



Date: Monday 8 December 2025
Time: 1:00pm -3:00pm
Location: Rototuna Library, 30 North City Road, Hamilton, Waikato 3281
or [Online \(MS Teams\)](#)

Facilitator: Sarah Gibb, Community Waikato

Note taker: Yvonne Mariano, Programme Administrator, Waikato Regional Council

Attendees in person:

Amantha Bowen, Community Transport Lead, Waikato Regional Council
Maurice Flynn, Accessibility Transport Coordinator, Waikato Regional Council
Daniel Stanners, Auto Transform
Bridget Doran, Bridget Doran Consulting
John Petry, Friends of Morrinsville Trust
Giny vanHonk, South Waikato Community Health Transport
Peter Boyce, South Waikato Community Health Transport
Amanda Henton, National Road Carriers Association
Alicia Leef, North Waikato Transport Trust
Val Sparks, Paeroa Volunteer Drivers - Paeroa Community Support Trust
Jan Meredith, Paeroa Volunteer Drivers
Elsbeth Ryan, Raglan District Community Vehicle Trust
Terry Ryan, Raglan District Community Vehicle Trust
Marnie Goodman, Tairua Care & Friendship Club Inc
Lorraine Austin, Te Aroha Community Support (Health Shuttle)

Attendees via Teams:

Claudia Cameron, Bay of Plenty Regional Council
Jan Dench, Matamata Community Health Trust
Shelley Wilson, Ōtorohanga Support House Whare Āwhina
Lauren Hughes, Te Kauwhata Community House
Desiree Brown, Te Kuiti 4H Community Board Trust
Wai Crombie, Waikato/Bay of Plenty Cancer Society
Tony Marsters, Whitianga Community Services Trust

Purpose: An opportunity to build relationships and share knowledge and information in support of rural transport initiatives and projects in the Waikato region.

Meeting notes:

- 1. Welcome and Introductions:** Sarah Gibb opened the meeting by sharing her experience at the Community Transport Association Conference in London. The event closely resembled the Community Transport Symposium held earlier this year, reinforcing that we are aligned with international efforts. While England may be slightly ahead in progression, they lack the strong connections we enjoy. At the conference, Sarah presented outcomes from our symposium and received positive feedback. She also noted that Community Transport groups in Australia, England, and Scotland meet periodically, and we will join those discussions when they occur.

Sarah also mentioned the Canterbury networking meeting which was attended by Amantha. It is similar to our forums but held less often. Our quarterly engagement provides stronger momentum and fosters ongoing collaboration, something we can be proud of.

- 2. Overview of the National Road Carriers Association and membership benefits:** Amanda Henton [[Click here](#)]

- National Road Carriers (NRC) is a not-for-profit industry association established in 1936, supporting members across all transport sectors (road, rail, port, air).
- Membership ranges from large companies (e.g., Mainfreight) to small operators and owner-drivers.
- Dedicated to building a safe, efficient, resilient freight supply chain and supporting members regardless of size.
- Works with central and local government on transport infrastructure and regulations
- Member Support:
 - Provides HR and compliance assistance (e.g., employment contract templates, compliance advice).
 - Partners with Fortune Manning (transport law specialists) and Marsh Insurance (specialised transport cover, premium discounts, liability protection).
 - Offers health and safety, accounting, and advisory support
 - Cost Model Tool: Online tool (via ECHO/ECA) calculates business costs by route, vehicle, or fleet. It provides detailed cost reports (hourly or per kilometre) and allows comparisons between diesel, electric, and hydrogen vehicles. Useful for purchase planning, finance, and helping new operators understand service costs.
 - Negotiating discounts with commercial partners – fuel discounts, business comms, insurance and tyres.

Amanda notes that while Community Transport providers are not commercial entities, they can still join NRC through its commercial partnership membership.

- Affiliate membership: for small operators, offering fuel discounts and insurance access.
- Associate membership: includes the same partnerships plus business support, ideal for those needing extra services.

Fuel discounts are available through Z Energy, Caltex, and Mobil, with rural members also benefiting from affiliated independent stations. Insurance and support are provided by a

dedicated broker team covering a wide range of transport needs, and memberships can be held under an individual's name. The business support team can adapt to meet community transport group needs, and overall membership costs are kept low to remain accessible.

3. **Auto Transform - Practical Solutions to help ensure a fit-for-purpose vehicle:** Daniel Stanners [\[Click here\]](#)

Overview:

- Focus on delivering community-first transport solutions that prioritize dignity, comfort, and accessibility while addressing the needs and constraints of providers.
- They worked closely with community transport providers across New Zealand to design purpose-built vehicles and share industry knowledge. These providers play a vital role in connecting rural and urban communities to essential services, often relying on dedicated volunteers and a mix of vans, cars, and SUVs, each presenting unique challenge.
- Aim to share solutions and strategies for delivering safe, comfortable, and reliable services.

Practical challenges facing community transport providers:

- **Passenger Accessibility:** Difficult entry/exit, limited grab handles, uncomfortable seating, and challenges assisting passengers.
- **Health & Safety:** Compliance requirements and risk exposure. Meeting certification requirements is critical to reduce liability, fines, and reputational risk while protecting passengers and providers.
- **Vehicle Issues:** Reliability concerns, short asset life, and gaps in specialist knowledge.
- **Workforce Challenges:** High staff/volunteer turnover and lack of formal training.

