

Feeding back on the formation of the Te Tara o Te Whai - Hauraki locality

Notes from Community Transport hui held 27 Feb 2023 at St John Station, Thames

Facilitator: Sarah Gibb, