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Auckland's future public transport system

**A summary of the Regional Public
Transport Plan 2023-2031**

**We've listened to Aucklanders and have
developed short-, medium-, and long-term
plans to improve public transport.**

Adapted in 2024 by Accessible Formats Service,
Blind Low Vision NZ, Auckland

**TN: Maps Rapid and Frequent Transit Network 2031
and Planned 2031 PT Network** have been omitted due
to their graphical nature.

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A summary of the Regional Public Transport Plan 2023-2031

The purpose of this summary

To provide an overview of the key issues and initiatives covered in the draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP). The aim of this document is to highlight things from the plan that Aucklanders are likely to be most interested in.

To view the full RPTP document please visit

[AT.govt.nz/rptp](https://www.transport.govt.nz/rptp).

Why we need to invest in PT

It's not sustainable or efficient to grow Auckland in a way that is heavily reliant on private vehicles and ever-widening roads to get around. Such an approach results in many negative effects such as lack of genuine travel choices, increasing traffic congestion, communities dominated by roads and traffic, increasing costs and space requirements to upgrade roads to accommodate growth, more emissions and pollution, and more deaths and serious injuries.

We need a frequent, efficient, reliable, and safe PT network that provides an attractive travel option for Aucklanders.

Key phrases and abbreviations

PT = Public Transport (trains, buses, ferries, and on-demand services)

RPTP = Regional Public Transport Plan

Rapid Transit Network = The network of PT services that operate:

- at least every 15 mins, 7am-7pm, 7 days a week
- on routes which are separated from general traffic, such as rail lines, the Northern Busway, and the Eastern Busway.

Frequent Transit Network = The network of PT services that operate:

- at least every 15mins, 7am-7pm, 7 days a week
- on routes that are not fully separated from general traffic, but often have some form of priority such as bus lanes.

90% of Aucklanders think a fast and reliable PT system is important for any world class city.

About our plan to PT

Overview

The RPTP is our plan for public transport, it outlines:

- How PT will be managed and improved over the next 8-years, with a detailed focus on the first 4-years

- The PT services that will operate during this time period and how they will change.
- The goals, policies, and actions that will shape PT.
- How we will monitor the performance of the PT system and check it is meeting Aucklanders' expectations.

This is what we want to achieve

Vision: To massively increase public transport use to reduce congestion, improve access for Aucklanders, support the economy and enhance the environment

Vision is supported by goals and key outcomes (Projects and initiatives that will achieve the RPTP Goals are outlined in the sections below)

Goals

1. Services providing an excellent customer experience

What this means

- Improved quality and number of services
- Public transport is efficient, frequent, reliable, and convenient
- Public transport is resilient and responsive to changes in demand
- Public transport adopts innovative approaches and integrates new technology

- All aspects of public transport provides an excellent customer experience

Key outcomes

- An increase from 70 million to 150 million annual passenger boardings
- In 2031, 57% of the population are within 500m of a rapid or frequent PT service (currently 40%)
- 92% of PT services run on time (currently 87% run on time)

2. Safe and accessible transport for everyone

What this means

- Public transport reduces inequity, enabling people to access key social, economic, and cultural opportunities
- Public transport is accessible and safe (including for people with disabilities)
- Public transport provides Māori whānau, hapū, iwi and communities access to a range of cultural sites (such as marae and wāhi tapu)

Key outcomes

- No reduction in the % of population living within 500m of a PT stop (currently 90%)
- In 2031 65% of the population living in deprived socio-economic areas are within 500m of a rapid or frequent PT service (compared to 45% in 2023)

- More evening trips on key routes

3. Funding and delivering public transport transparently

What this means

- Utilises community, and other, partnerships to better meet Aucklanders' needs
- Sharing more data about the performance of public transport service
- Public transport supports Māori identity and Māori outcomes
- Procurement supports the efficient delivery of services and value for money
- Advocate for additional funding to address current funding shortfalls

Key outcomes

- Micro-mobility hire schemes are better integrated with PT, such as compatible payment options
- Continued use of Te Reo Māori in service announcements and way finding
- Continued use of Māori design principles in infrastructure such as stations
- In 2031, 100% of the routes across the region meet their patronage targets (compared to 65% in 2023)

4. Integrating public transport into a growing Auckland

What this means

- Public transport helps to create more compact, sustainable, and efficient development patterns
- New development areas are well connected to public transport
- Public transport enables and supports well-functioning urban environments
- Public transport is well connected with other transport modes

Key outcomes

- More walking and cycling trips to rapid transit stations
- More houses and businesses near PT stations
- Better management of park and rides

5. Enhancing the environment and tackling the climate emergency

What this means

- Reduced carbon emissions from transport through more people using public transport and a low emissions public transport system
- Public transport protects and restores biodiversity, water, and air quality
- Public transport is resilient to severe weather events

Key outcomes

- 47% reduction in carbon emissions from our PT services (compared to 2020/21)
- 50% reduction in carbon emission from fixed assets (compared to 2018/19)
- A 50% reduction in embodied carbon emissions (against 2021)

RPTP time periods

Broad improvements to the PT system will be delivered in one of three time periods.

