

Single Stage Business Case Community Engagement Report

22 April 2024 – 11 June 2024



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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the methodology and high-level findings of the Taranaki Regional Council's (the Council) community engagement on:

- Single Stage Business Case

This consultation follows previous engagement with the community to develop Better Travel Choices in Taranaki and the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), which came into effect on 1 July 2024.

Background

The Single Stage Business Case (SSBC) presents the case to NZ Transport Agency/Waka Kotahi for investment in a revitalised bus network and uses the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) and Better Travel Choices (BTC) as supporting evidence. While these plans offer strategic and long-term guidance, the SSBC focuses on operational improvements needed to enhance public transport in Taranaki and outlines what specific changes will be implemented.

Our strategy involved a multi-phased consultation process: firstly, collecting various bus network feedback under several categories (Hop on Board); secondly, presenting these bus network options for public selection (Where to Next?); and finally, reporting on the finalised bus network (On the Horizon). The key driver behind the consultations has been to receive feedback from the public and use that feedback to determine what services our community wants. The results from the extensive consultation process are directly informing the new bus service contracts that come up for tender in September 2024, with implementation scheduled for September 2025.

The Hop on Board and Where to Next? consultations ran from 22 April to 11 June 2024. Both consultations were accompanied by multi-media promotional campaigns featuring social media, print media, digital media, OOH (Out-of-home or billboard advertising) and direct email marketing to drive people to take the surveys, give their feedback on what they want in a bus network and choose a bus network option that would best suit their needs. A total of nine pop-events around the region were used as a community engagement tool to support the two campaigns.

Phase one - Hop on Board

Our focus was in gathering information across several key categories:

- Bus routes
- Timetables/frequency
- Weekend services
- Key destinations
- Idea tank

In preparing for the consultations that would determine service levels as requested by our community and to understand our community's land transport aspirations, we held a number of community consultations in 2023 such as the Road Ahead engagement in March and April and the Better Travel Choices consultation in September and October.

The results from these consultations shaped the focus on the five key categories in phase one (the Hop on Board consultation, with the consultation seeking specific details from the public including:

- Where do the community want bus route adjustments?
- What are peoples' timing preferences?
- Regarding weekend services, which destinations are most crucial and at what times?

- The idea tank served as a platform for people to share and discuss ideas that don't specifically relate to the other categories, like on-board wifi and improved advertising that promote our bus services.

Engagement methods

We used a combination of digital tools and in-person engagement methods. Social Pinpoint was used as our online tool and we utilised the maps and pin tools available on this engagement tool for people to add their feedback and comments. We hosted a range of pop-up events across the region that had large maps of our bus network displayed, where people wrote their ideas and comments on sticky notes and placed them on the map. Conversations that our staff had with the public were uploaded into Social Pinpoint manually to ensure the data reports captured both methods of engagement.

Consultation for Phase One: Hop on Board ran from Monday 22 April and closed at 4pm on Monday 6 May 2024.

Results

Social Pinpoint

Tool	Posts	Contributors
Bus Network Refresh Map	96	46
Idea Tank	121	96
Total	217	142

Page visits	Unique visits	Conversion rate
713	597	55.5%

Pop-up events

Event	People spoken to
Seaside Markets	100
Hop on Board Ōpunake event	12
Hop on Board Waitara event	9
Hop on Board Inglewood event	7
Hop on Board Hāwera event	10
Hop on Board Stratford event	5

Hop on Board New Plymouth event	30
Total	173

Total submissions received

Total (oral and written)	390
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Marketing

Channel	Reach	Engagement	
PT Facebook organic posts	8,591	662	
TRC Facebook organic posts	2,637	87	
PT Facebook paid advertising	19,563	837	
	Audience	Opens	Clicks
Mailchimp	8,448	4,691	396
Total	39,239	6,277	

Media

Channel	Reach
Taranaki Daily News story	25,000
More FM Breakfast Interview - 30 April	8,600
Total	33,600

Total media and marketing reach

Total	72,839
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Key themes

Community feedback was gathered in a number of key areas and a number of common themes were identified across all responses and these are outlined below.

