

# Northland Regional Council

## Transportation Procurement Strategy

### 2024 to 2027

for activities funded through the  
National Land Transport Programme

**Northland Regional Council**

**36 Water Street**

**Whangarei 0110**

Document development control	
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<b>Document version:</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Date of last revision:</b>	
<b>Status:</b>	<b>Final as approved</b>

## Approvals

Approval of the Plan		
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<b>Position/title:</b>	Chief Executive Officer	
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b> 17 June 2025

# Executive summary

This Transport Procurement Strategy outlines the Northland Regional Council's (the Council) approach to the procurement of transport activities and services funded from the Council's Long-Term and Annual Plans and the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP). This strategy is designed for New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, the Council, and as a clear signal to current and prospective service suppliers, ensuring transparency and alignment with procurement goals.

## Key Issues and Opportunities for Obtaining Value for Money

The Council's Transport Procurement Strategy is focused on achieving value for money in procuring transport activities, whether funded in part or in full by the National Land Transport Fund or through other sources. The Council is committed to leveraging procurement as a tool to deliver sustainable, efficient, and high-quality transport services for the Northland region.

Key issues and opportunities include:

- **Legislative Adjustments and Sustainability:** The ongoing legislative adjustments, such as the shift to the Sustainable Public Transport Framework (SPTF), along with evolving strategies aimed at decarbonisation and improving transport choices, are significant factors shaping procurement decisions.
- **Equitable Access for Local Suppliers:** By strategically packaging contract management, the Council aims to ensure fair competition and equitable access for local suppliers, fostering local economic growth and innovation. Northland's procurement strategy seeks to build a competitive marketplace that supports local businesses while delivering value for money.
- **Strengthening Supplier Relationships:** Maintaining mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with suppliers is critical to achieving the step change required in Northland's public transport services. These relationships will focus on shared goals of improving service quality, sustainability, and efficiency to meet the region's growing transport demands.
- **Efficiency and Collaboration:** The Council sees an opportunity to enhance efficiency and economies of scale by exploring multi-council procurement arrangements. Such collaboration can support national consistency in service delivery, streamline reporting requirements, and optimise resource use across councils.

## Recommendations for New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi

It is recommended that the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi:

1. Endorses the Northland Regional Council Transportation Procurement Strategy 2024 - 2027.
2. Approves the continued use of in-house professional services in accordance with s26 of the LTMA.
3. Approves the continued use of a variation to Procurement manual, section 10.24 Contract term of public transport units allowing Northland Regional Council to extend the term of the following public transport bus contracts to the 30 September 2027:
  - a. Far North Link
  - b. Hokianga Link
  - c. Mid North Link
  - d. Hikurangi Link
  - e. Bream Bay Link

Notes the previous approval of this Strategy by the Northland Transportation Alliance, which included Northland Regional Council and the three district councils in Northland and was disbanded in August 2024.

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## Part A: Policy context

### Introduction

The purpose of this Procurement Strategy is to document the Council's long-term approach to the procurement of all transport activities, such as public transport services, supporting the Regional Transport Committee and professional services.

It is intended that the Strategy will:

- Be relevant to the Northland region.
- Have corporate ownership and commitment within the Council.
- Be endorsed by the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, pursuant to Section 25 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA). The New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Manual serves as the regulatory guideline for procurement of subsidised transport activities.

### Legislative requirements

At the highest level, the statutory objectives of the LTMA and Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) apply to the Council. The LGA empowers the Council to play a broad role in meeting the current and future needs of its communities for good quality local infrastructure, while the Council's responsibilities under the LTMA include contributing to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system that serves the public interest.

The LTMA, as amended in 2013, introduced the Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM), which is now transitioning to the Sustainable Public Transport Framework (SPTF). The SPTF aims to promote sustainable, accessible, and equitable public transport systems with a stronger emphasis on financial sustainability, competition, and efficient pricing for public transport services.

The Council must be guided by each of the following principles when exercising its responsibilities under Part 5 (Regulation of Public Transport) of the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

- a) well-used public transport services reduce the environmental and health impacts of land transport, including by reducing reliance on single-occupant vehicles and using zero-emission technology;
- b) public transport services support a mode shift from private motor vehicle use and equitable access to places, facilities, services, and social and economic opportunities if they are co-ordinated, integrated, reliable, frequent, accessible, affordable, and safe;
- c) fair and equitable employment or engagement of people in the public transport workforce should ensure that there is a sufficiently robust labour market to sustain and expand public transport services;
- d) regional councils, territorial authorities, and public transport operators should work together to coordinate public transport services, the provision of infrastructure, and land use as necessary to meet the needs of passengers, and to encourage more people to use the services.
- e) public transport services should be provided in a way that assists public transport investment to be efficient; and public transport investment to give value for money.

Any public transport service operated in a region must be provided under contract with a regional council as part of a unit unless it is an exempt service. In addition, planning, procuring, and operating public transport services must be carried out in an open and transparent manner, irrespective of who operates the service. (LTMA s116).

This Procurement Strategy will be used to implement the Council's approach to SPTF.

Section 17a of The Local Government Act (2002) provides for the effectiveness of service delivery and requires councils to review services every six years or when there are significant changes to service delivery such as changes in funding, service structure, or partnership arrangements. This Procurement Strategy replaces the previous NTA strategy following the disbandment of the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA). The Northland Regional Council reviewed and endorsed the NTA strategy in July 2020, with the next review scheduled for July 2024.

## Organisational goals

### 1.1 Strategic objective

The strategic objectives of the Council are defined by the 2024-2034 Long-Term Plan (LTP). The strategic objective in relation to transport activities can be summarised as:

Council's transport activities promote integrated, safe and resilient transport networks by ensuring there is a region-wide approach to transport planning and safety. This approach enables people to easily and reliably move around the region on buses and Total Mobility services. The Council is committed to working closely with communities and agencies to reduce emissions by providing efficient, low-emission, and accessible public transport options.

