

11 April 2021

The Chair  
Environment Canterbury

Dear Jenny

**Timaru District Council Submission to Environment Canterbury Draft Long Term Plan 2021-31 Consultation Document *It's in our hands, Kai roto I ō tātou rikarika***

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environment Canterbury LTP 2021-31 Consultation Document '*It's in our hands, Kai roto I ō tātou rikarika*'.

The Timaru District Council does wish to speak to this submission.

We offer the following specific comments for the Council's consideration:

**1) Overall programme**

Council acknowledges the considerable work programme detailed through the plan and supporting information, and the restructure of Environment Canterbury portfolios to reflect this. We also acknowledge that this Long Term Plan round is being prepared against a background of considerable uncertainty, challenge and increasing government and community expectation.

**2) MyWay Bus Service**

As described in the consultation document, Timaru is currently trialling MyWay - an on-demand public transport service.

We have appreciated the partnership approach to the implementation of this service with Environment Canterbury and Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA)).

The MyWay trial has replaced the previously scheduled bus services in our District with a successful public transport solution that is far better suited to the needs of our community. In particular, it caters exceptionally well to the needs of Timaru's growing aged population, the disability sector and new migrants.

Lack of reliable transport options can pose major social, economic and health barriers for community members from these sectors. MyWay delivers accessibility, flexibility and affordability and helps mitigate these constraints. Council feels strongly that discontinuation of MyWay would disadvantage these sectors and constitute a major

step back in the suitability of public transport service provision. It is important that Environment Canterbury continues to recognise equally the needs of those current customers who are transport disadvantaged, with increasing public transport patronage.

Public feedback on MyWay has been highly positive, with an average service rating of 4.8/5 recorded. In addition, since the introduction of the service, patronage has steadily increased and outgrown the patronage observed on scheduled bus services. This growth has occurred despite the limitations of COVID-19 on public transport usage, and is contrary to usage patterns observed on public transport networks elsewhere in New Zealand during the pandemic.

Responding to climate change has been identified as a priority in our District's Draft Long Term Plan and we consider that continuation of MyWay offers opportunity for TDC and Environment Canterbury to collaborate with climate change goals in mind. In particular, Council observes potential for MyWay to contribute to reduction in emissions from road travel and reduce dependency on privately owned vehicles.

Use of public transport is also known to increase patronage of active transport modes, as it often requires a portion of the journey to be travelled on foot. Council considers that, in this respect, MyWay has potential to provide significant health benefits for our community.

We believe this innovative approach to public transport is of national significance with strong potential as a model for greater public transport opportunities to other regions, districts or smaller communities and to provide an affordable and convenient service that meet the needs of transport disadvantaged. NZ is an ageing population with a relatively high cost of living and services like this will be critical in the future to meet these needs.

Our submission on Environment Canterbury's Draft Regional Land Transport Plan recommended continued investment in MyWay. We reiterate our support for this investment and consider the service to be an integral component of the future of public transport in our District. Council strongly supports the continuation of MyWay and its adoption as our long term, primary public transport service.

We recognise that under the Plan, this does represent an additional and ongoing cost to our community. However, we believe the benefits of the service outweigh the cost, and as the service continues to bed in, patronage will increase and some opportunities may arise for cost savings. Extension of the model to other areas in Canterbury could also open up opportunities for cost savings via contract negotiations with potential suppliers.

In light of this, it will require ongoing support and partnership from TDC, Environment Canterbury and Waka Kotahi. We look forward to continuing to work with all agencies to ensure this innovative approach to public transport is maintained.



Decision sought:

- *That Environment Canterbury support the continuation of the MyWay on-demand transport service for Timaru and adopt it as Timaru's long term public transport option, including the associated rating impacts.*

### **3) Flood protection work, including Rangitata River**

Council notes the work required within Timaru District on flood protection works over the life of the plan, as outlined in the Infrastructure Strategy portion of the supporting information. This includes work on the Orari-Waihi-Temuka catchment, Pareora River, Seadown drain, Opihi River and Rangitata River.

Council acknowledges and supports all of this work, both over the life of the plan and identified for future years within the Infrastructure Strategy.

Council particularly notes the COVID-19 recovery 'shovel-ready' works planned for the Rangitata River and associated works. In light of the significant Rangitata River flooding event in December 2019, Council supports all work to repair, improve and enhance resilience within this river catchment. Not only did this event have a considerable local impact, but highlighted the vulnerability of the South Island when a major arterial route is severed and no other options are available.

Council also supports and looks forward to involvement in planned river scheme reviews, notably the Rangitata, Opihi, Orari-Waihi-Temuka and Pareora Rivers.

Decision sought:

- *That support for the proposed flood protection works is noted.*

### **4) Freshwater Management**

The Council acknowledges and supports the ongoing and considerable work programme over the next ten years to improve freshwater management under the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) and to meet the government's expectations under the Essential Freshwater package.

However, the Supporting Information describes the programme in very general terms and Council is unable to determine Environment Canterbury's ongoing commitment and support for the improvement of Waitarakao/ Washdyke Lagoon and Otipua-Saltwater Creek as part of zone and regional implementation programmes.

Council is also unable to determine whether Environment Canterbury has allocated funding for the management of Serpentine Creek, Geraldine, as requested in last year's plan. The low water quality and ecological conditions of the creek and the limited flood capacity in Lower Serpentine Creek have been identified by Council as key issues in this catchment. The Geraldine Stormwater Management Plan commits Timaru District Council to addressing the low water quality for the creek in the urban catchment, but whole-of-catchment water quality and flood mitigation will require leadership and funding from Environment Canterbury.

Council also acknowledges the submission from the Timaru Rowing Club relating to their ongoing ability to use Saltwater Creek in Timaru for training and operation of the weir on the Creek. Council is keen for a sustainable and long-term solution to this issue, including the potential implementation of a targeted rate, if needed.

Decision sought

- *That the improvement of Waitarakao/Washdyke Lagoon and Otipua-Saltwater Creek continues to be supported as part of zone and regional implementation programmes.*
- *That Environment Canterbury include funding for freshwater management and flood protection for Serpentine Creek, Geraldine.*
- *That a sustainable and long-term solution is provided to the ongoing issues associated with Saltwater Creek*

**5) Climate Change and Community Resilience**

Council is supportive of working in partnership with Environment Canterbury to improve our understanding of the risks climate change poses to the Canterbury region, including research, and implementation of potential adaptation and mitigation approaches where required.

**6) Regional and Strategic Leadership**

Timaru District Council acknowledges and values highly the ongoing work of Environment Canterbury in the Regional and Strategic Leadership portfolio facilitating collaboration across the region on a range of work programmes and projects. While remaining supportive, Council is mindful of the time and resource commitment of forums, work and advocacy and encourages an ongoing effort to ensure this is achieved as efficiently as possible, and ensure clear and concise communication across the region with elected members and officers.

**7) Final comments**

Council is keen to progress a Thriving Timaru District in partnership with Environment Canterbury, but remains mindful of the impact on our communities, both of the pace and scale of change and financial impact. We encourage every opportunity to ease this impact, through effective partnerships, efficiencies, and communication.

Council looks forward to continuing to work closely with Environment Canterbury in next ten years and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bowen  
**Mayor**