Bus routes

New and Extended Routes

- New routes and extension of f existing routes suggested, places such as, e Somerset Village, Pōhutukawa Place and Discovery Development
- Additional routes connecting to key locations like the Taranaki Base Hospital, New Plymouth Airport and the Todd Energy Aquatic Centre in New Plymouth

Direct and Express Services

- Direct routes from Bell Block/Waitara to the hospital without stopping in the town centre
- Express services for commuters, especially to Stratford and Ōpunake, bypassing Hāwera to save time
- School-specific routes to reduce the need for multiple transfers and long waiting times

Central City Bypass

- Routes that bypass the central city to reduce travel time for cross-town journeys
- Out-and-back routes on main roads to minimise detours and maximise efficiency

Integration with Key Destinations

- Integration with major destinations like the airport, hospital, and tourist spots (e.g., North Egmont Visitor Centre)
- Stops at popular locations to increase convenience for users

such as retail outlets, for example, Bunnings Hāwera, Regional Connectivity

- Improved frequency and timing for regional buses between New Plymouth and Hāwera, Stratford, and other locations to support full-time workers
- More official stops in places like Hāwera and Eltham
- Routes through areas like Manutahi Road to Lepperton and services for rural towns like Waitara
- Enhanced service to smaller towns like Inglewood, Waitara and Stratford

Accessibility and Convenience

- Routes designed to facilitate access for those with mobility issues, such as stops closer to health services

Respondents called for new and extended routes, particularly to better serve outlying areas and key destinations. There was a strong preference for direct, express services to reduce travel time and increase convenience, especially for commuters and school students. Integration with major destinations and ensuring accessibility for all users were key considerations in the feedback.

Reliability, Scheduling

The respondents emphasised the need for a more frequent and reliable bus service, with adjustments to accommodate school schedules, work shifts and regional connectivity. There was a call for better weekend and evening services, express routes and more targeted services for specific groups such as students and hospital staff. Additionally, respondents said there was a need for consistent and clear communication regarding bus schedules and routes.

Increased Frequency

- Buses every 30 minutes or more often
- Higher frequency on key routes, especially during peak hours
- Consistent frequency throughout the day/week
- More frequent buses around school start and end times to accommodate students and parents
- Timetables that fit standard work hours, allowing arrival before 8am and departure after 5pm

Service Frequency

- High-frequency routes are preferred, with suggestions to avoid reducing current service levels
- Specific mention of a regular loop service around the CBD, possibly using electric buses
- More frequent services in less-served areas such as Inglewood and coastal routes

Specific Time Adjustments

- Earlier morning routes to accommodate school start times and early work shifts, e.g., hospital staff
- Later evening routes to cater to people with night-time meetings
- Evening services on Friday and Saturday nights to support nightlife and ease parking congestion in the CBD. Collaboration with restaurants and bars to promote these services to a new audience
- Adjustments for specific routes, such as the number 8 bus needing to be 10-15 minutes earlier for students

Reliability and Punctuality

- Ensuring buses are on time to improve reliability (e.g., the #2 bus often runs 15-20 minutes late)
- Better systems for making connections between buses

Weekend and Public Holiday Services

Increased Frequency and Regular Services

- Regular services throughout the weekend, with several respondents suggesting schedules such as 9am, 12 noon, 3pm and 5pm
- Extension of services on routes such as Number 9 and Southlink coastal to cover weekends
- Services to facilitate grocery shopping, sports and social visits, particularly for teenagers and families on weekends
- Importance of having weekend services for those without cars, helping to reduce reliance on expensive alternatives like Uber

- Providing options for people who work on weekends, ensuring they have access to public transport early in the morning
- Suggestion for bus services to run on public holidays, increasing overall usability and encouraging fewer car trips

Convenience for Various Activities

- Specific mention of routes that can help people attend events or visit markets on weekends

Respondents expressed a strong desire for more frequent and regular weekend bus services. They emphasised the need for services that cater to shopping, social, and recreational activities, particularly benefiting teenagers and families. There was a call for extending existing weekday routes to cover weekends, including rural areas, and providing evening services on Friday and Saturday nights. Ensuring accessibility for those without cars and facilitating public transport on public holidays were also key themes. Overall, respondents highlighted the potential for weekend bus services to significantly enhance the usability of public transport and reduce car dependency.

