

# Metlink Accessibility Action Plan

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## About

In 2021 Metlink have made a commitment to our [Accessibility Charter](#) through the Greater Wellington Regional Council. The vision: The Metlink public transport network is accessible for all with ease and dignity.

This is the Action Plan for achieving Metlink’s commitments to increasing access for disabled people to our public transport network from 2021-2031. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually, so that goals and priorities can be updated and the disability community can have consistent input.

In this instalment, one goal is to build fundable package of activities for inclusion in the 2024 Long Term Plan (LTP) and Regional Long Term Plan (RLTP), so that substantial improvements over the next years are possible.

## Our Process

This is the process that Metlink followed to create the charter and this Action Plan with consistent advice and participation from members of the disability community.



## The Approach

The Plan has been developed through 12 months of co-design and in-depth in-person engagement with disabled individuals and advocates, Metlink staff and frontline operator staff and through analysis of compliant trends and existing research.

We directly engaged with

- Disability representatives in our Public Transport Advisory Group (PTAG) to plan how we develop the action plan.
- Over 40 disabled individuals and advocates encompassing mobility, visual, hearing, learning, neurological and invisible disabilities in in-depth, narrative research.

- Bus drivers to understand their experience working with disabled customers.
- A group of trusted advisors representing different perspectives to review and rank results and ideas for actions.

Metlink reviewed accessibility initiative examples from overseas and also connected with the Auckland transport team managing their Accessibility Action Plan.

We reviewed research reports from the field:

- [Human Rights Commission Inquiry 2005](#)
- Disabled Persons Assembly 'Accessible Journey', 2019
- DHB transport 2022
- Waka Kotahi '[Transport experiences of disabled people](#)' 2022
- Metlink review of Total Mobility Services in Porirua and Kapiti 2021
- Metlink complaints and patronage data
- Overseas and NZ initiatives, standards and guidelines (inc. the [Auckland Transport Accessibility Action Plan.](#))

[The Accessibility Action Plan Research Report can be read here.](#)

## Ranking ideas

The research lead to a list of 16 ideas for actions, which were ranked by people with lived experience, sector representatives, support workers and trusted advisors on Accessibility.

The ranking of the ideas was consistent, with some differences based on the nature of main barriers, e.g. between the blind community and mobility needs.

All	Mobility	Blind Community	Divergent	Other Activity Limitation	Advisor/Supporter
Accessibility training for all staff	Accessible station improvement programme	'Bus Replacing Trains' improvement programme	'Bus Replacing Trains' improvement programme	Accessible bus stop improvement programme	Accessibility training for all staff
Accessible station improvement programme	Accessibility training for all staff	Accessibility training for all staff	Invisible disability campaign	Accessible station improvement programme	Accessible bus stop improvement programme
Accessible bus stop improvement programme	Accessible bus stop improvement programme	Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web & app	On-demand or community transport service	Accessibility training for all staff	Accessible station improvement programme
'Bus Replacing Trains' improvement programme	On-demand or community transport service	Talking buses'	Accessibility training for all staff	Improve accessible bus design over time	On-demand or community transport service
On-demand or community transport service	Invisible disability campaign	Personal accessibility assistance	Improve accessible bus design over time	Ability to view seat availability on buses in real-time	More support for accessibility apps and other tech solutions
Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web & app	Additional resource for Metlink contact centre	More support for accessibility apps and other tech solutions	More support for accessibility apps and other tech solutions	Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web & app	Talking buses'
Improve accessible bus design over time	'Bus Replacing Trains' improvement programme	Accessible bus stop improvement programme	Accessible station improvement programme	Improve access to the ferry and its ports	Improve accessible bus design over time
Talking buses'	Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web & app	Additional resource for Metlink contact centre	Establish 'guaranteed accessibility corridors' between the regions	Additional resource for Metlink contact centre	Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web & app
More support for accessibility apps and other tech solutions	Improve access to the ferry and its ports	Accessible station improvement programme	Accessible bus stop improvement programme	On-demand or community transport service	'Bus Replacing Trains' improvement programme
Additional resource for Metlink contact centre	Establish 'guaranteed accessibility corridors'	Improve accessible bus design over time	Usability and accessibility improvements Metlink web &	Invisible disability campaign	Ability to view seat availability on buses in real-

## **The path ahead**

### **What to expect**

The Action Plan brings systemic planning and commitment to improvements that have tended to be ad hoc and one-off in the past, often due to competing priorities.