The Transport section of the Long Term Plan (LTP) details levels of services, performance measures, and funding requirements for the next 10 years. Council's transport initiatives focus on supporting Northland communities with resilient and sustainable transport networks, allowing residents to travel safely while minimising environmental impact. These initiatives are as follows:

- Striving to increase customer satisfaction by enhancing service quality and improving services across rural and urban areas.
- Delivering vital transport infrastructure projects outlined in the Regional Land Transport Plan.
- Aligning the council's vehicle fleet with national Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) targets and transitioning to a fully electric bus fleet.

The following documents inform the LTP:

- Regional Land Transport Plan for Northland 2021 – 2027 (RLTP)
- Regional Public Transport Plan 2021 - 2031 (RPTP)

The Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Land Transport 2024 provides the national framework for transport funding and policy priorities, directly influencing decisions on how funding from the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) is invested over the next three years. GPS 2024 is built around four strategic priorities- Economic Growth and Productivity, Increased Maintenance and Resilience, Safety, and Value for Money. GPS 2024 also prioritises efficient, reliable, and sustainable transport systems in our towns and cities, and supports investments for improving freight connectivity through rail and coastal shipping.

At Northland Regional Council, procurement decisions are driven by a commitment to effective, efficient, and value-add procurement. Each company's performance will be assessed based on their ability to deliver sustainable solutions and provide value for money over the lifetime of the goods, works, and services. The management of risks is integral to project success, and this is supported by fair and transparent supplier management, strong internal controls, and a focus on promoting local Northland businesses. Additionally,

our procurement practices reflect the Council's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ensuring that our processes are inclusive, equitable, and support the growth of the local economy.

Decisions around procurement will be guided by the strategic objectives and targets within the RLTP and incorporating measures in the RPT. Additional processes for monitoring Northland's transport network through the Transport Insights Portal from NZTA will also be utilised.

#### **Community outcomes**

Northland Regional Council works closely with the community to make the region a thriving and sustainable place to live, work, and visit. NRC's transport strategy is a critical part of its commitment to improving the lifestyle and wellbeing of all Northlanders.

#### **Improving lifestyles**

NRC is committed to addressing significant challenges with a strong focusing on environmental issues, climate change impacts and socio-economic disparities to foster a resilient and prosperous future for all.

Our vision for the next decade is to create a region that thrives economically by encouraging responsible growth and land use, embracing innovation, fostering wellbeing and nurturing a healthy environment. Investment in sustainable transport services is an essential part of this vision.

#### **Supporting livelihoods**

The Council collaborates with industries, iwi, and local communities to ensure the sustainable use, development, and protection of Northland's environment. Transport infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the region's economic growth.

#### **Our mission**

To work for a thriving and prosperous Northland by:

- Promoting the sustainable use, development and protection of our natural and physical resources.
- Safeguarding Northland's people and resources from natural and other hazards.
- Promoting and providing for essential services, amenities and infrastructure.
- Representing Northland's interests and contributions regionally, nationally and internationally.

We achieve these goals by leading responsibly, working cooperatively, encouraging community participation, and upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The LTP outlines the Council's strategic approach, including how procurement of goods and services will support these outcomes. Procurement for transport activities will focus on achieving best value for money, contributing to sustainable development, improving community services, and supporting regional growth.

#### Northland Regional Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034

## **1.2 Broader Outcomes**

In alignment with national and regional priorities, Northland Regional Council supports broader procurement outcomes to achieve sustainable and equitable transport development. Key initiatives include:

- **Decarbonisation:** Transitioning to low-emission public transport options, including the use of electric buses, in alignment with NZTA Waka Kotahi's sustainability objectives. The council will work with service providers to integrate environmentally friendly practices into operations.
- **Improvement to Bus Driver Terms and Conditions:** NRC has agreed with the current CityLink/SchoolLink Whangarei supplier to increase the minimum hourly wage for bus drivers to \$28, ensuring better recruitment, retention, and service quality.

These measures demonstrate NRC's commitment to advancing environmental and social goals through its transport service.

## Procurement principles

### 1.3 Procurement Principles

Section 25 of the LTMA requires New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi to approve one or more procurement procedures designed to obtain best value for money in the procurement of land transport activities.

Section 24(4) requires all approved organisations to use a procurement procedure for any expenditure from their land transport disbursement account, unless exempt under section 26 of the LTMA or for a public transport service operated by a regional council.

The procurement policy that gives effect to NZTA's statutory function under section 25 is contained in the NZTA Procurement Manual. This manual governs all transport activities funded by the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), ensuring consistency, transparency, and value for money in procurement activities.

### 1.4 Best value for money

The following definition of 'Best Value for Money' accessed from the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Manual Section 3.2 has been adopted for this strategy: 'the most effective combination of cost, quality, benefit and risk to meet a requirement'.

### 1.5 Competitive and efficient markets

The LTP 2024 - 2034 outlines the transport budgets and provides a statement to the community of what the Council intends to procure during the period covered by the LTP. This statement provides information to the market about how much is anticipated to be spent per annum for the next ten years. However, the Council and suppliers will still need to be mindful of the following uncertainties:

- climate change, i.e., increases in rainfall intensity and sea level rise.
- changes in legislation and national funding priorities.
- change in land use.
- national and international economic, environmental and political factors affecting the council's finances.
- limited contractor competition due to isolation, and resource shortage in the labour market.
- change in the funding of public transport.

Given these uncertainties, the purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that a competitive market is maintained where possible. The Strategy acknowledges the need for flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing political and economic factors, while still encouraging innovation and supporting sustainable transport solutions.

### 1.6 Fair competition amongst suppliers

The Council uses the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Manual to ensure that fair competition in the market is maintained. This resource was designed to ensure that transport activities procured achieve the best value for money spent and promotes a whole of business strategic approach to public transport services. That approach aligns with and is endorsed by this Strategy.

The primary method of achieving fair competition is by providing confidence to the market that all qualified and capable suppliers have an equal opportunity to bid for work, with full transparency of the rules. For example, Council will disclose patronage and fare revenue information for services to ensure the market has access to relevant information.