Short-term (2024)

- We're working to fix problems like ferry crew shortages and service reliability
- Continued construction on existing projects like City Rail Link and the Eastern Busway
- Other "quick-win" initiatives like changes to PT fares, service improvements, and bus priority projects

Medium-term (2025-2027)

- Open projects like City Rail Link and the Eastern Busway. Modify the transport network to support these projects
- Initiatives like improved ferry services, more frequent buses and trains, new stations, and new bus priority projects

Long-term (2028-2031)

- Our broader network ambitions and goals. Higher usage and operating a stronger, more integrated PT system
- If they receive funding, start construction on projects like Light Rail, Airport to Botany, and the Waitematā Harbour Crossing

More RPTP initiatives are outlined in the following sections.

Beyond this plan

Please note:

Projects like Light Rail, Airport to Botany, and the Waitemata Harbour Crossing are not covered in detail in this RPTP because:

- They are not yet funded.
- If they do receive funding, they are unlikely to open by 2031. As such they will not influence the PT system within the time period of this plan.
- AT is involved in these projects to ensure they are developed in consideration of the wider PT system.
- The next RPTP revision will be in 2025 and, if necessary, it can cover these projects and their implications for the PT system.

What Aucklanders told us about the draft RPTP

3,196 Aucklanders gave us feedback on the draft RPTP during its public consultation period in July/August 2023

Transcriber Note: Information from a set of graphs has been listed.

Top 10 RPTP topics with the most responses

Transcriber Note: The numbers are approximate.

- Specific route changes: Gulf Harbour Ferry: 1300
- Frequent services: 990
- Cheaper fares: 820
- Public transport problems: 760
- Vision: 590
- Goal 1: Customer experience: 590
- Goal 2: Environment and climate: 590
- Travel times: 580
- Goal 3: Safety and accessibility: 580
- Goal 4: Integrating into a growing Auckland: 580

How respondents heard about the draft Regional Public Transport Plan

54% of respondents answered this question.

- Email: 346
- Social media: 330
- Other: 221
- People's panel: 201
- Word of mouth: 197
- AT ambassador: 169
- Poster ad: 102
- Newspaper ad: 60
- AT website: 47
- Online ad: 25
- Onboard: 25

Vision

582 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 45%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 32%
- Needs significant changes: 23%

Goal 1: Services providing excellent customer experience

572 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 59%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 26%
- Needs significant changes: 15%

Goal 2: Safe and accessible transport for everyone

568 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 56%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 24%
- Needs significant changes: 20%

Goal 3: Funding and delivering public transport transparently

558 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 52%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 28%
- Needs significant changes: 20%

Goal 4: Integrating public transport into a growing Auckland

550 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 58%

- Right track, but needs minor changes: 26%
- Needs significant changes: 16%

Goal 5: Enhancing the environment and tackling the climate emergency

545 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 53%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 27%
- Needs significant changes: 20%

Fixing Current problems

731 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 33%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 41%
- Needs significant changes: 23%

Providing more frequent services

971 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 42%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 32%
- Needs significant changes: 23%

Speeding up travel times

562 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 44%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 25%

- Needs significant changes: 21%

Rolling out cheaper fares

842 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 36%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 39%
- Needs significant changes: 25%

Improving accessibility

281 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 54%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 34%
- Needs significant changes: 12%

Making public transport even safer

356 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 49%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 35%
- Needs significant changes: 16%

Increasing weather resilience

389 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 54%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 40%
- Needs significant changes: 26%

Creating a low carbon system

366 people responded to this question.

- Great as proposed: 49%
- Right track, but needs minor changes: 43%
- Needs significant changes: 19%

This is how Aucklanders are using PT

- **Aucklanders primarily use PT for travelling to work and education**—Particularly to get to the city centre. Trips on PT for other purposes are more occasional, primarily to entertainment or social events.
- **Usage is highest in central areas**—The isthmus and lower North Shore.
- **Most regular users only make a handful of trips per week**—Daily users are only 11% of our customers.
- Two key factors influence the decision to use PT:
 - **Travel time**—this includes service frequency and reliability which influence overall journey time.
 - **Cost**—Where PT is cheaper than parking it can represent good value for money, but not where driving is faster and cheaper.
- **Younger Aucklanders (under 25) use PT the most**—Usage declines with age, then rises amongst over 65's.
- **Wealthier households use PT more.**

- **Impact of 50% fares**—43% of existing users travelled more by PT. 5% of non-users travelled, or considered travelling, by PT.
- **PT is used for medium-distance trips**—This is where PT is most competitive with cars. Shorter trips aren't worth the wait for PT, while longer trips can't compete with car travel times.
- **Usage doesn't vary significantly by other demographics**—E.g. age, gender, ethnicity

What you've told us needs improving

We regularly conduct market research to better understand people's needs and frustrations, we also receive regular feedback from members of the public.

