



Report 07.399
Date 6 June 2007
File T/10/04/001

Committee Passenger Transport
Author Rob Braddock Contract and Quality Team Leader

Total Mobility Flat Rate Payments for use of Wheelchair Hoist Vehicles

1. Purpose

To provide information on implementation and conditions of a flat rate payment system for each Total Mobility service trip operated with a wheelchair hoist vehicle. These payments are to be implemented 1 July 2007.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

It has been established as part of the review by the Ministry of Transport (MoT) and Land Transport New Zealand (LTNZ) of the Total Mobility Scheme (the Scheme) that wheelchair accessible taxi's tend to be less profitable than other taxi's due to higher operating costs that are associated with increased unpaid time travelling between fares, the time taken to load and unload passengers and depreciation and maintenance of wheelchair hoist mechanisms.

One of the Scheme review improvements agreed by the Minister of Transport states that "*LTNZ encourages adequate provision of wheelchair accessible taxi's by providing a flat rate payment (in addition to the fare) to the transport operator for each trip taken by a Scheme member using a wheelchair hoist*".

The objectives of the flat rate payment, which will be fully funded by LTNZ are to:

- Improve the financial viability of operating wheelchair accessible taxis
- Increase the availability of vehicles at peak times

- Reduce and make fares paid by wheelchair hoist users consistent with fares paid by others
- Encourage the provision of additional wheelchair accessible vehicles

4. Comment

LTNZ has calculated that a flat rate payment of \$8.89 excluding GST (\$10.00 including GST) is sufficient for the above purposes. This was based on information provided by the NZ Taxi Federation around costs, and average taxi fare information provided by local authorities.

5. Conditions of Payment

In order to claim payment, Scheme transport operators must agree to the following conditions:

- The fare meter must not operate while Scheme passengers are being loaded in or out of the vehicle; and
- The tariff rate for wheelchair hoist trips must be equivalent to the standard taxi tariff rate for the same trip.

These terms will need to be agreed to by transport operators in writing, prior to any payments being made. This will be in the form of a service level agreement that will be superseded by full contractual arrangements introduced along with other Phase Two improvements as discussed in report number 07.400.

6. Process

In the absence of electronic systems we intend to implement the following process:

- A register of wheelchair accessible vehicles and their drivers with sample signatures for each driver will be established. Wheelchair accessible vehicle drivers will be issued an individually identifiable “wheelchair hoist” stamp.
- The stamp will be used on each voucher presented by a passenger requiring the wheelchair hoist, but limited to one claim per trip where more than one wheelchair user required use of the wheelchair hoist on the same trip.
- A register of wheelchair hoist users will be created from the Total Mobility data base. Wheelchair hoist vouchers presented will be checked against that register.
- Wheelchair hoist invoices with all the completed necessary information will then need to be presented separately by the companies concerned.

7. Payment from Land Transport New Zealand

We will claim these payments from the end of July 2007 as part of the standard claim process.

\$187,000pa has been allocated to the Greater Wellington region based on Scheme trips as reported in 2005 as part of the overall review. If it becomes apparent that this allocation is not enough, we are instructed to approach LTNZ for revision of the amount as part of the standard monthly NLTP review process.

8. Cost / resource implications

This payment if fully funded by LTNZ. Once established, the new process will essentially become another layer of administration. We are unsure at this stage how much time will be spent on this regularly; however we believe it will require a fairly close eye initially.

9. Communication

These changes in process will be communicated to transport operators in a meeting held 20 June 2007. We will also be presenting an agreement that they must enter into that sets down the conditions of payment. Payments will not be made without this agreement.

All registered wheelchair users will be written to with a view to establishing whether or not they are wheelchair hoist users. At this stage we estimate there to be about 2100 users and this is to help provide a check and balance in the payment process.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Report approved by:

Rob Braddock
Contract and Quality Team
Leader

Rhona Hewitt
Manager, Transport
Procurement

Wayne Hastie
Divisional Manager, Public
Transport