### 1.7 Northland Regional Council Procurement Policy

Council operates under its own procurement policy for the purchasing of goods and services. The objectives of the Procurement Policy provide clear direction and support to management, employees and third parties in the performance of procurement activities. These objectives include:

- Effective, efficient value-add procurement.
- Sustainable procurement, and value for money over the lifetime of the goods, works and services we buy.
- Fair and effective management of our suppliers and service providers with appropriate internal controls.
- Promotion of Northland businesses
- Procurement practices that reflect the organisation's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Link to Council's Procurement Policy: [Procurement Policy](#)

### 1.8 Scope of the Transport Activity Procurement Strategy

This Transport Activity Procurement Strategy is not an organisation-wide document. It focuses on the procurement of those land transport activities (land transport planning, public transport, Total Mobility and professional services) that receive funding from the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's National Land Transport Fund only.

### 1.9 Health and Safety in Procurement

Northland Regional Council integrates health and safety considerations throughout the procurement lifecycle. During the planning phase, risk assessments are conducted to identify potential safety risks associated with the procurement. In the sourcing phase, contractors are pre-qualified for safety compliance, with all tenderers required to demonstrate robust safety management systems. During the management phase, safety performance is actively monitored, and adherence to safety standards is a key evaluation metric in contractor performance reviews. These processes ensure that health and safety considerations are systematically embedded across all procurement phases.

## Procurement framework

The Council's procurement framework is referenced through a hierarchy of guidelines, regulatory requirements and best practice (as outlined in this section).

[Procurement Framework 2023.docx](#)

### 1.10 Delegations manual

The Delegations Manual for the Northland Regional Council sets out the authority to approve purchases, authorise payments and enter into contracts on the Council's behalf. This Manual provides a baseline for expenditure authorities. This document was last amended in 2023: [NRC Delegations Manual 2023](#).

### 1.11 Public transport service manuals and contracting documents

The Council has a number of manuals and contract agreement documents all of which are used in assessing Tenders and letting Contracts. Key documents include:

- Public Transport Services: Bus service contracts
- Agreement for the Provision of Total Mobility Services
- Additional minor agreements relevant to specific services

### 1.12 Sustainable Public Transport Framework

The Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP) provides the statutory framework for implementing the Sustainable Public Transport Framework (SPTF), which is gradually replacing the Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) across New Zealand. This transition aims to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of public transport services.

The current review of the RPTP for 2024–2034 will incorporate any necessary updates to better align with the objectives and requirements of the SPTF, ensuring sustainable, efficient, and effective public transport solutions.

### 1.13 Requirements for Urban Buses in NZ

Council is committed to improving the overall quality of the public transport fleet, while balancing affordability, fairness, equity and sustainability. Therefore, the Council intends to comply with the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Requirements for Urban Buses (RUB), as updated periodically, for buses operating on urban routes. The Council may seek a procurement variation where value for money or safety concerns can be shown.

## Part B: Procurement programme

The LTMA requires all services, except exempt services, be arranged into units. A unit is “at a minimum, all services on a route for the full timetable, but can include more than one route where a group of routes forms a marketable whole”.

A public transport service, or group of public transport services that a regional council:

- identifies as integral to the region’s public transport network; and
- operates, or will operate, on the entire length of 1 or more routes specified in the regional council’s regional public transport plan; and
- includes all the public transport services operating to a timetable that applies to the entire route or routes specified for the unit.

## Unit procurement

The Council has defined the following units operating within the region. A detailed description of the services contained in each unit is to be found in the Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP) 2021–2031.

The network in Whangarei comprises one urban unit and several smaller rural or connector services. These services provide a mix of frequency and coverage throughout the region, designed to remain fit for purpose.

The current network includes:

- CityLink/SchoolLink Unit: Operates Monday to Saturday, serving Whangarei with a Peak Vehicle Requirement (PVR) of 17. This includes multiple urban routes across Whangarei, five schools in Whangarei, and on occasion is used to run promotional services.
- Rural Units: Rural services will be procured as separate units operated by multiple small suppliers. The Bream Bay Link and Hikurangi Link connect their respective communities to Whangarei. Additional rural services in Northland include the Far North Link, Mid North Link, and Hokianga Link. These services operate less frequently, often focusing on weekday travel with some potential for expansion based on community demand.

## Total Mobility Services

Total Mobility services in Northland operate through contracted small passenger service operators in both Whangarei and the Far North. These services provide accessible transport options for people with disabilities who are unable to use standard public transport.

Should a new small passenger service operator seek approval to provide Total Mobility services, Council will follow New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi’s Procurement Procedure 4 to assess and contract the service.

## Infrastructure

Public transport infrastructure improvements—such as new bus stops, timetable signs, associated infrastructure, charging stations, and the operations and maintenance of transport facilities—are the responsibility of Northland’s three district councils: Whangarei District Council, Far North District Council, and Kaipara District Council.

However, Northland Regional Council, on behalf of the district councils, applies to New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi for funding for these activities. Council works collaboratively with the district councils to plan and, where possible, coordinate and agree on infrastructure improvements.

## Exempt services

Exempt services are not required to be organised into units or contracted by Council. These services are exempt under 130 of the Land Transport Management Act (LTMA) or treated as exempt under Section 153(2).

In Northland, several commercially registered public transport services operate as exempt services. These are detailed in Appendix I.

## Tendering strategy

The Council's tendering strategy is to tender public transport service units as they become due for renewal.

- For the urban service (CityLink/SchoolLink) in Whangarei, the retendering process will commence no less than twelve months before the expiry of the current contract. However, if significant resource consents or works to install charging infrastructure to run electric buses are expected, the twelve-month period may not be sufficient. In such cases, the Council will consider extending the timeframe to ensure all necessary infrastructure is in place before the new contract begins.
- For the rural services, including the Far North Link, Mid North Link, Bream Bay Link, Hokianga Link and Hikurangi Link, the retendering or direct appointment process will begin no less than four months before the expiry of each contract.

