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‘Welcome’ changes to Total Mobility Scheme

An upgraded Total Mobility Scheme will boast a new electronic swipe card system and allow eligible people to travel within the wider Whangarei District under a raft of changes to be implemented from November. (*subs: Weds 01 November*)

Total Mobility is a nationwide scheme that provides a 50% fare subsidy (up to a maximum of \$25) to help eligible people with disabilities and/or impairments access appropriate transport to meet their daily needs and enhance their community participation.

Regional councillor John Bain, who chairs the Northland Regional Transport Committee, says the scheme has been running for a number of years in Whangarei.

The regional council administers the scheme, which is funded by both the Whangarei District Council (WDC) and New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).

Eligibility is determined by one of nine local assessment agencies (including Age Concern, NorthAble, CSS Disability Action, Idea Services and the Blind Foundation) who register those meeting the criteria with the regional council. The scheme's current transport operators are A1 Cabs and Kiwi Cabs.

Councillor Bain says under a suite of changes – potentially worth up to \$100,000 annually – a new electronic swipe card system dubbed ‘Ridewise’ will be introduced locally in November to replace the existing labour-intensive and paper-based system.

“This will be much easier for both users and drivers, more efficient to administer and enable better data collection.”

Councillor Bain says among other changes to the scheme approved by the NZTA recently are the:

- Lifting of Whangarei urban boundary restrictions (this will be replaced with a maximum subsidised fare of \$25)
- Inclusion of children 11 years and over who meet eligibility criteria
- Scrapping of a minimum \$4 fare requirement

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Depending on demand from users, the “long-awaited and very welcome” changes could boost the yearly cost of the scheme by up to \$100,000, bringing its maximum annual budget to a total of \$300,000.

“Even if the scheme costs do reach that new \$300,000 maximum, those extra costs will be met solely by the NZTA, which will see its annual contribution increase from \$80,000 to \$180,000. The district council’s annual spend will remain capped at \$120,000, which it has been for a number of years now.”

(The \$300,000 total does not include roughly \$20,000 of annual administration costs, which the regional council meets separately.)

Councillor Bain says the Total Mobility Scheme currently has more than 1200 registered users living in the Whangarei District.

Those wanting to know more about the service, including whether they might qualify, can contact the regional council’s Total Mobility Coordinator Anita Child on (09) 470 1200.

“Alternatively, information is available online at www.nrc.govt.nz/totalmobility “

ENDS

Caption for ‘Total Mobility new card (MEDIA) - 2017105.jpg’

Total Mobility Coordinator Anita Child with a sample of the new ‘Ridewise’ electronic swipe card being introduced under a series of changes to Whangarei’s Total Mobility Scheme. (Issued cards will feature a user’s photograph and identifying details.)

Further information:

- John Bain, Chairman, Northland Regional Transport Committee
Ph (021) 961 894
- Anita Child, Transport Officer, Northland Regional Council
Ph (09) 470 1112