**A Policy and Funding Framework for Community Transport**

Community transport services are operated by not-for-profit organisations, usually charitable trusts. Across New Zealand, community transport provides an essential service for the most vulnerable people in society to access health care, shopping and visiting whanau. Whilst a few councils – such as Waikato, Environment Canterbury, and Northland - are active in promoting community transport, the sector is not generally recognised as being an integral part of the public transport system. Just trying finding out what community transport services are available in your area!

Based on our work with Greater Wellington and Otago Regional Councils, along with the Eastern Bay Villages service in Whakatane, this paper argues that this mind set needs to change. It is impossible for fixed route bus services to provide an accessible service for everyone – the distances and population densities are just too vast. Total Mobility is very expensive, and only affordable for occasional use for most people. App-based demand response services are great, but relatively expensive to provide. Community transport can, and does, fill the gap that other transport services leave.

This paper therefore uses real life case studies of community transport services to advocate for a national / regional policy and funding framework to support further growth in the sector. Currently, many community transport services live hand to mouth - constantly battling to secure funding and recruit mainly volunteer staff to drive vehicles. Greater policy and funding support from Ministry of Transport, Waka Kotahi and Regional / local councils would enable community transport services to be expanded and people to live more fulfilling lives. The economic benefits of community transport – for example tackling costs of poor health and social isolation – are compelling. This paper will set out clear and practical proposals for positive change.