Due to the limited number and scope of the units in Northland, the length of contracts for each unit will be as follows:

- Urban unit (CityLink/SchoolLink Whangarei) – nine years
- Rural units – six years

A six-year term is viewed as appropriate for rural units given the lower capital investment required, typically only one bus per unit. This shorter term allows for more frequent cost reassessments, ensuring competitive pricing as benchmarking opportunities are limited for these services.

The urban contract is due to expire at the end of September 2027, with a nine-year term aligned with the Sustainable Public Transport Framework (SPTF).

### Sustainability

In line with the Local Government Act 2002, Northland Regional Council is committed to sustainable procurement, ensuring that goods, services, and works have positive economic, environmental, social, and cultural impacts on a whole-of-life basis.

The tender process will include requirements from the SPTF. The Council will also assess supply chain sustainability, considering both environmental and human impacts.

Council will evaluate outcomes that:

- Minimise environmental impacts over the life cycle of goods and services, supporting local businesses where viable.
- Employ strategies to avoid unnecessary consumption, manage demand, and minimise waste.

- Ensure that suppliers adhere to social responsibility practices, including compliance with employee-related legislative obligations.
- Respect obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and build relationships with local iwi.

Council will assess funding opportunities, such as government grants or Crown funding, on a case-by-case basis to improve public transport services. The intent is to access all possible funding streams to enhance public transport across the Northland region.

### **1.14 Alternative tenders**

Council may permit alternative tenders when issuing a Request for Tender (RFT). This approach is intended to:

- Allow tenderers to demonstrate how their alternative proposals can deliver better value for money while still meeting the required outputs.

The specific criteria for alternative tenders relevant to each unit will be detailed within the RFT.

Service enhancements, such as route adjustments or improvements, will be managed as part of the unit contract that Northland Regional Council enters into with each successful service provider.

### **1.15 Direct appointment for low dollar value contracts**

Council may utilise the direct appointment selection method when there is a single willing and able supplier and when the contract cost estimate is less than or equal to \$100,000 (gross contract price per year) for public transport services. This method aligns with the provisions outlined by the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, in accordance with Section 10.9 of the Procurement Manual.

### **1.16 Gross Price Resets**

Given the small size of the bus market in Northland, it is not feasible for the Council to utilise price benchmarking to reset the gross contract price at year six of a nine-year contract term, as noted in Rule 10.28 of the Procurement Manual. Instead, the Council will reconfirm the contract price as the "current contract price" when performing this gross cost reset.

The "current contract price" is defined as the original winning tender contract price (the initial contract price), plus any variations made during the first six years of the contract to adjust for service levels. These will be adjusted for input price variations using an index approved by New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, in accordance with Rule 10.25 of the Procurement Manual.

## Part C: Procurement environment

### Current services

#### 1.17 Bus services

The following tables outline the services that the Council currently procures, including contract details.

Location of service	Value (before fares)	Contract start date	Supplier	Peak Vehicles	Contract details
<b>CityLink/SchoolLink Whangarei</b>	~\$2M	1 October 2018	Ritchies	17	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)
<b>Far North Link</b>	~190K	3 October 2022	Community Business & Environment Centre - CBEC	1	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)
<b>Mid North Link</b>	~90K	21 February 2022	Clarks Coach Lines trading as Kaikohe Bus Company	1	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)
<b>Hokianga Link</b>	~85K	1 March 2021	Hokianga Express Charters	1	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)
<b>Hikurangi Link</b>	~30K	1 December 2021	Ritchies	1	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)
<b>Bream Bay Link</b>	~40K	1 December 2021	Ritchies	1	Contract extended (NZTA Approval granted to extend to 30/09/2027)

#### 1.18 Total Mobility services

The expenditure for Total Mobility (TM) services is dependent on the number of trips users take each year, with more trips occurring in Whangarei. The operating budget for Total Mobility services is approximately \$860,000 per annum. This growth has been due to the various COVID-19 recovery incentives and the ongoing discounted TM fares, which have led to increased costs while this 75% discount remain in effect.

Location of service	Value	Contract date start	Suppliers
Whangarei	~ \$ 700,000	April 2020	Driving Miss Daisy A1 Cabs Whangarei Kiwi Cabs Freedom Drivers Whangarei
Kerikeri	~ \$ 100,000	July 2022	Driving Miss Daisy – Far North

In addition to the funding of TM trips, the Council may provide funding assistance for the provision of new or refitted wheelchair equipment for vehicles fitted with either a hoist or ramp. This is budgeted in the 2024/25 year of \$50,000 for Whangarei and \$67,145 for the Far North (excluding GST).

## 1.19 Professional services

The Council engages both in-house and external professional services to support its transport activities.

### Professional Service – Internal

The Council maintains a management team to oversee its transport activities, refer section 23.1 for the staff positions and functions. This team is supported by other in-house professionals where there is capability and capacity as detailed in the following table.

Professional service	Role and Responsibility
<b>Policy and planning</b>	Development and review of programmes and transport plans e.g., RPTP (Regional Public Transport Plan), RLTP (Regional Land Transport Plan).
<b>Information Management</b>	Development and maintenance of the Northland Regional Council website and all council related information.
<b>Community and Engagement</b>	Managing marketing initiatives, including press releases, advertising, social media, and promotional activities, along with creation of visual materials such as posters and public notices.

In-house professional costs are tracked through a time-coding system where staff submit weekly timesheets. Each staff member's time is coded to the relevant general ledger code, which corresponds to the applicable New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi work category. The true cost of staff time is calculated using a charge-out rate, which is established through the Council's Long Term Plan (LTP) and updated annually via the Annual Plan.

These professional services are managed through the Council's internal procedures. Refer Section 14 for additional details.