Doing that, we need to make the principle 'Nothing about us, without us' part of our way of working. That is a central goal of this plan. That means we will plan, design and test the actions with active participation of disabled people and their advocates.

Committing to a co-design approach means that we cannot always predict the exact outcome of each action at the end of the first year. We will weigh up the pros and cons of different approaches together.

To set our region up for long-term, sustainable improvements through the AAP, we will:

- Request and secure substantial funding and do the shared planning that is required to reach our goals.
- Review available standards and guides and translate them into our own practice.
- Coordinate closer with councils in the region and with central government, as many barriers are in shared control.
- Grow our network of advisors and testers from the disability community, so that practical testing can become our BAU.

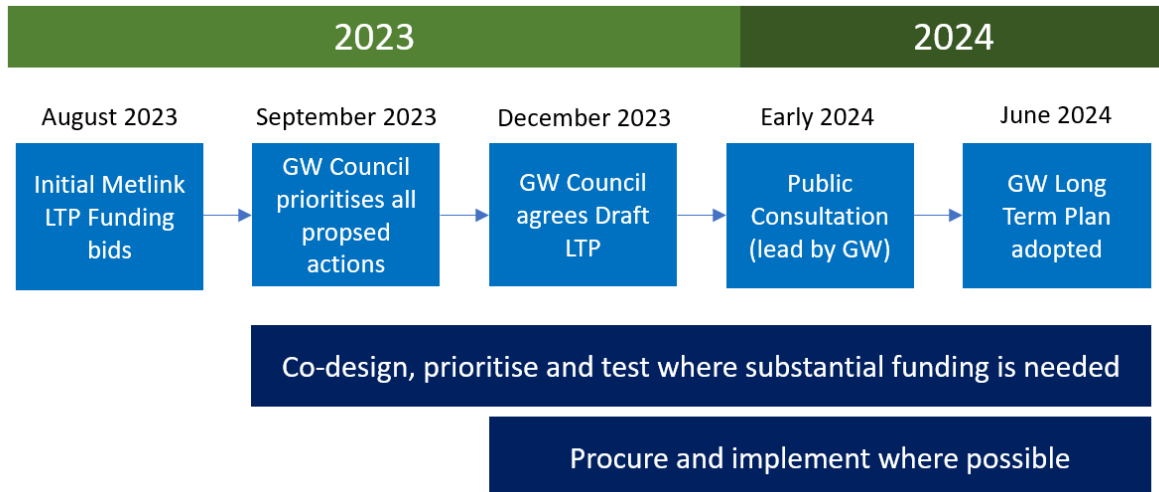
### **Securing funding**

We can fund accessibility initiatives in 2 ways:

- Through our current operating budget – which is limited but we have more direct control
- Through dedicated funding in the Greater Wellington Long Term Plan (LTP) – which is more substantial, but is still a finite pool of money that gets prioritised alongside other regional Council responsibilities

The actions in this plan are submitted into the initial Metlink LTP funding bid. It's possible that some of our bids don't receive funding. We will discuss alternatives as part of our planning and co-design engagements.

While the funding process continues, we begin our planning and co-design so that initiatives that fit into our operating budgets can be delivered without delay, and that more substantial initiatives are ready when their funding bids are successful.



## The Action Plan

Planned initiatives:

1. Accessibility training programme
2. a. Station accessibility improvements
2. b. Bus stop accessibility improvements
3. Increased in-person support
4. Vehicle accessibility improvements
5. Awareness of invisible disabilities
6. Accessibility Technology Aids
7. On-demand/community transport
8. Improvements to ferry & wharves
9. Fully accessible PT corridors

Live initiatives (already underway):

- On-bus announcement system
- Website & app improvements
- Buses replacing trains (BRT) stop accessibility improvements
- Real-time information (RTI) replacement / Audible RTI signs

Nearly all of the activities overlap to add strength to each other – and creating logical packages of work for the Business Plan and LTP.

## How we will approach each action

### 1. Accessibility Training Programme

**Where we are now:** Training is focused on operations and addresses disabilities in general terms. Transdev runs Accessibility training. Metlink office staff have no general training around accessibility.

**Our approach:** We will understand current training practice and providers and co-design a brief for desired training practice with members of the community

and operators. Then we compare options and discuss whether any existing training programmes or providers meet our brief. If the solution we're recommending is within current budgets, we proceed to procurement and implementation. If the training requires more substantial funding, then this goes into the Long-Term Plan (LTP) funding bid. We may take a staged approach between the two.

