

SMART TRANSPORT

supporting
a silver economy
sustainable development
successful ageing



This paper seeks to address the challenges of an ageing society and to make the most of current transport planning opportunities to optimize public transport use, minimize congestion, reduce emissions and increase efficiency.

The paper highlights the need for a focus on age-friendly public transport service improvement to increase use by mature and older people. It seeks to provide background for prioritising a project that will optimise an age-friendly public transport system that is affordable, available, accessible and acceptable.

A future focused service will require active multi-modal transport planning and a tolerant rethinking of strategies, policies and resource use to provision services to maintain health and well-being in a context of rapid ageing where 80% of Bay of Plenty total population growth is projected to be 65 years and over. Transport is a vital policy platform contributing to the silver economic sustainability of the Bay of Plenty.

Have we accepted that population ageing is real? Like climate change, there appears to be a comparable cynicism and sluggish policy response despite reputable global and local demographic data and trend analysis.

The reality is, we have increasing and highly predictable numbers of older and older-old people needing appropriate public transport options.

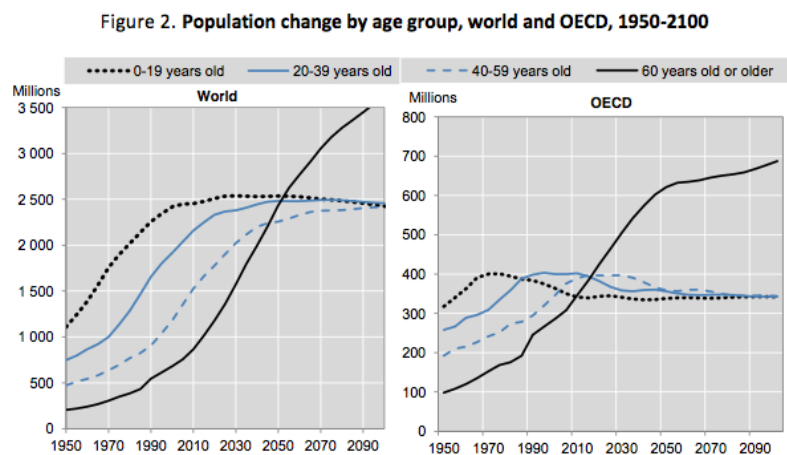
The place of transport and related technologies in the demographic transformation has significant implications for the well-being of societies and for sustaining communities. Longevity challenges are

pronounced in urban areas with spatial growth complexities such as Tauranga City, its outer urban and semi-rural settlements. However, public transport systems need to adapt to the needs and expectations of older people while attracting and familiarising them as passengers.

The OECD graph shows global and OECD nations' demographic transformation with exacerbated longevity and younger age groups reaching a new equilibrium reaching to the end of the 21st Century. This could well be New Zealand, our region and our City as our population-ageing trajectory reflects a similar structure.

New Zealand populations are changing and ageing at a pace that is faster than any in recorded history. Recent SNZ projections indicate TCC population increase from 134,600 in 2018 to 154,900 by 2028, 10,000 of whom will be over 65. The DHB projects 11,500 more people 75+ living in the City by 2036. Rapid ageing 136% of 75+ will occur in WBOP. BOP DHB data shows that 8.7% of BOP population is over 75yrs (NZ 6.4%).¹

Independence is critical to the wellbeing of older people, and transport is critical to independent living. From a policy perspective, we cannot delay embracing a new public transport paradigm.



Source: OECD calculations based on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010), *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, United Nations, New York, available online: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_indicators.htm.

Demographic change will reach a "new equilibrium" at the end of 21st century.² Policies for an ageing society are not just about today's needs but also about anticipating the future population structure, including economic, social infrastructure and technological investment for equity and sustainability. It is expected that modern transportation will become a network of modes, services, technologies, and designs that operate as a seamless intersection of options, linking walking on the sidewalk, with riding a train, driving a car, cycling options or using technology to avoid or consolidate trips.

¹ 2016 BOPDHB Health and Service Profile.

² The OECD graphs are informative as they show the structural trends in developed and developing nations, all of which have impact on New Zealand trade, immigration, tourism and global economic sustainability. Further, they show a longer term view of the demographic transformation. New Zealand is structurally positioned as average in ageing population progression.

Transport accessibility and efficiency are central to a 100-year life where preferences for independence, ageing-in place and connectivity is vital. It is widely recognised that community design can improve transportation efficiency, reduce trips by bringing neighbourhood amenities closer together, improve safety, and encourage physically active communities.

Optimising older people's use of public transport is just sensible, and central to strategies that prioritise independence, wellbeing, safety, efficiency and a reduction of congestion and emissions



- **What if we could encourage older people to use free public transport?**
- **What if we had an age-friendly bus system, and age-friendly buses?**

Just because we really want mature, older and older-old people and people of all ages to live a life of possibilities, connection and growth, and because they can be a role model for others on environmental sustainability.

We are now at a turning point where physical and digital advancements in transport infrastructure can position forward thinking solutions. As our population grows and ages, budgets shrink, and consumer preferences shift, we need a new smart vision to make better use of our resources as we adapt to new circumstances and opportunities. A transformational global wave of ingenuity and technological innovation is taking hold as an integral part of a growing silver economy. No single mode of travel can possibly meet the mobility needs in which the watchwords are “options,” “efficiency,” and “flexibility” however, we can focus on developing age-friendly public transport by:

Encouraging use, adapting buses and orientating existing and new service systems to older people's needs.

