



**Facilitator and Note taker:** Sarah Gibb, Community Waikato

Present: Greg Morton, John Wadey, Dexter Morgan, Dianne Burgess, Bryan Barker, Bill McMaster, Wayne Thomson, Marnie Goodman, Peter Winterbottom, Wanda Brittain, Carol Foothead, Les Sinton, Amantha Bowen.

Via Zoom: Deb Hill, Sheryll Fitzpatrick, Julie Taverner, Alicia Leef, Desiree McKenzie

Apologies: Nigel King

In attendance: Karen Stockmann (Community Waikato) to manage the zoom and Maureen Marra to lead the evaluation discussion.

**1. Welcome:** Our second meeting including a zoom option so welcome to Karen who facilitated any questions via zoom.

#### **2. Community Waikato evaluation: focus on Community Transport**

Maureen Marra led a conversation about Community Waikato's impact on the community sector. This was based on two of our Strategic Goals – Connect and support communities and Strengthening the capacity and capabilities of community organisations.

She asked the group for examples of what has been learnt since involvement in the forum.

The write up of the evaluation is attached to these notes and includes commendations and recommendations.

#### **3. Updates from WDHB – Greg Morton**

Community Health Forums:

Greg reminded us about these quarterly meetings that are held around the region, noting transport is a regular topic for discussion.

Red Cross: Things are on track in terms of the local community transport groups who used to be under the Red Cross umbrella, for them to be able to contract directly with the DHB from late 2020.

Renal Transport: In terms of renal transport, St John is no longer going to provide this service for the South Waikato and Thames Coromandel/Hauraki areas. The DHB is working with two other renal transport providers who have agreed to provide renal transport service in these two areas from 1 October.

Transport & Access Plan: The front end of the DHB's Transport and Access Plan (not the actions component) was reported through to the Executive last week and approved in principle. Some technical work is being undertaken via funding from NZTA, Hamilton City and the DHB to determine actions under some of the Plan key focus areas. This work will determine actions for the final draft Plan, and should be completed by June 2021. These actions will be developed and go under the following focus areas: Parking management and accessibility at Waikato Hospital; Transport choices to and from Waikato Hospital for staff and consumers (greater Hamilton); and Staff travel between key DHB facilities in Hamilton.

#### **4. Next meeting**

- Monday November 23 – presentation by Gary Goodman, creator of booking system for ST John

Prepared by Maureen Marra on behalf of Community Waikato.

The Community Transport Forum is a Community Waikato driven initiative first established in 2011 with Waikato Regional Council and Waikato District Health Board. The Forum brings together the regional providers of health and well-being community-based transport services with external stakeholders including Waikato DHB and the Waikato Regional Council.

Data for the evaluation of the impact of this Community Waikato initiative was gathered through a focus group session held on 21 Sept 2020 at Community Waikato and supported by Zoom connection. Participants in this focus session included community transport providers from geographic locations around the region including Te Aroha, Morrinsville, South Waikato, North Waikato, Tairua, Taumarunui, Whitianga, Otorohanga, Te Awamutu and TeKuiti . Also taking part in this focus group were representatives from the Waikato Regional Council and the Waikato DHB. The meeting was facilitated by the Community Waikato Facilitator of the forum and co-ordinated by Maureen Marra. Meeting notes were taken by Indigo Cambie.

The discussion began with a review of the situation prior to the introduction of the Transport Forum initiative in 2011, as experienced by those community transport services operators who were providing transport services at the time.

- *We Knew good work was happening, but no one was connected. Due to the diverse parts of the Region, many issues needed to be dealt with such as the regional transport issue with transport from rural locations to the hospital. Driving force was how can we collectively do what the forum is doing right now*
- *Everyone was doing their own thing, then began to complement each other's works. There were not many options for providers to connect. The Forum provided opportunities for relations and connections among the group and out of the group. It also raised awareness of issues that the DHB did not hear about because information from community was filtered through many people. The Forum allowed direct flow from community the members in the DHB*

The focus group discussion then moved to centre on what the introduction of the Transport Forum has provided to them. The following four key achievements were highlighted by the focus group members:

**1. Learning from each other – managerial logistics**

The forum provides the platform for conversations with other community transport providers around the processes and managerial logistics such as those associated with setting up Trusts. By sharing experiences and solutions, people were able to hear and learn from each other.

- *We have someone to talk to rather than an entire bureaucracy; face to face contact with someone who knows what they are doing and how to help*
- *....things around processes such as knowing the ropes and understanding what is needed and clarification for things like GST registrations.*
- *Understanding how to quickly set a viable system*
- *We are in the same boat. Together we come up with a solution...*

Thus, the Forum provides a unique setting for the sharing of new ideas, successes and practical solutions.

**2. Connectivity and collective voice**

As a collective, the Community Transport operators are able to advocate for change, particularly with the Waikato DHB. Communication and logistical problems exist between the operators and the DHB partly because of the complexity of the DHB. Prior to the establishment of the Transport Forum there were no communication links with the DHB, but there is now. The Forum provided a collective voice with the power to advocate for systems that better supported the needs of the patients and their drivers. For example, the Forum has enabled the issue of problematic waiting times to be addressed.

*Being part of this forum meant we were able to solve some of the logistical problems we were having with the hospital regarding appointment timing and waiting times ...*

Also problematic were the pick-up times for patients, which were often late at night. As a collective, the Forum surveyed and collated data on pick-up times, which they then provided to the DHB as the first step towards the successful establishment of a policy on this matter. Consequently, the Forum enabled the group to successfully regulate the pick-up times whereby these worked better for the well-being of the patient and the driver.