**At the end of AAP 23/34, we will:** Have an agreed approach for accessibility training, and if it is within existing budget, procured and begun work on the design and implementation of the practice.

## 2. Stops and Station Improvements

**Where we are now:** Accessibility is part of our practice around bus stops and train stations. However, how we apply which standards, test designs and involve the community is ad hoc, there is pressure on priorities.

### **Our approach:**

- Draft accessibility factors for stops and stations based on what we know and do site visits with community members to validate what makes a stop or station accessible
- This, and our review of other standards and best practice examples, will clarify our standards by which we can measure an accessible stop or station.
- We will then audit all stops and stations in the region. We have existing engineering reports on many train stations which will make the process faster. There are several thousand bus stops in the Wellington region. A full audit of all will take several years.
- Then we will have agreed service standards for stops and stations, and how they will be prioritised, audited and improved in our ongoing practice (as mentioned above, timings may differ between stops and stations).
- This informs our LTP funding and a multi-year programme to improve bus stops and train stations.
- At the same time as we're reviewing standards and visiting sites, we will co-design and answer: what info do people need around the accessibility of stops and stations to plan a journey with confidence?
- As soon as information is available through the audits, we will make accessibility information available through our website, app and through the contact centre.

**At the end of AAP 23/34, we will:** Publish comprehensive accessibility information about stops and stations on our website and app, bids for funding, and implement accessibility in our planning and design practice.

## 3. In-person support

**Where we are now:** There is no dedicated mobility/ accessibility support. Such support is part of many other roles in the network. We need to understand gaps and opportunities for improvement.

**Our approach:** We will understand current staffing practice and service levels at stations, stops and the contact centre and co-design a brief for desired in-person support & priorities with members of the community and operators. Then we compare options and discuss what in-person support changes are most valuable, in relation to their cost and feasibility. If the solution we're recommending is within current budgets, we proceed to procurement and implementation. If more substantial funding is required, then this goes into the Long-Term Plan (LTP) funding bid. We may take a staged approach between the two.

**At the end of AAP 23/34, we will:** Either have an agreed plan for improvements on in-person support that can bid for funding, or we will be ready to implement and recruit first roles and possibly pilot ideas.

## Actions 4-9

The other actions require more collaboration to determine what improvements really make a difference in practice, and what is feasible within budget.

### 4. Vehicle Improvements

- **Goal:** Accessibility considerations to be included in Asset Management Plan and future procurement.
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - Co-design workshop with community members.
  - Prioritise & scope what can be done in 23/24.

### 5. Awareness of Hidden Disabilities

- **Goal:** Improve the experience and comfort of travellers with hidden disabilities.
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - Collectively discuss possible approaches, such as lanyard systems and awareness campaigns.
  - Include hidden disability awareness into training.

### 6. Accessibility Technology Aids

- **Goal:** Improve digital channels and use technology solutions that can reduce barriers or make travel more comfortable.
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - Audit of known accessibility issues – prioritise and schedule testing with users where needed.
  - Co-design workshop with community members of tech ideas or application, rank and scope feasibility.

### 7. On-Demand and Total Mobility (TM)

- **Goal:** Alternative travel modes as part of the accessible network.
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - Scope support enhancements for Tawa on Demand trial – booking and payment options outside of the current app.
  - Metlink: Review Operating Model On Demand and TM.

## 8. Ferry and Wharfs

- **Goal:** Accessibility improvements to the Easy By West Ferry and its wharfs
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - This is owned by East/West ferry – recommend an engineers report to make the ferry fully accessible.
  - Metlink to facilitate contacts to community for co-design.

## 9. Accessible Corridors

- **Goal:** Coordinate our efforts from other actions so that regional connections are improved and made accessible with increased confidence.
- **To-do in AAP 23/24:**
  - Consult with members of the community: what regional links are most desired and needed?
  - This is expected after progress is made on bus stop and station improvement planning.

## Measures of improvement

The Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) will be reviewed annually. At each instalment we will use these metrics to see if our efforts are improving the network for people as intended.

- Fewer complaints related to accessibility issues and barriers
- Fewer incident reports related to accessibility issues and barriers
- More people with disabilities travelling with public transport (measured though boardings with concessions)

It's possible that public awareness of this plan will lead to an initial increase in accessibility complaints. Metlink would welcome this as information about barriers and concerns is crucial for the AAP. For use as a metric for success, complaints data will be assessed on qualitative factors in the first year.