

## Regional Public Transport Plan Hearings Team

### Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

We are writing on behalf of the Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council, a group of rangatahi volunteers aged 12 - 24 from across the Ōtautahi region. As representatives of the Christchurch Youth Council, we wish to emphasise the importance of an effective and sustainable public transport system, particularly for young people. Many young people rely heavily on public transport as a primary mode of transportation, and we are committed to promoting environmentally friendly options.

This submission is based on the Youth Takeover survey responses (over 450 rangatahi responded to the sections on Public Transport in the first quarter of 2024 - see attached), a quick poll of our instagram (see attached), as well as discussions and surveys conducted internally with our membership of 22 volunteers aged 14 - 24. We acknowledge that we are not representative of all young people in Christchurch. Young people may disagree with the statements made throughout this submission, and we would expect and value this, as no two people have the same voice or opinion.

### Key Insights from Young People:

- 1. Frequent Use of Public Transport:** Many rangatahi use buses almost daily due to convenience and affordability. However, concerns about the reliability and availability of services, particularly in areas outside the city centre, have been expressed. The Orbiter bus, for instance, is notoriously unreliable. Addressing these inconsistencies is crucial for encouraging more young people to use public transport regularly.
- 2. Affordability and Fare Structure:** This is very important to rangatahi, with 47% of young people in our survey responding that affordable public transport is “very important to me”. The current flat fare system has been well received among young people, with many of our team and the online pollers saying they think the fare structure is about right. Many appreciate subsidised fares for students, making transport accessible. However, daily commuting can still be costly; for example, students often spend \$20 a week just to get to school. We suggest looking into initiatives to encourage regular bus use, such as weekly or monthly discount passes. Maintaining affordable pricing is essential to ensure that all young people, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, can access public transport without financial strain.
- 3. Sustainable Transport Options:** Young people today are particularly environmentally conscious and passionate about combating climate change. We understand the importance of reducing carbon footprints and are increasingly advocating for public

transport as a more sustainable alternative to car travel. We believe that an efficient, reliable public transport system is vital for reducing congestion and emissions in Christchurch. Young people want to see greater investment in public transport services that prioritise sustainability, making it easier for them to choose eco-friendly travel options.

4. **Motu Move Initiative:** The introduction of the Motu Move system, allowing seamless tap-on, tap-off payment methods, has been positively received. This innovation enhances convenience and aligns with young people's preferences for modern, tech-friendly solutions. However, it is crucial to keep metrocards available, as many rangatahi do not have access to tap-and-go cards.
5. **Improvements Needed:** Many youth expressed a desire for more frequent bus services and improved scheduling. Feedback highlighted frustrations with long wait times and inconsistent routes, particularly with only one bus available on weekends that comes every 40 minutes. Enhancing the frequency and reliability of services will significantly boost public transport usage among young people.
6. **Pet Policies:** Rangatahi felt a bit more mixed about this point with about two thirds of our team supporting the policy, and 64% of our instagram poll respondees. Therefore we support the general idea of allowing pets on public transport, as it would improve accessibility for pet owners to take their animals to the vet, park, or visit whānau and friends. However, we suggest that more work needs to be done to address concerns for passengers with asthma, allergies, or fear of animals. Potential solutions could include allowing pets only on specific buses or creating pet-free areas on the bus. Additionally, we believe that there should be more frequent cleaning of buses, as animal hair can be difficult to remove, and allergies can occur even after the animal has left the bus.
7. **Safety and Comfort:** Safety on public transport remains a concern, particularly for young women. Safe and accessible transport was deemed the most important issue for young people regarding transport (with 49% deeming it very important) in our Youth Takeover 2024 survey. Many highlighted the need for clear protocols regarding safety and behaviour on buses. Initiatives like better driver training and clear guidelines for handling inappropriate behaviour could enhance the safety and overall experience for young commuters. Additionally, the issue of priority seating has arisen, with young students sometimes occupying seats designated for the elderly or parents with young children.

Incorporating the views of young people into the ECan regional public transport plan is vital for creating a system that meets their needs. Making bus services attractive and accessible to young people captures a whole cohort before we begin driving themselves around, creating a great opportunity to foster lifelong public transport users as we transition into adulthood. We encourage ECan to prioritise improvements in frequency, reliability, affordability, and safety to foster a sustainable public transport culture among youth in Christchurch.

Thank you for considering our input. We look forward to seeing how ECan will implement these changes to benefit the young people in our community.

**Ngā Mihi,**

**Thomas Richards and Beth Gibson**

**On Behalf of Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council Incorporated  
Executive Committee**