



ELIGIBILITY

Handbook for

# ASSESSING MEDICAL ELIGIBILITY

for Total Mobility Scheme Participation

TARANAKI  
Total Mobility Scheme



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## BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Total Mobility scheme is to enhance community participation for eligible people with impairments by providing access to appropriate transport. Assistance is provided in the form of subsidized door-to-door transport wherever Total Mobility scheme approved transport providers operate. This reduces fares for people with an impairment that may prevent them from using public transport in a safe and dignified manner.

There is a provider in Stratford, Hawera, Waitara and four in New Plymouth. The subsidy applies to each trip, from one point of origin to one destination, up to a maximum of \$20 (50% of a \$40 fare).

All users must meet the eligibility criteria to have their membership approved by and registered with the Council. Prior to this approval, applicants must undergo a medical assessment by an assessor (doctor, specialist and/or an approved assessment facilitator contracted by the Taranaki Regional Council).

### ***Role of the assessor***

Your role as an assessor is to ascertain an applicant's eligibility for the Total Mobility Scheme. The role is one of guiding and assisting, then confirming that the information regarding the applicant is accurate. The Taranaki Regional Council team will contact you should any further clarification be required.

### ***How do I use the handbook?***

An applicant is required to complete an application form which also includes a medical eligibility section. The applicant therefore needs to be assessed against the eligibility criteria by you as outlined in the following pages.

The steps to completing an application form are:

**Step 1: Applicant:**

Completes Sections A and B of the application form.

**Step 2: Assessor:**

Completes Section C - medical eligibility assessment.

**Step 3: Applicant:**

Submits the completed application form to the Taranaki Regional Council for approval and registration of the client. In the case where a client is declined they will be contacted by the Council with an explanation.

## ***Guiding principles***

The following guiding principles underpin your role as a Total Mobility assessor:

- the dignity of the client will always be respected
- an uncomplicated commonsense approach will be taken
- information will only be sought if it is directly relevant
- the importance of Total Mobility in providing independence, freedom and opportunity to its users will be recognised.

## ***Ascertaining eligibility for the Total Mobility Scheme***

Your key role is to work with the applicant to determine whether that person meets the eligibility criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme. When making your decision, the following eligibility criteria must be observed.

If an applicant meets these eligibility criteria, they must be recognised and accepted as eligible. Eligibility then entitles the client to receive subsidized transport assistance via the Total Mobility scheme.

## ***Eligibility criteria***

The criteria are:

- **An eligible person must have an impairment that prevents them from undertaking any one or more of the following components of a public transport journey, unaccompanied and without assistance, in a safe and dignified manner:**  
(In Taranaki public transport is bus only)

1. Get to and from the nearest bus stop without assistance
2. Stand and wait without assistance for a bus
3. Get on or off a bus without assistance
4. Handle money or bus ticket or card without assistance
5. Travel securely on a bus without assistance
6. Travel on a bus without getting confused or anxious
7. Travel on an accessible bus if it was available

All of the components of the journey are of equal importance. If one link is broken or inadequate, the whole journey becomes impractical.

If the applicant has an impairment that prevents them from being able to undertake any one of the specified components of a journey, they are eligible for Total Mobility. If they can undertake all the components then the applicant is NOT eligible.

## ***Applying the criteria***

It is expected that the 'assessment' will mainly consist of going through the criteria with the applicant (or, in some instances, with the aid of an authorised representative).

- a. The impairment(s) may be physical, sensory, intellectual, mental/psychiatric, or neurological.
- b. It is not the impairment itself that determines eligibility for Total Mobility – rather, it is the effect that the impairment has on the individual's ability to undertake the components of the journey.

- c. It must be the impairment that prevents them from undertaking the journey, not any other reason, such as:
- having too much shopping to take on the bus
  - preferring door-to-door transport to buses
  - not having a public transport route nearby
- d. 'Safe' and 'dignified' are largely self-evident.
- 'Safe' generally means 'free from harm or danger'. In the Total Mobility context, examples of 'unsafe' might include:
- a component of the journey causing an increased risk of a significant deterioration in the person's condition (for example, epileptic seizure or breathing difficulties)
  - a component of the journey exposing the person's impairment-related vulnerabilities to possible exploitation (for example, vulnerabilities related to an intellectual or psychiatric impairment)
  - a component of the journey (for example, getting onto or off the transport) being risky for the person to attempt, because of their impairment.