Such group initiatives were made possible through the connections developed during the Forum meetings as members became more familiar with each other. Also, closer relationships were formed among the operators of Community Waikato, the DHB, and the Regional Council. Also, connections between different townships communities were able to be formed. As one member commented:

- *Trust and connections among townships formed*

### **3. Growing the transport services**

The Community Transport operators provide essential service gaps in small towns in the Waikato Region. Most of the services are health based, and some are exclusively health based. Others include well-being and taxi services. For example, although Taumaranui has a bus that takes people to the Waikato hospital the operate also fulfils other essential services at the same time because not everyone is able to actually go on the bus.

- *During Covid the second van began doing chemist deliveries for the people who couldn't get to the pharmacies. Free, 30 deliveries a day, which continued on after Covid lockdowns.*

And, in Tairua, where the population is the oldest in New Zealand, there is no taxi or bus service. Thus, the community transport operators fill this need by providing additional services such as round trips to Hamilton to eye clinics and other health needs such as

- *..... provide well-being trips, shopping, lunch, shows, groceries and things. Once people know about it they pass the word on.*

### **4. Impact on people's lives and on the community**

The contribution of the community transport operators has significant positive impact on people and families/whanau. The interactions reported in the focus session were rich and abundant in their examples and information. It is clear that the service is a highly personalised service, more than that associated just with a medical appointment.

- *....drivers are not just drivers, they care about the people, many need support people*
- *Many people see their appointments as social interactions. Bigger than just getting to a medical appointment*
- *We know the hardships... everyone has their stories. We are social workers and therapists. You find out about the people in their communities, about people left on their own.*

There are stories describing how the service has saved the lives and touched the hearts - for example:

- *....2 years, taking him for chemo treatment because he had no one else. Because of all the chemo they were able to operate. He was just cleared. He wrote a letter sharing his appreciation*

Drivers are a support service often working above and beyond the call of duty. Examples include driving on Christmas day to ensure someone else spent the day with their family; and the story of a young patient unable to get home from hospital on a Saturday

- *Saturday morning, the girl was [discharged] from hospital in a wheelchair, no money, no busses. She had the card of the driver, rung the driver to get home.*

As one person stated - *There is a story to be told every single drive, every single day.*

This is what the Transport Forum enhances, grows, connects and makes easier.

### **Data in support**

In addition to the focus group discussion regarding the impact of the Transport Forum, the Community Waikato Review online survey also gathered participant comments about the Forum's activities and these are consistent with those provided during the focus group discussion. This survey data highlight the importance of the Transport Forum in helping them network and connect with others providing similar services in order to better work with their own community. Examples of comments follow:

- *The Transport forum is an amazing forum that informs all the community health shuttles of what works for each other in aid to help other shuttles. we also get updates for the regional councils and DHB reps.*
- *Attending the Transport Forum allowed us to explore how other communities are approaching their gaps in service*
- *Community Transport Forum -enabled active engagement with community transport providers which supported development of Waikato DHB's Transport and Access Plan*
- *I had to interview clients that use our service, his helped me realize how much the community appreciate the service that we provide.*
- *Community Waikato worked with a group to establish North Waikato Transport Trust and continues to advocate for rural transport options.*
- *Community Transport connects with other providers and sharing information*
- *We have attended community transport forums, along with other providers in the same situation as ours. They have brought us all together so we can help each other.*
- *NZ's inaugural community Transport symposium report informed development of the DHB draft transport and Access Plan*
- *The idea to facilitate a community transport symposium was inspired.*

In summary, the Transport Forum has grown the capacity of community transport provider organisations to service their communities. In addition, the Forum has not only created a network across the Region that otherwise would not have been there but also enabled the formation of essential connections among the local community operators, the DHB, the Regional Council, and Community Waikato.

From the data presented here, the following commendations and recommendations are provided.

#### **Commendations**

- C1.** Community Waikato, Waikato Community Transport Service providers, the Waikato Regional Council and the Waikato DHB, are commended for their collaborative membership and support of the Transport forum
- C2.** Community Waikato is commended for leading the development of the Transport Forum as a mechanism to grow the networking and operational capacity of community organisations providing transport services to their local communities.
- C3.** The transport operators are highly commended for their commitment, dedication to, and care of vulnerable people in their communities.
- C4.** The community transport operators are to be highly commended for the significantly positive impact they are having on people lives and families/whanau

#### **Recommendations**

- R1.** It is recommended that Community Waikato profile the work of the Community Transport service to gain Central government support and recognition for the effort, commitment, and value that the service provides to Waikato communities.
- R2.** It is recommended that the Transport Forum, as a group, initiate discussions aimed at addressing the limitations currently associated with the following operational issues:
  - a. The sharing of resources
  - b. Coordination of appointment bookings
  - c. Services to/for iwi
  - d. Consistency of transport costs
  - e. Group buying power (vehicles etc)
  - f. Funding options
  - g. Attracting volunteers
  - h. The possibilities for organising local medical and well-being specialist visits
- R3.** It is recommended that Community Waikato consider ways in which the level of support for the Transport Forum is safeguarded for as long as it is needed to support the work of the community transport operators.
- R4.** It is recommended that the Transport Forum considers the necessity of safeguarding the future success of the Forum (e.g. succession planning).