

From: James Barber
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Tēnā koe

This submission is on behalf of Extinction Rebellion Ōtautahi

My name is James Barber.

Yes we wish to speak to the committee about our submission.

I can be contacted on or

Our submission is in the attached doc.

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Ngā mihi

James Barber

Extinction Rebellion Ōtautahi

Submission on Annual plan to Environment Canterbury te Kaunihera Taiao ki waitaha

We are writing to congratulate and thank the regional council for having a strong focus on the climate crisis in the annual plan. It is vitally important that councils here acknowledge the increasing threats posed by the climate crisis and plan accordingly, We need to get emissions down to as low as possible as soon as possible while also planning to adapt to increasingly frequent extreme weather events be it storms or droughts.

We are thrilled that the council wants to trial a free fares scheme on public transport. Free fares is a great idea and needs to happen. However, the current proposition would allow some people in need to slip through the cracks. It would also not fully incentivize people to use public transport. If we really want people to shift to this then there need to be several major changes.

1. There should be no charge for anyone using public transport. The free fares policy should apply to all.
2. There needs to be huge improvements on the pay and working conditions of bus drivers. We need a better service but we can only get a better service if we have enough drivers.
3. There needs to be a shorter waiting time between bus services. At rush hour the waiting time between buses to get into and out of the city should be no more than 5 minutes and waiting times at non peak hours should be no more than 10 minutes. After 10pm they should be no more than 20 minutes.

A study published in the New Zealand Medical Journal last year shows that the low income areas of Ōtautahi Christchurch are not adequately served by our public transport system. A particular concern was the access healthcare in the middle of a pandemic for those living on low incomes in the city. This study was reported on by [stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz) in November 2021. In addition to free fares there needs to be huge improvements in the frequency of buses in the eastern suburbs. Bus waiting times can be a big challenge for people working in hospitality and the service industry. As such there needs to be shorter waiting times across the board up until midnight.

Another important change would be to provide an after midnight bus service. Currently there seems to be one bus each way on the major lines after midnight. Regular after midnight buses are provided in other cities in Aotearoa and it is disgraceful that this major city in Te Waipounamu does not have one. Not only is this bad for the climate but it's also a safety risk as a lack of after midnight buses can increase the chances of people driving while drunk.

Free public transport is one great example of a climate justice approach to the climate crisis. We reduce emissions while making life a bit easier for those who are struggling.

We are also thrilled that the council is taking action on adaptation and this needs to happen.

We are concerned however about the inequitable effect of the proposed climate levy on the wellbeing some of the more vulnerable in our society. In Ōtautahi Christchurch there are some high rates of poverty, especially in the eastern suburbs. At the same time there are ongoing increases in house prices, rent and the cost of living. This trend of increasing living costs will continue for sometime. While we understand that funds for action on climate change need to come from somewhere we do need to make sure that by taking action on climate change we make life better for those on low incomes not worse. This levy will affect the lives of people on low income more than those on high incomes. This makes it all the more important that ideas such as free fares public transport are made permanent and not just a temporary measure.

If Environment Canterbury finds itself struggling with the current contracting regime for bus services then it should join regional councils such as the Greater Wellington Regional Council calling for central government to change the current contracting model.