'Dignified' generally means in a manner that does not bring disrespect or humiliation. In the Total Mobility context, examples of 'undignified' might include:

- a person depending on help from a stranger (who may or may not agree to help)
- a person's impairment-related vulnerabilities being unduly exposed
- a person being expected to get onto or off a bus in a way that compromises their dignity.

A medical certificate is not required to establish eligibility for Total Mobility. However, if the impairment is not clearly evident to the assessment facilitator, then a medical certificate may be requested.

The following list of impairments will assist decision-making on whether the level of impairment meets the eligibility criteria:

- Inability to walk to the nearest bus stop or board and alight from a bus for reasons such as pain, respiratory problems, sensory disabilities, neurological fatigue, reliance on complex walking aids, or the need for constant assistance from another person for mobility.
- Total loss or severe impairment of vision preventing the independent use of a bus.
- Intellectual, cognitive or psychiatric disabilities which may require assistance from another person for travel on a bus.
- People are eligible who have impairments such as epilepsy or arthritis, and are able to use a bus some, but not all of the time.
- People with impairments who have independent use of a vehicle, but are unable to use a vehicle all of the time due to their impairments, are eligible.

Defining the components of the journey:

### **1. Getting to and from the nearest bus stop without assistance**

- Does the person's impairment prevent them from getting to the bus departure point?
- Can they physically get to that place? For example, can they walk (or equivalent) a short distance (for example, 500 metres) without their condition deteriorating or stopping to rest?
- Can they recognise when they have arrived?
- Does the person's impairment prevent them from getting, from where they disembark, to their actual destination? Can they physically get to that place?

### **2. Stand and wait for the bus**

- Can the applicant stand and wait, where there is no seat, for 10 minutes or more?



### **3. Getting on and off the bus without assistance**

- Does the person's impairment prevent them from getting on or off the bus? For example, though steps on buses are less common, can the person walk up or down three or more steps unassisted?

*NB: All buses in the Citylink urban fleet servicing Waitara, Bell Block, New Plymouth and Oakura, are now low-floor and wheelchair accessible – no steps.*

### **4. Handling money, bus ticket or card without assistance**

- Can the applicant understand the need to keep money, a ticket, or a card secure, and be confident in the process of how they will validate their bus trip?

### **5. Riding securely without assistance**

- Can they travel without their condition deteriorating, and without distress?
- Can they balance while sitting or standing?
- Can they communicate their intentions to the driver?
- Does the person's impairment prevent them being able to recognise when they have arrived at the correct bus stop to disembark?

### **6. Travel on a bus without getting confused or anxious**

- Can the applicant travel confidently on a bus or is there an increased risk of anxiety and confusion?

### **7. Travel on an accessible bus if it was available**

- Buses are increasingly accessible to passengers of limited mobility, including passengers in wheelchairs.
- Again, all buses in the Citylink urban fleet servicing Waitara, Bell Block, New Plymouth and Oakura, are now low-floor and wheelchair accessible – no steps.

If the person has an impairment that prevents them from undertaking any one or more of the above components of the journey, unaccompanied and without assistance, in a safe and dignified manner, **then they are eligible.**

The Total Mobility application form therefore, has the following checklist of the journey components relating to the applicant undertaking a bus journey unaccompanied or without assistance:

	Yes	No
■ Get to and from the nearest bus stop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Stand and wait for the bus (where there is no seat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Get on and off the bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Handle money or a bus ticket or card	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Travel securely on the bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Travel without getting confused or anxious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
■ Travel on an accessible bus if available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If there is one tick in any of the 'No' boxes, then the person is eligible for Total Mobility.