Key Destinations

The key destinations identified in the survey responses focus on enhancing access to recreational areas, facilitating transport for older people, improving late-night services for social activities, connecting to the airport and ensuring accessibility to medical centres and supermarkets. The feedback supported the aim of providing convenient and reliable bus services for various activities and essential needs, particularly on weekends and during events.

Recreational and Event Locations

- Bowl of Brooklands: High-frequency services during events and concerts to ease the commute for attendees

Weekend Destinations for Outdoor Activities

- Tramping and walking locations
- Te Papakura o Taranaki
- Beach service to Ohawe from Hāwera during summer

Transportation for Older Adults

- Services tailored for older community members, potentially with wheelchair access and assistance with bags. Regular routes from places like Mokau to New Plymouth for hospital appointments and other needs

Medical and Essential Services

- Regular routes to medical centres and hospitals to ensure accessibility for appointments
- Supermarkets to help people with their grocery shopping, especially those without other means of transport

Idea Tank

Improved Accessibility and Convenience

- Wheelchair Access and Elderly Assistance: Tailored services for older adults and people with disabilities, including assistance with steps and bags
- Wifi on buses: Reliable and functional on-board wifi for passengers
- Clear bus numbers: Better visibility of bus numbers for visually impaired passengers, potentially through audible announcements at bus stops

Targeted and Specialised Services

- Event-based services: Special routes and increased frequency during major events at venues like the Bowl of Brooklands

Operational Improvements

- Timetable adjustments: Accurate and updated timetables that reflect actual bus arrival and departure times
- Branding and information: A region-wide brand with consistent livery for buses, making them easily recognisable. Improved education on bike rack usage and other facilities

Infrastructure and Amenities

- Suggestions for additional amenities such as bike racks on buses, especially for the coastal Southlink bus
- Integration of public transport with bike options and park-and-ride systems
- Improved bus stops, including those on the outskirts of towns and specific points like Plunket

Additional Suggestions

- Booking options via app: Allowing booking through a mobile app, particularly beneficial for elderly and disabled passengers
- Integration and coordination: A vibrant, interconnected network that blends school, rural, and urban routes seamlessly
- Environmental and community benefits: Encouraging public transport use to reduce car ownership, traffic congestion, and environmental impact through improved marketing campaigns