### Professional Service – External

External professional services are contracted when specialised skills are required, which may not be available in-house. These services typically include:

- Transport Consultants and Planners
- Legal Services
- Marketing Services
- Investigation and Design Services

The table below outlines the types of external professional services that the Council currently procures or may procure over the next three years. These services are often low dollar value contracts, as outlined in Section 10.9 of the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi Procurement Manual.

Professional service	Current provider	Contract start date	Contract duration
<i>Current services</i>			
<b>Ticketing system</b>	INIT	July 2020	Until implementation of National Ticketing Solution (NTS)
<b>National Total Mobility Administration System</b>	Ridewise	20 September 2018	30 June 2024
<b>Legal services</b>	WRMK Lawyers	As required	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Age Concern	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Blind Low Vision	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	CCS Disability Action Northland	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Cairnfield House	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Community Mental Health Services	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	The Epilepsy Association of New Zealand (Northland Branch)	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Idea Services	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	Lester Heights Hospital	October 2020	Ongoing
<b>Total Mobility eligibility assessment provider</b>	NorthAble Matapuna Hauora	October 2020	Ongoing

<b>Website manager</b>	BigFish	As required	Ongoing
<b>Radio advertisers</b>	Various	As required	Ongoing
<b>Printers</b>	JOP	As required	Ongoing
<b>Tender evaluator</b>	To be determined	As required	As required
<b>GTFS management provider</b>	Radiola	01/01/2023	Ongoing
<b>Transport Planning Tool</b>	Remix	July 2020	Ongoing
<b>Security at bus terminus</b>	Northern District Security	July 2015	Ongoing

All external consultants and contractors' costs are coded directly to the Council's general ledger, with each cost allocated to the appropriate work category.

## 1.20 Infrastructure

District councils in the region carry out all infrastructure procurement, i.e., bus stops and associated infrastructure improvements. The Council does not provide any direct financial assistance for these activities. However, the Council does collaborate with the district councils in infrastructure planning and placement.

## 1.21 Road safety

Road safety services are provided by the Whangarei District Council, with the Northland Regional Council financially contributing to these services until the end of the 2027 financial year.

## 1.22 Whangārei Urban Contract Review

Northland Regional Council intends to conduct a Local Government Act (LGA) s17a review before retendering the Whangārei urban contract unit. This review will evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of current service delivery models, including depot infrastructure, fleet considerations, and opportunities for introducing or upgrading charging infrastructure to support decarbonisation goals. The findings will guide decisions to align procurement activities with regional and national strategic objectives.

# Analysis of supplier markets

## 1.23 Bus services

The market for bus services in Northland is relatively limited. The urban unit is primarily served by one local public transport provider that operates the CityLink/SchoolLink unit. Additionally, two smaller units, the Break Bay Link and the Hikurangi Link, operate in the Whangarei area. In the rural regions, three established service providers have been delivering bus services for several years. These providers also offer a mix of services, including charters and Ministry of Education contracts, which enhances fleet utilisation efficiencies.

The primary public transport service provider also operates SchoolLink, a commercial service for students traveling from to major secondary and intermediate schools in Whangarei. This service began in June 2024.

The urban unit that operates across Whangarei and its surrounding areas is the only service that is viewed as attractive for external service providers to bid on. This appeal stems from the service being classified as one unit and having a nine-year contract duration.

However, entry barriers for new operators may still exist, particularly concerning the urban unit. Potential barriers include:

- High initial capital investment.
- Regulatory compliance and licensing requirements.
- Established competition with strong market presence.
- Potential risk if the Operator loses the tender for the CityLink services, as SchoolLink and CityLink services are operated in conjunction as one unit.
- Availability of centrally located land and facilities
- Availability of drivers
- Transition from diesel to electric buses:
  - Necessary infrastructure upgrades, such as charging stations, require significant investment and planning by the Whangarei District Council, which owns and is responsible for all associated charging infrastructure and costs..
  - Difficulties in sourcing appropriate electric buses, ensuring they meet operational and other requirements, and training drivers on the new technology.
  - Concerns about the initial higher capital costs associated with electric vehicles compared to traditional diesel buses, impacting the financial viability for new entrants.

Council acknowledges the potential risks associated with the commercial operation of SchoolLink services in conjunction with CityLink public services. If the current operator loses the CityLink tender, it may impact the integrated operations, requiring careful consideration and potential service adjustments to maintain seamless school transport.

The Council recognises that while there are barriers to entry, they are not insurmountable. These challenges are largely standard commercial realities faced by passenger transport operators seeking to establish themselves in new operating regions. When retendering all services, the council will be requiring tenderers to provide confirmation that the successful tender will include electric vehicles from the start, or a plan of how they will be phased into service over an agreed period.

Additionally, tenderers must collaborate with Northland Regional Council, Whangarei District Council, and any other relevant parties to coordinate the implementation of charging infrastructure. As this infrastructure may not be completed by the tender opening date, tenderers should consider coordinating with local authorities to align on the development and timeline of public charging infrastructure. Alternatively, tenderers may present plans for installing and operating their own charging infrastructure at the operator's bus depot.

## 1.24 Total Mobility

The Total Mobility supplier market in Northland is adequately serviced by small passenger services, including those that offer wheelchair hoist/ramp capabilities and personalised assistance. The delivery of the Total

Mobility (TM) service in the region is based on small passenger services, which can limit accessibility based on their location. For a comprehensive list of suppliers, refer to Section 11.2.

To become an approved TM transport provider, any new operator must complete an application form and submit sufficient information for the Council to ensure they can meet the required standards and expectations. The Council is not obligated to accept every application and may decline it for various reasons, including:

- Sufficient operators already contracted in the area.
- Concerns about the sustainability of existing operators.
- Lack of additional service benefits for TM clients, such as wheelchair hoist capabilities.
- Failure to deliver value-for-money services.

The Council allocates annual funding assistance for the replacement or installation of new hoist equipment or ramp components in vehicles for approved TM transport providers.

There is ongoing review in the TM space as demand for services has increased in a post COVID-19 environment which aims to adapt to the evolving needs of the community while considering funding availability.