**NB: 7 'yes' responses makes the applicant ineligible for the scheme.**

**Note:** Being able to drive a car (modified or unmodified) is irrelevant to eligibility for Total Mobility. Eligibility is specifically with respect to public transport. However, it is envisaged that being able to drive a car would have an impact on the required level of use of Total Mobility.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF ELIGIBILITY

### *What if there is no bus service?*

Total Mobility may operate in areas that have Total Mobility transport operators but do not have buses. In areas in Taranaki without a bus service, eligibility can be determined with reference to hypothetical rather than actual journeys.

Those hypothetical equivalents of the component steps of a journey would be in terms of:

- **Being able to walk** (or equivalent) a short distance, for example, up to 500 metres.
- **Being able to recognise when they have arrived at the transport departure point.**
- **Stand and wait comfortably** (where there is no seat)
- **Being able to get from the footpath onto the transport.** This may involve ascending a few steps on some buses.
- **Being able to travel** without their condition deteriorating, and without distress.
- **Being able to communicate intentions to the driver.**
- **Being able to handle money or a bus ticket or card.**
- **Being able to recognise when they have arrived at their bus stop.**
- **Being able to get from the bus onto the footpath.** This may involve descending a few steps on some buses.
- **Being able to walk** (or equivalent) to their final destination without their condition deteriorating.

In the event that hypothetical journeys are used, an uncomplicated common sense approach should be used to ascertain eligibility.

## ***Temporary vs permanent impairments***

The assessment process will distinguish between permanent and temporary impairments. The Total Mobility application form includes the following:

### **The applicant's impairment is:**

- Permanent.
- Temporary (has lasted, or is likely to last, for six months or more).

A fluctuating impairment (able to use a bus service some, but not all of the time) should be regarded as 'permanent'. See further notes regarding fluctuating need on the following page.

### **If the impairment is temporary, please state:**

- 1) Approximate date of when impairment started, and
- 2) When you consider the applicant's eligibility for Total Mobility will end.

Date impairment started:

Date impairment ends:

Reassessing a client's eligibility need only happen in the case of temporary/finite-term impairments. The exception to this would be if significant changes to the transport services made the journey accessible. The introduction of super low-floor buses that are wheelchair accessible, has allowed more people to travel by bus.

If a client has a permanent impairment, they need only be assessed once, unless there is a significant improved change in their condition that may affect their eligibility for Total Mobility.

In the case of temporary impairments, a timeframe for reassessment by an assessor should be indicated, appropriate to the individual's circumstances. In some instances, the expected duration of the

impairment may be difficult to predict, for example, recovery from stroke or head injury. The due date for reassessment should be negotiated between the applicant and the assessor, with regard to what might reasonably be expected.

## ***Six-month threshold***

*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.*

The six-month threshold should only be considered for a client with a **temporary impairment**.

The six-month period can be either *retrospective* (the impairment has already lasted for at least six months) or *anticipated* (the impairment is expected to last for at least six months).

It is important to note that this does not mean a person must wait six months before they are eligible for Total Mobility. If a person has an impairment that has already lasted for six months or more they may be considered eligible (provided they meet the criteria); whether the impairment is expected to last another six months is immaterial to that person's eligibility.

Examples include:

- a person who had a stroke 12 months ago, who meets the criteria for the scheme and who is expected to recover sufficiently to be able to use the bus in four months' time is eligible to receive Total Mobility support for the remaining time they cannot undertake one or more of the components of a journey.
- a person who had a stroke 12 months ago, who meets the criteria for the scheme and who is expected to recover sufficiently to be able to use the bus in two years' time is similarly eligible to receive Total Mobility support for the remaining time they cannot undertake the components of a journey.

- a person who has an impairment that has not yet lasted for six months is considered eligible (provided they meet the criteria) only if it is anticipated that the impairment will last for six months (including the time already elapsed). For example:
- a person who had a head injury one month ago, who meets the criteria for the scheme and who is not expected to recover sufficiently to be able to use the bus within the next five months is eligible to receive Total Mobility support.
- a person who had surgery last week, who meets the criteria and who is expected to recover within six weeks, is not eligible to receive Total Mobility support.
- a person who has a broken leg or a bad back and is unable to use a bus but is expected to have recovered in less than six months is not eligible.