The Bay of Plenty Council currently seeks “improved customer outcomes” (Sept 2017). Further, Tauranga City states that it seeks to implement an “ambitious plan” that “will need to increase uptake of public transport” because “consequences will be dire” (Sept 2017). A realigned age-friendly service provision can make a contribution to:

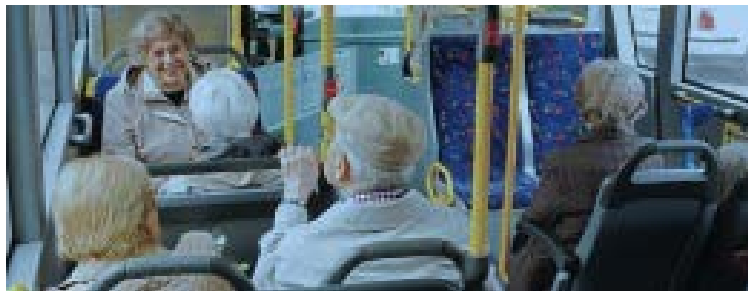
- Enhance transport service efficiencies

- Reduce congestion and emissions
- Improve access to continued work and volunteer engagement
- Facilitate tourism
- Assist business viability
- Acquire and retain regular passengers.
- Enable active engagement in fitness and leisure activities, shopping, health care
- Enhance family, social and cultural connectivity
- Improve the quality of life of mature, older and older-old people

Reducing congestion by adapting our public bus stock, and redesigning service provision to meet the age-friendly “more connected choice” expectations of mature and older people, will be a cost-effective silver economic and environmentally sustainable investment.

GETTING OLDER PEOPLE ON THE BUS

Project Proposal



Meeting key strategic transport goal - changing behaviour

Improving the suitability of public transport is an efficient active ageing strategic intervention that enhances community wellbeing, strengthening social, economic, environmental and cultural sustainability. Further it gives older people a real sense of belonging, community care and security. It is time to be proactively encouraging.

Context:

1 The Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC) sets the direction for the region’s transport system. A BOPRC report 2010³ noted the wider benefits from improving age-friendliness of the transport network, and monitoring of travel behaviour of older people.

2 A key Tauranga City Transport Blueprint goal includes “Improved optimisation of the public transport network” seeking PT capacity increase of 13.62% by 2031 through a proposed ‘Programme 8’ initiative, where improved uptake and other modes are considered crucial for business and liveability.

³ BOPRC. 2010. *Study of The Relationship Between an Ageing Population and The Transport System in The Bay of Plenty.*

3 People who hold a Super Gold Card are currently eligible for free travel on off-peak services on weekdays and all day on weekends and public holidays. Few do.

Proposal:

That a collaborative “Getting Older People On the Bus” project be established, including a contract to:

- 1 Assess age-friendly public bus service improvements
- 2 Engage with older people to increase the uptake of public transport use by older people.

Purpose:

- To increase the number of older people using the Bay of Plenty public transport system
- To Contribute to core priority for Silver Economy regional development.

Relevance:

Transport authorities need to know the needs and expectations of older people at a local level. The proposed “Getting People On Board” project will contribute to meeting Regional Transport Plan goals to:

- Increase public use and perception of public transport as a mode of safe and secure travel.
- Contribute to environmental sustainability, reduce congestion and carbon emissions.
- Improve safety and transport system efficiency
- Increase elder mobility options and Improve older people’s quality of life
- Contribute to age-friendly social infrastructure goals.

Key Outcome: More happy older people using buses

Potential project outcomes:

- Relevant international evidence on age-friendly improvements to public transport
- Outcomes from ideation process engaging mature and older people.
- Brief overview (local sample) on elder travel use/ needs, barriers and concerns.
- Implementation priorities including service delivery, training and information.
- Community based promotional initiative to develop elder confidence and experience in public transport use.
- Contribute to core priority for Silver Economy regional development.

Intelligent transport and information systems are rapidly evolving. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to canvas the efficacy and economies of scale of the new modes of emerging mobility. However, a comprehensive multi-modal transport system will ensure that the loss of ability to drive for older-old people will not mean a loss of independence and ability to age-in-place. It is clear that technology is advancing travel options more closely tailored to individual need and the possibilities for ageing populations are exciting. Integrating 21st Century technology with ageing boomers will be transformative.

It is acknowledged that an informed breadth of transport ‘future options’ discussions are taking place, and that there is a depth of enthusiasm, local knowledge and innovation offered through various forums including those facilitated by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, New Zealand Transport Agency, Councils Tauranga Connect and Environmental Sustainability groups.



Christchurch Hops
Social innovation



Mobility Scooter speedster

warned in Oamaru

“ You don’t own the footpath.”

A mobility scooter user was issued a formal warning by police. File photo / 123rf

BOPRC ACTION:

It is anticipated that this paper becomes a basis for further project discussion and collaboration with BOPRC Public Transport Committee, NZTA, and TLA advice to achieve investment and implementation.