## Part D: Delivering the work programme

### Procurement approach

Council follows the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Manual, which outlines the rules for delivering transport activities. The Council has chosen the following procurement approaches for its transport activities.

Information on each of the proposed delivery and supplier selection methods can be found in Appendix I of this strategy, or the [New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi Procurement Manual](#) s 8.4 and s 8.5.

#### Bus services

Approximate annual operating expenditure	~\$5,000,000
Proposed delivery method	Urban - partnering Rural – staged
Proposed supplier selection method	Urban - price quality Rural - lowest price conforming or direct appointment

#### Total Mobility

Approximate annual operating expenditure	\$860,000
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The Council will procure Total Mobility services using the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Procedure 4 – Public transport fare subsidy schemes. Selection of an operator will be based on the Council's application criteria and evidence that they will provide additional benefit for the TM clients and value for money for the Council.

For disability assessments, the Council engages NorthAble and Age Concern, as stipulated in the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi publication, Total Mobility Scheme: A Guide for Local Authorities, which outlines contract principles, minimum standards, and general guidance for Total Mobility scheme contracts with service operators and assessment agencies.

#### Professional services - external

Approximate annual operating expenditure	\$800,000
Proposed delivery method	Staged
Proposed supplier selection method*	Direct appointment Lowest price conforming Price quality

\*The proposed professional services supplier selection method used will depend on the type of professional service required, using criteria such as achieving best value for money, the value of the contract, the number of suppliers and the quality attributes of the suppliers.

## Pricing model and change control

During the term of any contract, either the Council or the operator may request a service level variation, such as changes to the route, frequency, and timings of a service to accommodate evolving circumstances within Northland.

Changes will primarily be identified, planned, and implemented as part of the contract's annual business planning process. If necessary, the contract price will be adjusted to reflect the nature of these changes.

Any adjustments to the contract price will utilise the variation rates established at the time of the tender.

For complete terms and conditions, please refer to the Council's bus service contract.

## Benchmarking for gross price resets

The Council will reset the contract gross price of its urban unit at year six of the nine-year term in accordance with section 10.28 of the Procurement Manual.

As the Council only has one urban unit, suitable benchmarking information is unlikely to be available. Therefore, the Council will apply the following policy:

If there is no suitable benchmark information available, the contract price will be reconfirmed at the current contract price. The current contract price is defined as the original winning tender contract price (i.e. the initial contract price) plus the price of any contract variations (for service level adjustments) made during the first six years of the contract, each adjusted for input price variation using an index approved by the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi in accordance with section 10.25 of the Procurement Manual.

The Contract Price may be adjusted from this level if either party can provide evidence<sup>1</sup> that the current Contract Price is unsustainable, and both parties agree to a revised price that is consistent with this evidence.

## Performance management

Performance management will be a critical component of the contractual relationship in ensuring that the delivery of the Council's public transport contracts is successful.

The following Council staff will be involved in the contract management process.

The Council's contract management team will be:

- Transport Manager
- Transport Project Officer- Buses
- Transport Project Officer- Total Mobility
- Transport Projects - Strategy
- Transport Coordinator

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence will typically relate to factors outside those envisaged when the contract was established e.g. changes to the roading network that were not planned prior to contract commencement, which affect running time and consequently operating costs.

Further information on the roles for each staff member is provided in Section 22 Capability and Capacity.

## Annual business planning

The Service Provider and the Council will form a business team for the purposes of jointly developing a business development plan for all units under contract (the Business Development Plan). The Business Development Plan (BDP) process is viewed as a way for the parties to work collaboratively in a structured and systematic manner to improve the service and grow patronage, and in managing the contract obligations.

The BDP will set out activities in the form of resourced project plans (action plans), to be carried out during the ensuing 12-month period and may include but will not be limited to:

- Service improvement initiatives.
- Plans for the development and/or introduction of new services.
- Infrastructure projects.
- Plans for the development and/or introduction of new technology.
- Co-branding or promotion of services.
- Performance review against Plan targets.
- Any other joint business and/or marketing activities.

The BDP will be created within thirty (30) working days of the Commencement Date of a Contract and reviewed annually.

When accepted by the parties, the BDP will form part of the Contract for the relevant contract and the parties will be bound by its terms.

The performance of the parties against the BDP and action milestones specified in the BDP will be reviewed quarterly or upon such other dates as the parties agree to.

Refer the Council's Tendering and Contracting Manual for the full terms and conditions regarding Business Development Planning.

## Relationship management

The Council seeks to work with all Service Providers using the partnering philosophy, including those providing the rural services. This will deliver the best results for all the stakeholders involved in the Council's public transport services. The elements of successful partnering include high levels of collaboration, integration of shared business processes, mutual transparency and trust.

The Council has adopted partnering principles including:

- Devising strategies that will grow and expand the public transport network as a whole.
- Collectively market the network.
- Plan for the initiation of new, improved or expanded services.
- Define service standards and innovations to benefit passengers.
- Identify the need for desirable business processes, infrastructure and supporting requirements for the network, such as passenger terminals, bus exchanges, ticketing systems and the like.
- Share information that will benefit the network as a whole.
- Identify and implement incentives for commercial behaviour that will attract and grow patronage.

Guiding principles of partnering are as follows:

- A one-team approach.
- Focus on total benefit for all partners.
- Commitment of people and organisations to agreed outcomes and decisions.
- Open, honest, transparent and non-adversarial communication.
- Keep each other informed – “no surprises”.
- Respect confidentialities.
- Reduce duplication and waste.
- Seek early corporate alignment with agreed partnership directions to eliminate sign-off blockage.
- Timely action upon request.

Where a dispute may arise between the Council and Service Provider the applicable dispute resolution process outlined in the Council’s bus service contract will apply.

## Performance Management Mechanisms

The performance management mechanisms are designed to foster collaboration between the Council and the Service Provider, ensuring continuous improvement in the delivery of public transport services. These mechanisms are based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and aim to incentivize contract compliance.