Purpose Built Transport Solutions

- Designed a custom build tailored to provider needs, recognizing that requirements vary by location and passengers.
- Combine New Zealand manufacturing with global innovations, especially from Europe, to deliver high-quality solutions.
- Recent example: Lawrenceville Community Trust vehicles featuring:
 - Side step for easy entry (Toyota Hiace)
 - Bench seating and grab handles
 - Wide, comfortable seating for accessibility

Feedback from John Petry, Friends of Morrinsville Trust

Auto Transform Enhancement for their vehicle:

- Custom two-bench seating for improved comfort and simplicity.
- Added extra grab rails for easier entry and exit, especially for older passengers.
- Fourth vehicle completed by Auto Transform and they had all been very successful.

Future of EV and Solutions for Community Transport Providers

- Government and councils are encouraging EV use to meet sustainability goals, but community providers face concerns over cost and rural suitability, making the transition gradual and long-term.
- Auto Transform presented a Mercedes-Benz eSprinter, chosen for its leading range capacity. The fit-out uses lightweight aluminium composite materials to maximize range and includes a flexible interior with side-folding seats for wheelchairs or a stretcher. The vehicle was available on-site for attendees to view
- Auto Transform suggested to start with your needs, cost and budget – looking into most common vehicles.
- Auto Transform can help to stay on top of compliance: mobility equipment training programme and mobility equipment servicing. They provide training and a booklet – it includes theory test and then practical.

Feedback:

- Professional training is an important consideration for community transport providers, as it builds trust and ensures service quality.
- Terry Ryan from Raglan District Community Vehicle Trust noted that each of their driver receives a quality system document and is expected to follow it, ensuring compliance and accountability.

4. WRC Community Transport Update – Funding and Legal Review: Amantha Bowen

Funding Update

- Total funding available: \$500,000.
- More applicants expected, which will increase administrative work for distribution.
- Application process remains the same. A slight adjustment will be made following the legal review.
- Applications open early January to February possibly for four weeks this time. Correspondence and FAQs will be released during this period.
- The funding distribution schedule will remain unchanged and will take place in April.
- Any type of community transport can apply within the Waikato region, and this is clearly outlined in the policy, which specifies potential entity types.
- The funding is intended for operational expenses and does not cover the cost of vehicle purchases.

Legal and Policy Review Update

- Review is being refreshed; delays noted but funding distribution of 500,000 will continue.
- Review will cover health & safety requirements.
- Small Passenger Service Licence for many Community Transport providers is likely a requirement. More information on how to navigate this will be provided.

- Passenger endorsement (P endorsement) may be required for employees, but the process is simpler than expected, typically involving a medical certificate, a fee, and a Waka Kotahi background check. More details will be provided next year.

Feedback from Amantha:

- Small Passenger Service License and P endorsement can be treated as operational costs hence this can be included in the funding request.
- One Small Passenger Service Licence can cover the entity; P endorsement may not always be necessary.
- Waikato Regional Council cannot provide specific licensing advice; providers must confirm requirements such as licenses and P endorsements themselves. However, in the interest of supporting the sector, we've investigated and, based on discussions, are confident in sharing our current understanding.
- Small Passenger Services License allows providers to legally charge passengers.
- After obtaining a Small Passenger Service Licence, a Certificate of Fitness (COF) is also required. This is an added benefit of the licence, ensuring service compliance.

Support for Providers

- Community Transport Team will continue to assist the funding applicants through the process and provide detailed information about the updates on the legal review.
- Providers are encouraged to apply for funding, with licensing costs eligible as part of operational expenses.
- Sarah Gibb clarified that applicants will be contacted to ensure they fully understand the purpose of the funding – accountability and the quality of the application.

Recent government announcements regarding Regional Councils: There is currently no impact anticipated on Community Transport funding, and the budget already set aside will continue to be distributed.

5. Anything else: Open to the Forum

- Te Awamutu Health Shuttle van is currently on sale ([click here](#))
- Jan Meredith from Paeroa Volunteer Drivers shared their experience with a team in Tauranga who repaired their wheelchair at no cost because they were volunteer drivers, even when an extra part was needed. It's worth reaching out for this kind of support.
- Forum dates were confirmed, and with no additional feedback, it was agreed to continue holding forums quarterly. Suggestions for changes remain open to all.
- A webinar on legal review and funding will be organized for those who have questions.

Actions:

Topic	Discussion	Action & time frame	Person(s) responsible
Community Transport Fund and Legal Review	Funding and Legal Review	To open the Community Transport fund early January	Amantha Bowen
Community Transport Fund and Legal Review	Funding and Legal Review	To organise a webinar on legal review and funding	Amantha Bowen
National Road Carrier	Membership Benefits	Share presentation and membership info (attached in the meeting notes)	Yvonne Mariano
Auto Transform	Vehicle fit to purpose	Share presentation and contact information (attached in meeting notes)	Yvonne Mariano / Daniel Stanners

Upcoming 2026 forum dates:

16 March
15 June
21 September
7 December

Any queries, please contact Amantha Bowen or Yvonne Mariano at communitytransport@waikatoregion.govt.nz

