

27 March 2026

Total Mobility Consultation  
Ministry of Transport  
PO Box 3175  
Wellington 6140

Kia ora

### **Support for the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's Submission on Proposals to Strengthen the Total Mobility Scheme**

Hamilton City Council is pleased to provide this letter of support for the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's submission on the Ministry of Transport's discussion document, Total Mobility Scheme: Proposals to Strengthen the Scheme (December 2025).

Council recognises the Total Mobility scheme as an essential and highly valued part of the transport system. For many disabled and older residents, Total Mobility is not discretionary but a critical enabler of independence, dignity, and participation in community life, supporting access to employment, education, healthcare, and social connection.

As a territorial authority within the Waikato Region, Hamilton City Council works closely with the Waikato Regional Council in its role as Public Transport Authority. Through this partnership, Council sees firsthand both the significant benefits of the scheme for users and the growing financial and operational pressures associated with its delivery. Council therefore supports the considered, regionally grounded and experience-based approach taken by the Transport Committee in its submission.

#### **Support for the direction of the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's submission**

Hamilton City Council supports the overall direction of the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's submission, including its emphasis on:

- Clarifying the purpose of the Total Mobility scheme and improving consistency of eligibility and assessment processes;
- Recognising accessibility gaps in areas with limited or no public transport, including rural and semi-rural communities; and
- Supporting more appropriate, consistent, and user-centred assessment approaches.

Council agrees that these measures, if well designed and adequately funded, have the potential to improve equity, consistency, and long-term sustainability of the scheme while maintaining its focus on those who rely on it most.

#### **Funding sustainability impacts on users, and cost-shifting risks**

Hamilton City Council notes the Government's signalled funding changes to the Total Mobility scheme outlined in the Ministry of Transport's discussion document, including increased user costs from July 2026. While these specific funding settings are presented as decisions already made rather than matters being consulted on, and are not positions advanced in the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's submission, Hamilton City Council has concerns about the potential impact of increased user costs on people who rely on Total Mobility, particularly those on lower incomes and with high transport needs.

Increased out-of-pocket costs risk undermining accessibility and equity objectives if not carefully monitored and mitigated.

Council also emphasises the importance of ensuring that any future reforms or service enhancements do not result in unintended or default cost-shifting to local government. This is particularly important in the context of potential rate-capping settings, which would significantly constrain councils' ability to absorb additional costs arising from central government policy decisions without clear funding commitments. Any changes to service expectations or responsibilities must be accompanied by transparent, sustainable funding arrangements and clearly defined implementation pathways.

### **Clarifying roles and responsibilities**

Council considers it essential that the respective roles and responsibilities of central government, regional councils, and territorial authorities remain clear (noting the separate discussions underway regarding the simplification of local government). Where changes to delivery models, assessment processes, or service expectations are proposed, these should be deliberately designed, fully consulted on, and supported by appropriate funding and realistic implementation timeframes. Such clarity is critical to maintaining the long-term viability and integrity of the scheme.

### **Conclusion**

Hamilton City Council supports the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's submission as a balanced and well-considered contribution to the review of the Total Mobility scheme. Council encourages the Ministry of Transport to give careful consideration to the Waikato Regional Council Transport Committee's recommendations, particularly in relation to protecting users from adverse affordability impacts, maintaining equity of access, and ensuring funding responsibilities remain appropriately aligned, as well as the additional points raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully



**Councillor Sarah Thomson**  
**Chair of the City Delivery Committee**

Yours faithfully



**Councillor Mesh Macdonald**  
**Deputy Chair of the City Delivery Committee**