Below are the most common things people tell us about PT, and how we intend to tackle them.

"Fix the current problems with PT urgently"

There were significant issues with the PT system due to bus driver shortages in 2023. These have now been rectified, but there is more to do, and we are pursuing the following initiatives:

- We are working with ferry operators to address the ongoing staff shortages affecting ferry routes.
- We're advocating to government for increased wages and simpler immigration pathways for PT workers.

- We are working to provide continuation of service (in some form) for customers affected by KiwiRail's rebuild of the rail network, between now and when the work will be completed in 2026.

"Provide more frequent services"

Most Aucklanders want to be able to just turn up and go, rather than planning journeys around timetables.

- 10 new frequent bus routes by 2027 (funded by Auckland Council's Climate Action Targeted Rate).
- By 2026 trains will run every 7.5 minutes at peak travel times and every 15 minutes the rest of the day.
- More ferries operating on several routes by 2025.

"Speed up travel times"

While travel times are influenced by service frequency and reliability, these initiatives are focused on travel times once people get on the PT services.

- City Rail Link will speed up train journeys meaning twice as many people will be within 30 minutes of central Auckland.
- More bus lanes on key routes.
- More bus queue jumps and priority at intersections. For example buses running behind schedule will be able trigger a green traffic light.

"Make fares cheaper"

- A weekly fare cap that allows unlimited travel for a fixed price.

"Make improvements for people with accessibility needs"

- Continue to implement our Accessibility Action Plan and funding of the Total Mobility Scheme.
- Continued roll-out of audio announcements on buses.
- Ongoing accessibility improvements to stops and other infrastructure.

"Make public transport better at dealing with severe weather events"

- Maintenance programmes will upgrade infrastructure, so it is less vulnerable to increasingly severe weather events.
- New infrastructure will be designed to be resilient to increasingly severe weather events.

"Provide better communications and technology"

- Passengers will be able to use credit cards to board PT (sometime in 2024).
- AT HOP card will be replaced in 2026 when we move to the national ticketing system. One benefit of the new

system is that it will enable online balance top-ups to take effect immediately.

- Improvements to the AT Mobile app and online channels to let you know things quickly.
- Better real-time service tracking information.

"Make using public transport feel safer"

- Rolling out transport officers on buses like those seen on Auckland's trains.
- Testing the implementation of safety barriers to protect drivers.
- Conflict de-escalation training for drivers.

"More train lines, more busways, build light rail"

- City Rail Link creates the rail capacity to have more trains running more often.
- Stages 2 and 3 of the Eastern Busway between Pakuranga and Botany.
- Planning improvements to the public transport system that will support and connect to Light Rail.
- North-west bus improvements, including longer bus shoulders on the motorway with buses every 7-8 minutes during peak hours.
- More trains more often (see Provide more frequent services).

- Electric trains extended to Pukekohe and three new trains stations being built on the southern line.

"Create a low carbon PT system"

- Electric ferries operating on several routes by 2025, and over 1,000 buses (75% of the fleet) will have no tail pipe emission by 2031.
- Ensure all PT projects consider the embodied emissions and reduce them where possible.

Improvements to trains

- City Rail Link (operating by 2026).
 - Doubles the rail network's capacity in the long term
 - Provides faster travel times
 - Two new underground stations in the City Centre (Te Waihorotiu and Karanga-a-Hape)
 - City Rail Link (operating by 2026)
- More trains, more often (operating by 2026)—Trains every 7.5 minutes at peak travel times and every 15 minutes the rest of the day.
- New train stations in Drury, Ngākōroa, and Paerātā (open by 2026).
- Electric trains extended to Pukekohe (operating by 2026).

Trains every 7.5 minutes at peak travel times and every 15 minutes the rest of the day.

Improvements to buses and on-demand services

- Eastern Busway stages 2 & 3 open with new peak hour buses from Ormiston and Howick (by 2027).
- Further Northwestern bus improvements.
- New bus station at Rosedale Station and associated bus connections to Browns Bay and Albany (opens 2027).
- New bus station in Whangaparāoa (under investigation).
- Airport Link Extension.
- 10 new frequent routes by 2027, plus another three frequent routes by 2031.
- Over 1,000 electric buses (75% of the fleet) will have no tail pipe emission by 2031.
- Takaanini on-demand transport service is now permanent, and we will conduct further trials throughout Auckland as funding allows. Currently we are considering trials in East Coast Bays, Western North Shore (Kaipātiki), Lincoln Road, Scott Point, Massey, Oranga, Karaka Lakes, and Drury.