### Performance Management Framework for the Urban Unit:

The Council will employ a collaborative approach to manage performance, focusing on the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

1. On-time performance metrics
2. Vehicle standards compliance
3. Customer satisfaction targets
4. Passenger pick-up reliability
5. Quality Plan adherence
6. Driver performance standards
7. Operational efficiency measures, including:
  - a. Depot phone availability
  - b. Complaint handling and referral to the Council
  - c. Health and safety compliance

### 1.25 Areas of influence for the Service Provider

Historically, the Service Provider’s ability to influence key aspects such as fares, service routes, and route frequencies has been limited, as these elements are controlled by the Council, the contracting party.

However, under the principles of a partnering contract, the Service Provider is expected to actively contribute their expertise and professional advice across all aspects of the service.

This collaboration includes day-to-day operational matters as well as participation in the annual business development planning process. The Council will consider all the advice and information provided by the Service Provider in good faith and will engage in open and constructive discussions to explore ways to enhance service delivery. The goal is to foster a mutually beneficial relationship that improves performance and patronage outcomes.

While the Council will retain ultimate decision-making authority, it is committed to ensuring that decisions are informed by the professional input of the Service Provider, supporting the shared objectives of the partnering contract.

## 1.26 Changes

Flexibility will be maintained to allow for negotiation and mutual agreement with the Service Provider through the annual business planning process. This approach ensures the FIM reflects evolving transport patterns, revenue growth, and contributions from both parties to the success of the unit.

Any variations to the FIM will require a clear value-for-money rationale to ensure transparency and alignment with the Council's objectives.

Further details regarding the FIM applicable to the urban unit will be outlined in the Council's Tendering and Contracting Manual and the Unit Request for Tender.

## Performance measuring and monitoring

The Council will comply with the performance measurement and monitoring requirements as stated in the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's Procurement Manual section 11.1. Included in the Council's Regional Public Transport Plan 2021-2031 is the policy framework for managing, monitoring and evaluating unit performance.

Key performance indicators (KPI's) set a minimum standard to be achieved by all contracted public transport Service Providers and will be used to assess overall contract compliance, enforcing breaches of contract, and for the urban unit, financial incentive payments. Contractor performance will be reviewed regularly against the KPI's. This will help ensure that compliance is achieved and allows the contractor to advise of circumstances outside of their control that have impacted on their ability to meet the minimum KPI's.

The following are the key performance attributes, indicators, measures that will be the minimum used to monitor any public transport service.

- patronage – total public transport boardings and by category
- passenger km – total passenger kilometres travelled
- farebox revenue – farebox revenue by time period
- service reliability – scheduled trips completed in full
- service punctuality – at trip start, enroute and destination
- service cancellations - scheduled trips cancelled
- customer satisfaction – for public transport users

The KPI's (excluding patronage) will all have a monetary value applied to them for non-compliance (that is failure to meet the performance indicator). The value of the non-compliance deduction will be specified in the Council's bus service contracts.

The Council will also monitor and report the farebox recovery ratio on an annual basis.

## 1.27 Surveys

The Council will conduct passenger satisfaction surveys in alignment with New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's guidelines. These surveys, along with regular performance monitoring, will help assess the effectiveness of this strategy.

Additionally, the Council may conduct its own surveys to monitor specific areas, such as the Total Mobility Scheme or for research purposes when considering service adjustments or new service proposals.

## 1.28 Contractor Performance Report

The Council will, at the conclusion of a contract, compile a Contractor Performance Report. This report will evaluate the overall satisfaction level of the Council with the Contractor's performance. The Council will allow the Contractor to comment on the performance report before it is included in the Contract file.

## Public transport technology

The Council's current public transport information technology feature set encompasses a range of modern solutions designed to enhance user experience, improve operational efficiency, and provide real-time information. These features include:

- Ticketing and Fare Collection
  - Electronic ticketing system—currently the Northland Regional Council is a part of the Init RITS ticketing consortium utilising contactless smartcards on the CityLink Whangarei service.
  - The National Ticketing Solution (NTS) for CityLink Whangarei services is expected to be implemented by the end of 2025.
- Customer Information and Service
  - Contact information available online including telephone numbers allocated to the bus operators.
  - Citylink/SchoolLink and BusLink websites provide bus service information e.g. timetables, fares, and route details.
  - Social media presence: CityLink Whangarei Facebook page for public transport information and service updates.
  - CityLink website for real time bus locations and journey planning for passengers
  - Dynamis access to real-time information via the Citylink website
- Total Mobility: Ridewise- TM operator and trip collection management tool.

## Strategy objectives

This Procurement Strategy seeks to promote transport activity services to meet the strategic objectives outlined in the Long Term Plan (as outlined in section 3.1 of this Strategy).

## Part E: Management and implementation

### Capability and Capacity

#### 1.29 Organisational chart

The Council's current structure, role and responsibilities relating to transport activities are as follows:

Role	Responsibility
<b>Elected members</b>	Set community outcomes and approve the Long-Term Plan (LTP) i.e., the community plan.
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Approves the Procurement Strategy and holds overall responsibility for all passenger transport operational activities and transport policy, including the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) and Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP).
<b>Group Manager Community Resilience</b>	Oversees management of passenger transport operations and transport policy, including the RLTP and RPTP.
<b>Transport Manager</b>	Oversees development and implementation of the RLTP and RPTP, manages public transport activities such as the Total Mobility Scheme, public transport contracts, community transport services, and assists with other public transport strategies and public transport infrastructure development.
<b>Policy Specialist</b>	Prepares regional transport policy documents, including the RLTP.
<b>Transport Project Officers</b>	Implement public transport activities, including public transport contracts, the Total Mobility Scheme, provide support for infrastructure development, oversee the social media and advertising campaigns, and report trip, patronage and fare data to New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi.
<b>Regional Transport Coordinator</b>	Facilitates coordination to support planning, implementation, and monitoring of regional transport projects and services.
<b>Transport Projects - Strategy</b>	Responsible for strategic planning, project alignment with the work programme, and cross-department coordination.