## ***Reassessment is required for ‘temporary’ status applicants***

Assessors are asked to estimate the date at which a temporary impairment might end. Prior to that end date that Total Mobility member will receive a letter and medical eligibility reassessment form with a request they re-visit their doctor (or approved assessor) for reassessment of their need for the Total Mobility Scheme.

## ***Fluctuating need***

*People with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme and are able to use bus services some of the time, but not all of the time, should be eligible for the scheme.*

This is intended to cover situations where an impairment is fluctuating (for example, epilepsy), or where the impairment is constant and non-fluctuating, but is affected by environmental changes (for example, a visual impairment that makes independent travel at night very difficult).

This may also include people with impairments (such as Alzheimer's) that restrict travel on buses only to very familiar routes.

The fact that a person may be able to undertake all of the journey components, some, but not all of the time, does not therefore limit their eligibility.

## **Children**

*Children with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility scheme should be eligible for the scheme.*

The Total Mobility scheme should be available to children to support their independent participation in the community, in ways similar to other children in their peer group, who do not have impairments. This could include trips to visit friends or to see a movie. If the child's impairment prevents them from being able to use bus transport, and it is reasonable to expect that children in their peer group can independently use such transport, then the child should be eligible for the scheme.

Conversely, if the child is so young that other children in that age group would not be reasonably expected to independently use such transport, then the child would not be within the scope of the scheme. There should not be a set age cut-off for eligibility. It is not intended that the scheme should 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.

## ***Where people live***

*People with impairments who meet the criteria for the Total Mobility Scheme and live in residential care should be eligible for the scheme.*

A person's place of residence is irrelevant to their eligibility for Total Mobility, whether it be a family home, a rest home, a residential facility or other.

People who live in residential care may have some of their transport needs met by the residential care provider. For example, rest home providers are responsible for meeting the cost of transport of residents for stipulated health services (including needs assessment and service coordination services, laboratory services, radiological services, dental services, specialist medical services and podiatry services).

If a person meets the criteria for Total Mobility and has a need for transport assistance that is not already being met as required by legislation, they are eligible to receive Total Mobility assistance. For example, Total Mobility should be available to people who live in rest homes to support their independent participation in the community. This could include visiting friends or families, attending appointments (other than those stipulated as the responsibility of the rest home provider), meetings or events, or going shopping.



## ***Wheelchair users***

Freedom Companion Driving Service, a New Plymouth-based approved Total Mobility operator, offers two vehicles that are easily accessed by wheelchair passengers via a ramp.

In addition, the Taranaki Regional Council provides funding assistance to the Ironside Vehicle Society, an approved operator which provides wheelchair hoist transport. North and Central Taranaki Total Mobility members are welcome to contact Ironside Vehicle Society when they require transport with wheelchair hoist assistance. Ironside's service and fare structure is different to other operators' systems – passengers should advise at the time of booking of Total Mobility membership.

South Taranaki Passenger Services Inc. (SToPS) is Hawera-based and serves South Taranaki Total Mobility members. Two vans are available – with wheelchair hoist or ramp.

## ***Use of low-floor buses***

The assessor needs to determine and advise on the application form if the applicant may be able to use low-floor buses. This is helpful in that it provides information for planning of bus services (including footpath and kerb access, bus stops and signage) to make public transport more accessible.

## Want to know more?

If you have any questions contact Total Mobility team at the Taranaki Regional Council

**Phone: 0800 868 662**

Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays)

**Website: [www.trc.govt.nz/total-mobility/](http://www.trc.govt.nz/total-mobility/)**

for answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs),  
Application Forms and User Guides

**Email: [totalmobility@trc.govt.nz](mailto:totalmobility@trc.govt.nz)**

*We appreciate your assistance with the Total Mobility Scheme – it is a huge help in allowing people with impairments to retain some independence and to participate in their community*

### Notes:

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