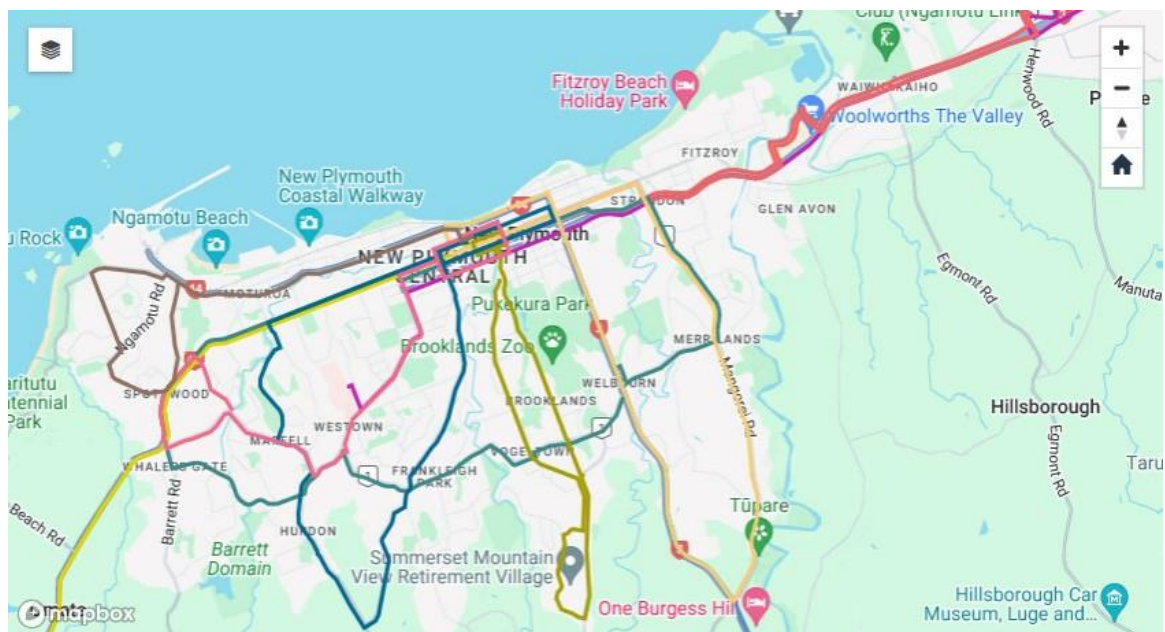
The key ideas for the new bus network revolve around improving accessibility, offering specialised services for events and specific needs and operational improvements. The results of the feedback support the overall goal of creating a comprehensive, convenient and reliable public transport system that meets the diverse needs of the community.

Phase two - Where to Next?

The second phase of community conversation was centred around presenting two bus route options to the public and getting feedback on which of the options was their preferred choice. Two new network map options were provided to us by engineering consultancy group Beca and used information gathered not only from the Hop on Board consultation but also from the preceding Road Ahead and Better Travel Choices consultations and from the public feedback on the Regional Land Transport Plan which was held in early 2024.

Consultation for this phase began on Wednesday 22 May and closed on Tuesday 11 June 2024.

Option 1

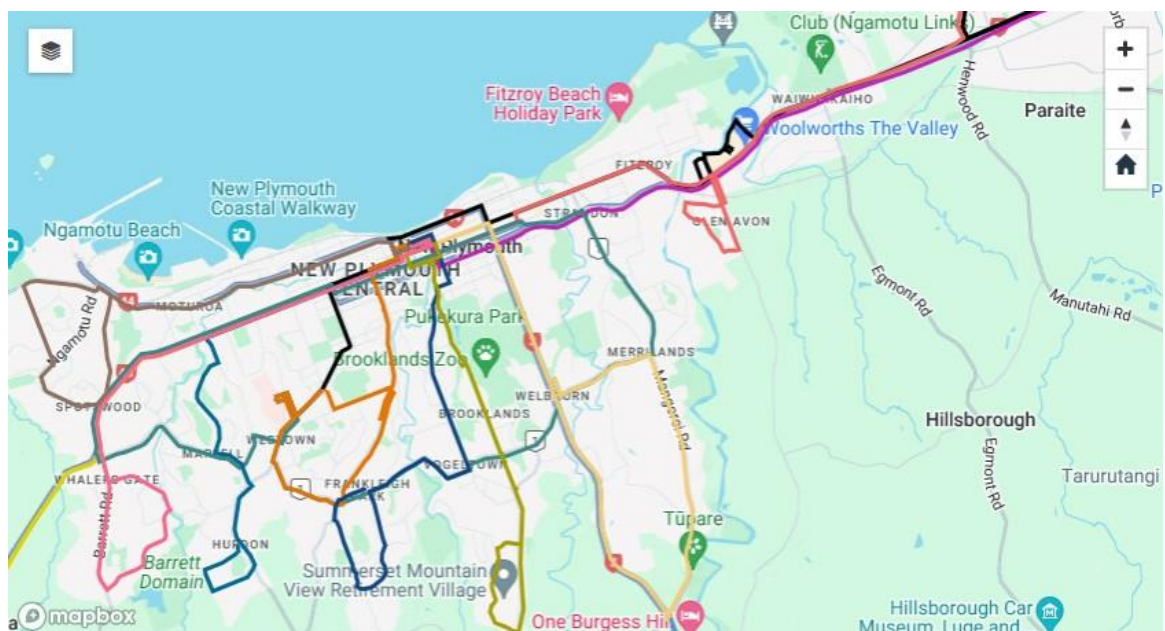


Option 1 is a highly efficient network that gets commuters where they need to go faster. It includes 12 direct, high frequency services on main routes. On the flip side, for some in our community, the nearest bus route may be further away.

