



Report 08.855
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Committee Transport & Access Committee
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Total Mobility Phase 2 Project Update

1. Purpose

To provide an update on progress towards implementation of Phase 2 improvements to the Total Mobility scheme.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Greater Wellington runs a Total Mobility Scheme which provides subsidised taxi travel for people who cannot use regular public transport due to a disability. In 2007/08 the scheme carried 267,000 passengers at a subsidy cost of \$1.6m. The scheme qualified for funding assistance from the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Following a review of the scheme in 2005 the Ministry of Transport and the New Zealand Transport Agency (then Land Transport New Zealand) announced a phased series of improvements to the scheme. By implementing these changes regional councils would become entitled to an increased financial assistance rate from the New Zealand Transport Agency.

In 2006, the Committee considered these improvements on two occasions (refer reports 06.29 and 06.114). The phase 1 improvements were implemented subsequently.

In June 2008 the Committee agreed to implement the phase 2 improvements. This has secured an increased financial assistance rate of 60% starting this financial year.

4. Comment

Many of the Phase 2 requirements have already been implemented. The following key requirements are still being implemented.

4.1 Council contracts with assessment agencies

Contracts are to be negotiated with agencies which assess the eligibility of applicants to the scheme. The contracts will include improved guidelines (in the form of an assessment facilitators' handbook) for assessors to help maintain consistency and quality of assessments.

A disability agency working group consisting of six agency representatives has met four times over the last few months to provide feedback on the assessment agency contract and assessment facilitators' handbook. They have also provided invaluable input into the design of the proposed administrative improvements (refer below) and communications strategy. Further working group meetings are proposed over the next year as the administrative improvements are implemented.

The proposed contract and assessment facilitators' handbook are currently being reviewed by all agencies and the contracts are expected to be signed by the end of December.

4.2 Council contracts with taxi companies

Contracts are to be negotiated with taxi companies to ensure drivers are qualified and that vehicles and service levels meet the required standards.

A taxi company working group consisting of six taxi company representatives will meet this month to discuss the introduction of contracts, training requirements, electronic equipment upgrades and proposed administrative improvements.

A contract is currently being drafted by officers and following feedback from transport operators should be finalised by the end of June 2009, once design of the new electronic system is finalised. All drivers will also be required to have completed training courses before the administrative system improvements are implemented.

4.3 Administrative system improvements

At present the administrative system is based on a paper voucher system which is labour intensive and relatively expensive to administer. A new electronic system is proposed to help reduce fraud, remove manual voucher validation, ensure a more efficient application process and provide better reporting and trip information.

The new electronic system will involve issuing a new photo identification card to all clients which will replace the current paper vouchers. The photo identification card will be "swiped" by taxi drivers with details of the transaction automatically sent through to Greater Wellington for verification

and payment. In addition client assessments will be carried out by assessment agencies using a web based application form and will include photo capture for the photo identification card.

Officers have reviewed and are building on the functionality of electronic Total Mobility systems currently being operated in Auckland and Waikato. Consultants are currently preparing procurement documentation with a request for tender expected to be issued mid-December. The contract for development and implementation of the system will be awarded towards the end of February with system “go live” planned for August 2009.

The cost of developing the electronic system is currently expected to be fully funded within the existing operational budget for the scheme. Officers plan to report back with information on costs once these are finalised following completion of the tender process.

5. Communication

Officers have developed a communications plan targeting scheme users, assessment agencies, taxi companies and other stakeholders. Officers will also continue to communicate through working group representatives and other stakeholders as the project progresses.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receives** the report.
2. **Notes** the content of the report.

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