It takes either one bus lane or four traffic lanes to transport the same amount of people per hour.

Improvements to ferries

- Electric ferries start operating (2024). Ongoing implementation of electric ferries (2024-2031).
- More ferry trips on several routes, including Pine Harbour, West Harbour, Hobsonville Point, and Half Moon Bay. Associated improvements to create more reliable connections to bus services (2024-2026).
- More ferry crews to ensure trips aren't cancelled (2024).

Better connections to the PT network

- Better management of park and rides, including live parking availability data, a small portion of parks available to be prebooked for a fee, charges for people that park but do not ride.
- Better walking and cycling links to PT services. Primary focus is links to the rapid and frequent networks.
- More secure bicycle parking and e-bike charging facilities at key PT stations.
- In principle, AT will support developments in close proximity to the rapid and frequent transport networks.
- Develop and make publicly available thresholds for when PT services will be provided to rural towns and new greenfield developments. We are also investigating changes to developer contributions, so they can help fund the early provision of PT services to new developments.

Electric ferries start operating in 2024.

A key decision

The city has to make some trade-offs when allocating resources to PT. One big decision is deciding whether to focus on:

- Increasing reach by providing new services to reach more people in different areas, such as rural towns.
- Increasing the frequency of existing services, usually our busiest PT routes or routes with good potential for increased demand

We asked over 1,200 Aucklanders what they thought was most important. 16% favoured reach, 48% wanted an equal focus, and 38% favoured frequency.

We have taken this feedback on board. Our priority is maintaining the existing network, which is predominantly focused on "frequency". However, additional funding for service improvements will be split at around 50% "frequency" and 50% "reach".

Funding

We are facing a significant ongoing funding shortfall.

The initiatives outlined in this RPTP are fundable, but beyond 2024 we don't have certainty that the Council and government will be able to provide the funding we need to continue operating the system, let alone to deliver all of the improvements required to significantly increase PT use.

AT will continue to advocate for new and more secure funding sources so we can make more progress on PT improvements.

Current funding constraints have been made worse by:

- A drop in fares revenue due to COVID-19. Fares typically fund around a third of our operating costs.
- Increasing inflation. Increased costs to operate PT services mean we are providing less services for the same amount of money.
- The cost of debt has increased, which impacts on our ability to deliver infrastructure.

Additional funding has recently been approved through Auckland Council's Climate Action Transport Targeted Rate, and funds many of the improvements in this RPTP. Even with this, we need more funding to be able to deliver the level of improvements required to significantly increase PT use.

Funding sources for the RPTP

Transcriber Note: Start Described Diagram

A flowchart is shown, with 3 top level boxes.

Top level box 1 (coloured black) contains the text "User Contribution" and contains an internal box with the text "PT fares"

Top level box 2 (coloured blue) contains the text "Auckland Council Contribution" and contains 3 internal boxes "Auckland Rates", "Auckland Regional Fuel Tax" and

"Climate Action Transport Targeted Rate (CATTR)". This box links to a level 2 box (also blue) containing the text "Auckland Long Term Plan".

Top level box 3 (coloured green) contains the text "NZ Government Contribution" and contains 2 internal boxes "National fuel tax" and "Other Crown funding". This box links to a level 2 box (also green) containing text "National Land Transport Programme".

The two level 2 boxes ("Auckland Long Term Plan" and "National Land Transport Programme") link to a level 3 box (coloured purple) containing text "Regional Land Transport Plan". This purple box is also linked to by Top level box 1) User Contributions".

The level 3 box ("Regional Public Transport Plan") links to a level 4 box (coloured dark green) containing text ("Regional Public Transport Plan")

Transcriber Note: End Described Diagram

Steps we took to develop the RPTP

Late 2022

- Identify issues and opportunities for PT and develop draft RPTP goals
- Engagement activities included:
 - Market research survey (over 1,000 Aucklanders)
 - Three workshops with key interest groups

Jan-Apr 2023

- Further feedback on draft goals, develop draft actions, and research on Aucklanders' priorities for public transport
- Engagement activities included:
 - Market research survey (over 1,000 Aucklanders)
 - Two workshops with key interest groups
 - Auckland Council Planning Committee endorsed strategic direction for the RPTP

May-Jun 2023

- Develop draft RPTP
- AT Board endorses draft RPTP for public feedback

Jul-Aug 2023

- Public feedback on draft RPTP

Sep-Oct 2023

- Local board feedback on draft RPTP
- AT amend RPTP taking feedback into account

Nov 2023

- Finalise RPTP
- RPTP approved by AT Board

End of Auckland's future public transport system