

# Submission

## Draft Canterbury Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-35

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SUBMITTED TO: Canterbury Regional Transport  
Committee  
via email to  
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1. Ashburton District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit feedback on the **Draft Canterbury Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-35 (the plan)**.
  2. Ashburton District (the District) is located in the middle of Canterbury, an hour's drive south of Christchurch and an hour's drive north of Timaru.
  3. More than 36,800<sup>1</sup> residents live in our district. Approximately 50% of our residents live in the main town of Ashburton, with the rest of our residents living rurally or in smaller towns or villages across the district. Ashburton District has experienced moderate and sustained population increase since the mid-1990s, increasing by 22% between 2006 and 2013 (a 3.3% increase per year). Since 2013, this growth has slowed slightly, with an average growth of 1.9% per year since 2013<sup>2</sup>.
  4. Overall, Council is supportive of the draft plan. While there is not a lot of specific mention of Mid Canterbury, we note that the plan allows for continuation of the Total Mobility Scheme and the Community Vehicle Trust within the Ashburton District.

### Total Mobility Scheme

5. We are wholeheartedly supportive of the continuation of the Total Mobility Scheme, as covered by Policy 1.6 of the plan. Subsidised in partnership with Central Government, this scheme assists eligible people to access appropriate transport to meet their daily needs. We note the use of this service is becoming increasingly popular and support the continuation of this scheme as it currently stands.

### Community Vehicle Trust

6. We note that we currently have a Community Vehicle Trust in Ashburton (the Mid Canterbury Connector) and this is supported by funding grants. This service is important to maintain because it provides a transport option for those who have no alternative. We believe this service is essential for many people in our community and we are happy to see the continuation of this funding as part of Policy 1.5 of the plan.
7. The Mid Canterbury Connector averages about 30 passengers per month, with most coming to Ashburton Township from Methven or Rakaia and sometimes Mayfield or Mount Somers way. The Community Vehicle

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics New Zealand Estimated Population 30 June 2022

<sup>2</sup> Ashburton District Council Environmental Scan 2023

Trust currently has two vehicles and around 12 volunteer drivers, and we note that this service would not be possible if not supported by these volunteers.


## **Research Survey**

8. Earlier this year we undertook a survey in partnership with Safer Mid Canterbury to collect views on the future need for public transport in Ashburton. This research project was undertaken by Sarah Wylie, of Social Research and Evaluation, and we received about 450 responses through the community survey, as well as additional responses via interviews and a workshop.
9. The survey found a moderate level of demand for a public transport service in the Ashburton Township. Based on the survey, the most viable type of service would be a scheduled bus service that has set pick up and drop off points.
10. The study also found that a public transport service would make the biggest impact on quality of life for those with disability or health issues (that aren't eligible for the Total Mobility Scheme), refugees and migrants. For refugees and migrants, the rural driving scheme takes between six months to two years, and during that time these residents are left in limbo. This can lead to isolation, when connection is particularly essential for our newcomers.
11. We note that there is no reference to introducing a public transport option to Ashburton within the plan. Council understands that we currently do not have many public transport options in Ashburton District so may not be considered a significant part of this plan. However, based on the findings of the research survey, and the fact that this is a ten year plan, we request that wording be included to note the strong possibility of public transport expansion both within the Ashburton district, and between the Ashburton District and the region, over the next ten years.

## **Other notes**

12. We support the revised vision of “public transport is the mode choice for more people and provides a safe, frequent, seamless low emission transport option” for the plan. However, in order for this to ring true to the Ashburton District we believe there needs to be more public transport options available locally, if feasibility and cost justifies establishment.
13. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Canterbury Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-35. **Please note that we wish to speak at the hearing.**

Kā mihi,



**Neil Brown**  
Mayor



**Hamish Riach**  
Chief Executive