



**Hon Michael Wood**  
Minister of Transport

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Targeting transport costs: Free public transport for children

- Free fares for kids under 13
- Half price fares for people under 25
- Cheaper public transport for 1.6 million New Zealanders
- Better wages and working conditions for bus drivers
- Funding to help restore public transport service levels

The Chris Hipkins Government is helping ease cost of living pressure on families by providing free fares on buses, trains and ferries for children aged 5 to 12 and half price discounts for all passengers aged 13 to 24 from July 1 2023.

“Transport is a big cost for Kiwi households. It’s why we provided relief at the pump when petrol prices spiked following the invasion of Ukraine, and it’s why we are now providing ongoing cost reductions for children and young people,” Michael Wood said.

“Making public transport free for children will make it much easier for kids to get to school and provide relief to household budgets. Free fares for under 13s could save \$30 per week for the average household of two children.

“Half price fares for under 25s as well as Community Service Card holders and Total Mobility Users will help over 1.6 million Kiwis save money, and make it easier for people to get to where they need to go.

“Budget 2023 continues our work to deliver a thriving public transport network with more services, drivers, and passengers.

“Cheaper fares for an additional 774,000 Kiwis through this Budget, on top of the 895,000 New Zealanders made eligible for half price fares in Budget 2022, will remove a barrier to taking public transport and will help to tackle congestion and get Kiwis moving.

“We know that public transport has not always been reliable over the past year. A dependable public transport network relies on a strong workforce to keep the system moving. This Budget’s investment in better wages, rosters, training, and working conditions will ensure workers are supported to join and stay in the industry.

“The Budget enables public transport authorities to raise the base wage rate to \$30 per hour for urban bus drivers, and \$28 for regional bus drivers, introduces split shift allowances of \$30 per split shift; and introduces penal rates for those working after 9pm.

“This builds on our work in Budget 2022 which supported the implementation of wage increases to at least \$28 an hour in most regions across the motu. This has helped to reduce the bus driver shortage from 860 in December 2022 to 560 now, with hundreds more drivers being recruited and trained.

“This delivers an average 58 percent increase to bus drivers pay since we took office.

“We’re also putting money on the table for councils to restore public transport services to pre-pandemic levels. Public transport patronage has been increasing steadily since the pandemic but hasn’t reached the same levels yet. This funding will allow councils to consider reinstating cancelled services and minimise further service cuts to ensure Kiwis can access affordable, frequent, and reliable transport.

“Everyone in New Zealand will benefit from the investments we’re making today, be it through improved access and reliability of public transport, or less congested and safer roads thanks to the increased patronage of public transport.

“As a result, we will have a more sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system that better supports economic activity and our communities,” Michael Wood said.

“This increase in funding will help us to take cars off the road while cutting pollution that goes into the atmosphere. More people using public transport is critical to reducing our climate emissions and to increasing our wellbeing,” Climate Change Minister James Shaw said.

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**Notes to editor:**

The Government has made \$327 million available to public transport authorities (PTAs) from 1 July to deliver on the Community Connect extension. The Ministry of Transport and Waka Kotahi are working with PTAs to enable PTAs to implement half price fares for under 25s, free public transport fares for under 13s, and half price Total Mobility fares for Total Mobility users.

PTAs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport and Waka Kotahi, will provide more detail on implementation phasing in the coming weeks.

The process for accessing the concession will vary from council to council. Information about how it will work in each region is under development, and will be communicated to the public once the details are confirmed.