### Internal procurement processes

The Council has a Delegations Manual that defines Council officer and committee spending authority. This is available from the Council on request.

## Performance measurement and reporting system

The Council employs a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system for both internal performance and external reporting. NRC aims to align its performance measures with the standards set by NZTA and will monitor the following key indicators to assess the success of this Procurement Strategy:

### **Value for money**

- Time – Compare estimated versus actual duration for key contracts to evaluate timeliness.
- Cost – Monitor estimated versus actual costs of contracts to manage budget adherence.
- Quality – Measure Council's satisfaction with the quality of goods and services procured, ensuring alignment with predefined standards.

### **Market Competitiveness and Innovation**

- Fairness – Assess whether supplier selection processes are open or closed contests and document rationale for these decisions.
- Competitiveness – Track the number of bids received and evaluate whether alternative bids were allowed and/or submitted.
- Innovation – Encourage alternative bids to drive value for money; monitor if accepted proposals offered added value or innovative solutions, including associated costs and benefits.

### **Procurement Efficiency**

- Council will assess the efficiency of procurement processes by comparing the total cost of the procurement function to the aggregate cost of awarded contracts, ensuring that procedures are cost-effective and not overly complex.

### **Compliance and Transparency**

- Compliance – Measure adherence to this Procurement Strategy by tracking complaints related to the purchasing process.
- Audit – Use the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's audits to ensure compliance with funding requirements and procurement standards.

Council's overall success in procurement will be assessed by its ability to deliver on the transport program targets set in the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) and Long-Term Plan (LTP).

### **Data collection and Reporting**

Data will be collected in accordance with the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's requirements, such as monthly reports on SuperGold Card and public transport patronage, and annual reporting for KPIs like service kilometres, customer satisfaction, and overall expenditure.

## Communication

### 1.30 Internal reporting

The Council's Procurement Strategy will be accessible to transport staff on a shared digital repository. Given the Council's size, informal communication via email between staff and departments will continue to be encouraged for efficient day-to-day operations.

The Council's Audit Risk and Finance Committee receives formal reports and approves operational changes on public transport operational matters.

Formal reports and operational updates are also provided to the Regional Transport Committee of the Council as and when appropriate. The Regional Transport Committee approves other regional planning matters such as the Regional Land Transport Plan.

### **1.31 Professional Service Providers / Supplier market / Other approved organisations**

The Council will ensure that the Procurement Strategy is shared with key providers involved in the delivery of the transport programme. Communication regarding transport procurement methods will be formalised through letters and, if necessary, follow-up meetings to ensure clarity and compliance with best practices.

The Council commits to maintaining open and transparent communication with current and potential service providers. Regular meetings will be conducted as needed to discuss ongoing and upcoming procurement opportunities, especially when significant changes are anticipated.

A tender meeting may be arranged with prospective service providers upon request to promote transparency and clarity. The Council will notify all service providers who submit tenders of the outcomes in accordance with New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi requirements, ensuring fair and transparent feedback

When releasing a Request for Tenders (RFT) for public transport units, the Council will advertise in both print and electronic media, including the local regional newspaper, national dailies, and the Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS).

Other procurement-related consultations will generally be conducted through the Long Term Plan (LTP) and Annual Plan (AP) processes. However, the Council encourages an open-door policy, allowing suppliers to discuss future procurement options and strategies with Council staff.

### **1.32 New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi**

New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi is a multi-disciplinary organisation responsible for various transport-related functions. The Council commits to providing all required procurement information to New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi in an accurate and timely manner. The Council will maintain transparent and prompt communication to align with New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi's guidelines for approved procurement practices, thereby facilitating effective monitoring and auditing processes.

### **1.33 Updating and review**

The Transport Activity Procurement Strategy will be reviewed in conjunction with the development of each Long-Term Plan (LTP) and the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) to ensure alignment with current policies and practices. Interim updates may be made if necessary to address significant changes in procurement requirements or new guidance from New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi. This regular review process ensures that the Procurement Strategy remains relevant, compliant, and aligned with best practices and statutory obligations.

## **Corporate ownership and internal endorsement**

The Transport Activity Procurement Strategy is owned and approved by the Council's Chief Executive, therefore any significant procurement issues will be discussed with the Council's executive team.

## Appendix I

The following table shows the transport service registered as exempt as per section 130 of the LTMA.

Service type	Frequency	Route	Service Provider
<b>Interregional</b>	Mon – Sun	Auckland to Whangarei, Paihia and Kaitaia and return	InterCity Coachlines  602 Great South Road Ellerslie Auckland 1051 (Head Office)  06 835 4326 <a href="mailto:info@intercity.co.nz">info@intercity.co.nz</a> <a href="http://www.intercity.co.nz">www.intercity.co.nz</a>
<b>Interregional/Local</b>	Weekly  On Request  Twice Daily	Te Wai Ora Coachlines- Auckland to Dargaville and Whangārei on Friday evening, returning on Sunday  Transport to Waipoua Forest and Opononi is also available.  The Westcoaster offers two return trips a day for passengers and freight between Dargaville and Whangārei.	Te Wai Ora Coachlines Ltd  29a Arimu Road Papakura, Auckland, 2110  027 482 2950 <a href="mailto:tewaioracoachlines@gmail.com">tewaioracoachlines@gmail.com</a> <a href="http://www.tewaioracoachlines.com">www.tewaioracoachlines.com</a>
<b>Local</b>	Mon – Sun	Rāwene–Kohukohu (Hokianga) vehicle ferry	Northland Ferries  Kohukohu 0491 0800 222 979 <a href="mailto:bayofislands@northlandferries.co.nz">bayofislands@northlandferries.co.nz</a>
<b>Local</b>	Mon – Sun	Ōpuua–Okiato vehicle ferry	Northland Ferries  Rāwene Road, Rāwene 0473  0800 222 979 <a href="mailto:hokianga@northlandferries.co.nz">hokianga@northlandferries.co.nz</a>