

**From:** Tim Frank  
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Please find my submission attached. I want to make an oral submission.

Kind Regards,  
Tim Frank

Dr Tim Frank

Environment Canterbury

## Draft Annual Plan | Mahere ā Tau 2022/23 Submission

### Changing the bus fare structure

I would prefer an amended Option 3 as the option that is most likely to ensure sustainable long-term public transport.

Transport needs to cost something, that includes public transport. Otherwise it becomes a consumable that is used in excess and creates significant externalities. At the same time, transport pricing needs to encourage a switch towards more sustainable transport options, and ensure some equity. As a long-term public transport advocate I do not think that fare-free options support sustainable transport. It is a non-imaginative response instead of taking the important step of improving public transport. It can also generate a sense of entitlement that might mean that charging for transport is no longer possible, and therefore new valuable transport services cannot be implemented.

Fare-free public transport only seems to make sense because public transport in New Zealand is restricted to metropolitan centres. However, we need public transport throughout New Zealand to travel between towns and cities, to reach rural communities and recreation opportunities. New Zealanders in smaller cities and towns need more public transport services so that they can get out of our cars while maintaining independence and connections to others. A fare-free policy puts a national public transport network at risk. Instead it keeps us restricted to a low-quality public transport system. (I would even propose changing SuperGold Card entitlements to free travel in certain zones that can be chosen by the user, rather than a blanket free card for the whole country).

There is some justification for seeking reduced fares for certain users. I think a case can be made to reduce fares, such as for younger users, community card holders, and total mobility users. However, if we ask what may bring users to leave their cars at home, rather than who appears the most deserving of a discount, family or group travel costs should be lowered. The bus is currently competitive for one or two people travelling together, but often for a whole family travelling together the car is still the cheaper option for short-distance trips.

Distance should still be included in fare policy. That way cheaper fares can be offered for smaller distances, while for larger distances higher fares are justified. On the other hand the fare system needs to be simple. The current zone system is adequate due to its simplicity, even though a further differentiation by distance should be investigated. I would be against just one big zone, as again this puts at risk the expansion of the public transport network throughout Canterbury and New Zealand.

It is more important that money is put into improving public transport services:

- faster travel times
- network expansion
- frequency increase
- more attractive modes, such as rail.

My preferred option (amended Option 3):

- fare reductions for all passengers on all services including the ferry (approximately to the level reduced through the current government initiative)
- fare reduction for students (about 30% off reduced fares)
- further fare reduction for children under 18 (about 50% off reduced fares).
- no other changes in fare zones unless the network expands
- improved services

#### Other options (amended Option 1)

- fare reductions for all passengers on all services including the ferry
- further reduction for children under 18 (about 60% off reduced fares).
- discount for under 25, community services card holders, tertiary students, and total mobility card holders (about 25% off reduced fares).
- improved services.

It would be great if eventually as tag-on/tag-off cards are introduced a way could be found to give group or family discounts to encourage people travelling together. Group and family discounts are common in successful public transport systems overseas.