute for transport services that are the responsibility of other government agencies such as the Ministry of Education which is responsible for all school related travel.

⁴ It is not intended that the Scheme should be a substitute for transport services that are the responsibility of the rest home provider, or be used by the rest home to provide transport for organised activities.

- 5 Local authorities enter into contracts with assessment agencies, aligned with the guidelines produced by Land Transport NZ.
- 6 Local authorities should make a financial contribution towards the cost of assessments and administration undertaken by assessment agencies.
- 7 Appropriate training be provided to assessors to assist in the consistent application of the eligibility criteria.
- 8 A handbook, including best practice guidelines, should be developed and published by Land Transport NZ in conjunction with local authorities, to help assessors in consistently applying the eligibility criteria.
- 9 The assessment process assists Total Mobility Scheme members estimate how many trips they would use (self assessed needs). This information will be provided to local authorities to assist them determine the appropriate number of allocated subsidised trips.
- 10 Potential members of the Total Mobility Scheme are not required to become financial members of an assessment agency in order to have an assessment for the Scheme, although they may be asked to pay an application fee. The appropriate amount of any such fee should be negotiated between Land Transport NZ, local authorities and assessment agencies.
- 11 Potential members of the Total Mobility Scheme have the option to be assessed by a voluntary disability sector agency in every region.
- 12 Land Transport NZ encourages local authorities to establish systems for data collection, monitoring and evaluation.
- 13 Land Transport NZ encourages local authorities to improve their administration systems for the allocation and redemption of trip entitlement vouchers.
- 14 Land Transport NZ develops guidelines for contracts between local authorities and Total Mobility Scheme transport operators to ensure high quality and adequate service levels, including the provision of wheelchair accessible taxis within the fleets.
- 15 Local authorities enter into contracts with transport operators, aligned with the guidelines produced by Land Transport NZ.
- 16 Land Transport NZ encourages adequate provision of wheelchair accessible taxis by providing a flat payment (in addition to the fare) to the transport operator for each trip taken by a Total Mobility Scheme member using a wheelchair hoist.
- 17 Land Transport NZ investigates the establishment of an appropriate regime to ensure that wheelchair hoists meet acceptable safety standards.
- 18 Local authorities are encouraged to investigate the possibility of contracting taxi services operating in areas that are not currently covered by the Total Mobility Scheme, to provide a Scheme service.
- 19 The possibility of other types of transport providers participating in the Total Mobility Scheme is investigated.

The Ministry of Transport has recommended a possible third phase of improvements to the Scheme. Further policy work by Land Transport New Zealand would be required to determine what the impacts of these improvements would be.

Where to from here

Land Transport New Zealand will be in contact with regional council staff soon to provide further information on phase one improvements through a fact sheet to the Total Mobility Scheme. There will also be an opportunity to discuss this further at the next Regional Transport Officers (RTO) meeting scheduled for the end of November.

More information on the review and a copy of the final report can be obtained from Glenda Spackman at the Ministry of Transport, phone (04) 498 0608 or email g.spackman@transport.govt.nz, or it can be downloaded from the Ministry of Transport website www.transport.govt.nz

Enquiries

For further information contact David Cope or Lyndal Peters at Land Transport NZ's national office in Wellington, Phone (04) 931 8700 or email david.cope@landtransport.govt.nz, lyndal.peters@landtransport.govt.nz