This 'turn up and go' service means people don't need to worry about checking a timetable – they can just head to their nearest bus stop knowing it's just a short wait for the next bus.

Under this option, we will aim to run buses every 15 minutes at peak times, subject to funding.

Option 2



Option 2 allows for faster connections to key destinations, but also has more route coverage which means that you have better access to where you want to go. Option 2 has 15 routes and will reach destinations that Option 1 does not, such as Glen Avon. This option focuses on the destinations the community requested in recent public consultations such as supermarkets, medical and social services and sports facilities.

This option aims for a 15-30 minute frequency at peak times, subject to funding.

Engagement methods

We used a combination of digital tools and in-person engagement methods. Social Pinpoint was again used as our online tool and we utilised the maps and pin tools available on this engagement tool for people to add their feedback and comments on options 1 and 2. A comprehensive consultation campaign was used to encourage people to provide feedback on the two options with a mix of social media advertising, OOH (use of billboards in New Plymouth), direct EDM (electronic direct mail marketing) and advertisements in newspapers. This wide focus ensure we were able to get in touch with all members of the community. As before, we held in-person events where staff were able to engage directly with the public. The two face-to-face sessions were held in New Plymouth and Hāwera.

Results

Total submissions received

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Submissions</i>
Social Pinpoint	326
Pop-up events	23
Phone	10
Emails	24
Total	383

Social Pinpoint – Total

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Submissions</i>
Where to Next form	326

<i>Page visits</i>	4,241
<i>Unique visits</i>	3,448

Pop-up events

<i>Location</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
New Plymouth	8
Hāwera	15

Mailchimp

Three emails in total

<i>Recipients</i>	16,965
<i>Opens</i>	8,681
<i>Total clicks</i>	1,140

Facebook – organic posts

Seven posts in total

<i>Reach</i>	<i>Engagement</i>
7,975	145

Facebook – paid posts

Eight ads in total

<i>Reach</i>	<i>Engagement</i>
33,358	1,323

Print

Nine adverts in total

<i>Reach</i>
211,000

QR Code

On all print advertising

Scans
57

Digital

Five digital billboards in total

Reach
139,000

Four digital adverts on Stuff

Reach	Engagement
42,805	60

Total reach	451,103
Total engagement	10,266

Social Pinpoint – Option 1 and 2 results

Where to Next? surveys: 326	Results
Option 1	31.7%
Option 2	68.3%

Key themes

Community feedback identified four key themes:

- Bus frequency and beginning weekend services
- Services to events (e.g. Yarrow Stadium and the Bowl of Brooklands)
- Services to Base Hospital and New Plymouth Airport
- Connectivity between New Plymouth and Hāwera

The surveys also featured a number of responses around specific routes in options 1 and 2 and the changes to those routes.

Impact of responses to engagement process

There was strong community feedback to the Where to Next? Engagement process and this has had a direct impact on Option 2. Thanks to the public sharing their views, we have made the following changes:

- The level of service between Hāwera and Taranaki Base Hospital will be maintained
- The importance of the east-west throughput corridors (Route 5, Express, Airport to Whalers Gate) has been noted.
- Returning bus routes to the underserved communities for key destinations including:
 - Waitara Express (Waitara to CBD)
 - Airport to Whalers Gate to provide a connection between Glen Avon, Bell Block, and Airport
 - Proposed Orbiter route help provide the underserved communities with bus services
- Improving accessibility to our older community and to the hospital (Mangorei Road route) including:
 - Merrilands to Taranaki Base Hospital to serve the retirement communities in Merrilands.