

Geraldine Community Board  
C/-janf@timdc.govt.nz

Regional Public Transport Plan  
Environment Canterbury  
[haveyoursay@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:haveyoursay@ecan.govt.nz)

24 October 2024.

Kia ora Mr Pauling and Councillors,

### **Geraldine Community Board submission on the Draft Canterbury Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035**

The Geraldine Community Board represents around 5,500 Geraldine ward citizens within the Timaru District. Geraldine, population approximately 3,000, is the ward's main centre.

The Board welcomes the opportunity to provide information to ensure the Canterbury Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035 delivers affordable, enabling, and expeditious public transport to the Geraldine community and more widely.

The Board endorses submissions made on this process by the Timaru District Council and the Pleasant Point and Temuka community boards.

*The Board wishes to be heard in support of its submission if such an opportunity exists.*

### **Geraldine demographics and other context**

The Geraldine Transport Strategy, adopted in 2021, puts Geraldine township's median age at 48.6 years (nationally 37.4 years), with 28.8% of the township's population aged over 65 (nationally, 15.5% are over 65).

Timaru, the town nearest to Geraldine with a hospital and various other essential professional services, is 36 kilometres away.

Public transport needs are high, in large part due to convergence of these factors.

In 1996, the Geraldine Community Vehicle Trust was established, with the support of the Timaru District Council, to address the public transport needs of Geraldine citizens. The GCVT now owns five vans, two of which are set up for Total Mobility, and one car. In the year from September 2023 to August 2024, the Trust provided 7,624 rides. The GCVT's contribution to the Geraldine community is outlined in more detail below.

### **The Geraldine Community Vehicle Trust**

The Geraldine Community Vehicle Trust is a community trust and a registered charity. Its purpose is: *To provide and operate a transportation service for the community in Geraldine and districts, in particular transport for the disadvantaged and for those without private cars, and for recreation and education of the very young and the elderly, and transport for projects which help the elderly remain in the community.*

Its vehicles are available for: subsidised scheduled weekly return trips to Timaru (\$20 per trip), half-price journeys for school students in the Geraldine area, unsubsidised on-demand travel, and commercial hire. Subsidised Ashburton return trips are being trialled (\$10 per trip). As per above, two vehicles facilitate travel for Environment Canterbury-subsidised Total Mobility clients.

The 7.624 total trips for September 2023 to August 2024 can be broken into these categories (including some overlap):

- day taxi passengers: 6,761.
- on-demand passengers: 863.
- Total Mobility rides: 3,900 (857 hoist-assisted).

Around 30 volunteer drivers are the effective engine room of the GCVT, which pays wages/salaries for part-time office/management roles for just 42.5 hours weekly.

In the GCVT's charitable needs-focused operating landscape, Environment Canterbury's consistent financial contributions are critical. For the Trust's 2023-2024 financial year (ended 31 May 2024), Environment Canterbury contributed \$18,000. Taxi and on-demand services provided 96,546 kilometres' subsidised travel, with rentals and charters providing 66,607 kilometres' income-earning travel. Local businesses provided sponsorship of just under \$8,000. Net assets were \$101,543.

The Geraldine Community Vehicle Trust is essential to the smooth running of the Geraldine community, enabling many citizens to maintain independent living arrangements as far as possible. Partial or total loss of the GCVT, which could be triggered by partial or total loss of the Environment Canterbury contribution, would be significantly disruptive to many individuals and the community generally.

### **The draft plan**

In the main, the Board wishes to comment on the draft plan as it relates to the Geraldine community. However, the Board is aware that Geraldine's public transport provision landscape is part only, and reflective of, wider regional public transport settings, therefore wishes to comment briefly on that broader context also.

### **General**

The Board supports the general intent of the draft plan in that it lays the ground for affordable, enabling, and expeditious public transport in Canterbury.

**Recommendation:**

- **The draft plan's general intent of providing affordable, enabling, and expeditious public transport in Canterbury should be carried into the final plan.**

**Policy 1.5 (Community Vehicle Trusts)**

The Board concurs with the draft policy, whose provisions allow the Geraldine community's unique public transport needs to be addressed.

The Board requests reconsideration of the policy's action sub-point:

*Environment Canterbury will: Provide financial support to approved Community Vehicle Trusts to assist with the costs of vehicle replacement and/or administration. We will use the following criteria... There is sufficient funding available in accordance with Environment Canterbury's funding policy for community-based organisations.*

Geraldine citizens are Canterbury regional citizens and ratepayers, and should have as much certainty of needs-related public transport provision as other Cantabrians.

The plan should be clear about this. The action sub-point should be removed.

**Recommendations:**

- **Policy 1.5 should be adopted.**
- **Equivalence of Geraldine citizens' rights to needs-based public transport provision to those of other Canterbury citizens should be clear in the wider plan, and the relevant action sub-point should be removed.**

**Policy 1.6 (Total Mobility service)**

The Board agrees with Policy 1.6 as it is written.

Relatedly, the Board encourages Environment Canterbury to proactively advocate to central government, if and as needed, for at least maintenance of Total Mobility qualifying criteria and subsidy levels.

**Recommendations:**

- **Policy 1.6 should be adopted.**
- **Environment Canterbury should proactively advocate to central government, if and as necessary, for at least maintenance of Total Mobility qualifying criteria and subsidy levels.**

Kā mihi,

Jan Finlayson,  
Chair, Geraldine Community Board.