

## By email

29 July 2025

Paula Tesoriero  
Secretary for Disabled People  
[chiefexecutive@whaikaha.govt.nz](mailto:chiefexecutive@whaikaha.govt.nz)

Tēnā koe Paula,

### **Greater Wellington Regional Council's role and obligations in serving the disabled people of the Wellington region as the Public Transport Authority**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 May 2025 reminding Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) of our obligations in providing public transport services to disabled people of the Wellington region.

Greater Wellington is the Public Transport Authority (PTA) for the Wellington Region and our public transport services are provided through our Metlink business group and brand.

Greater Wellington and Metlink take our role and obligations in serving disabled people of the Wellington region seriously. Making our public transport services more accessible to disabled people has been a focus over the last triennium.

### **Regional Public Transport Plan**

In June 2025, Greater Wellington adopted the Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-35 (RPTP). The RPTP outlines our policies in a wide range of areas. This includes our policies to support the transport disadvantaged, which includes disabled people. The RPTP can be found on our website at:

[gw.govt.nz/your-region/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-reports/transport-plans-and-strategies/wellington-regional-public-transport-plan/](https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-reports/transport-plans-and-strategies/wellington-regional-public-transport-plan/)

Some of the key policies relating to our role and obligations in providing public transport services to disabled people are set out below.

### **Metlink Public Transport Accessibility Charter and Accessibility Action Plan**

Greater Wellington's specific commitments to support disabled people are outlined within our Accessibility Charter and Accessibility Action Plan, both of which are available on the Metlink website at:

[metlink.org.nz/accessibility](https://www.metlink.org.nz/accessibility)

In 2021, the Greater Wellington Transport Committee committed to a Public Transport Accessibility Charter. This is a policy commitment to making the Metlink public transport network accessible to all with ease and dignity. It aligns with Greater Wellington's commitment to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026.

To deliver on the Charter, Metlink has committed to providing an Accessibility Action Plan for prioritising and delivering accessibility improvements. In line with the principles of the Charter, this was co-designed with the disability sector and Metlink staff in 2022 and early 2023.

The approach comprehensively engaged disabled individuals and sector representatives to identify 'pain-points' and barriers along the 'accessible journey' and solutions for resolving these. Disabled people identified and prioritised the actions they considered the most important to improve accessibility across Metlink public transport network.

Priorities in the 2024 Accessibility Action Plan that we have secured funding to deliver include:

- Providing accessibility training to front line customer facing staff.
- Prioritising and investing in accessibility at stations and bus stops to create fully accessible transport hubs.
- Exploring new technologies for assisting navigation on the network.
- Improving the accessibility of bus services which replace train services.

### **Engagement with the disabled people and their wider communities**

A "nothing about us, without us" philosophy underpins Metlink's work to meet our commitments set out in the Accessibility Charter. We plan, design and test new initiatives with input and active participation from disabled people and disability service providers.

Examples of how this has been enabled include:

- Appointing disabled people to our Public Transport Advisory Group, which provides advice to Council on the business of Metlink. Established in 2020, this forum ensures that our work is shaped by the voices of those with access needs. Over a quarter of the Group's membership identify as being disabled.
- Hosting workshops with disabled people representing a range of disabilities to influence the design of new assets and infrastructure (e.g. design of the new Melling Station, new articulated bus model and presentation of new on street passenger information displays).

- Attending meetings of disabled people to share information about our work, understand their experiences of public transport and offer opportunities for participation in co-design processes. For example, Metlink staff have recently attended meetings hosted by the Deafblind Association, i.Lead and Masterton District Council Disability Advisory Group.

## **Staff Training**

In your letter you specifically raised the issue of staff training in relation to disabled people.

Delivering consistent education and training for staff is a key strategy for enabling our vision of a network that is accessible to all with ease and dignity, and an investment that the disability community asked Metlink to prioritise. We are committed to ensuring frontline staff are appropriately trained to assist our disabled customers.

Metlink recently appointed a specialist accessibility training provider as an outcome of a robust procurement process supported by a selection panel of mostly disabled people. Over the next two years, this supplier will work with the disability community and our transport partners to co-design and deliver accessibility training to bus drivers, rail staff, ferry crews and taxi drivers who deliver our Te Hunga Whaikaha Total Mobility services.

Training will be ready for rollout across all Metlink's public transport operators in 2027. This coincides with the renewal of our contracts with operators which will make it compulsory for transport operators to provide accessibility training to their frontline staff.

## **Service Dogs**

In your letter you also specifically raised the issue of service dogs. The Metlink Conditions of Carriage allow disabled people to travel on our services with certified disability assist dog (as defined in the Dog Control Act 1996). I note that we do expect disabled people to comply with reasonable instructions from Metlink Staff regarding their disability assist dog.

The Conditions of Carriage also state that disability assist dogs must travel on the floor of the vehicle and not in a passenger's lap or on a seat. The Conditions of Carriage can be found on the Metlink website:

[metlink.org.nz/legal/conditions-of-carriage](https://metlink.org.nz/legal/conditions-of-carriage)

I would note that during the recent public hearings on the RTP, we sought feedback from the public on allowing larger pets to travel on our public transport services. The public submissions supported allowing larger pets onto our public transport services (47% agreed, 31% disagreed and 22% did not know or were neutral). However, feedback during consultation from disabled people was that allowing larger pets (particularly untrained dogs of any size) onto our public transport services could result in fewer disabled people taking public transport due to the fears of another dog attacking their service dog.

Submissions from public transport operators were also strongly against Greater Wellington changing the current policy on pets. Operator concerns included the potential impact of changing the policy on all passenger groups including disabled and elderly people. Mindful of this, Greater Wellington elected members decided, following deliberations, to retain the current policy on pets.

Greater Wellington and Metlink continues to welcome certified disability assist dogs on our public transport services and we will continue to ensure that our policies in this regard are adhered to by our operators.

## **Conclusion**

Greater Wellington and Metlink take our role and obligations in providing public transport services to disabled people seriously.

We are actively engaging with this community to get early input into our processes to achieve the best possible outcomes for both Greater Wellington/Metlink and disabled people.

We value our relationship with this community, and we look forward to continuing to build and strengthen this relationship going forward.

If you have any questions or queries about any of the information provided above, please contact Emmet McElhatton, Manager Policy at Metlink. Emmet can be contacted through [emmet.mcelhatton@gw.govt.nz](mailto:emmet.mcelhatton@gw.govt.nz) or at 021 352 934.

Ngā mihi,

**Nigel Corry**

Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive

cc:

Daran Ponter, Chair, GWRC, [daran.ponter@gw.govt.nz](mailto:daran.ponter@gw.govt.nz)

Samantha Gain, Group Manager Metlink, [Samantha.gain@gw.govt.nz](mailto:Samantha.gain@gw.govt.nz)

Emmet McElhatton, Manager Policy, Metlink; [emmet.mcelhatton@gw.govt.nz](mailto:emmet.mcelhatton@gw.govt.nz)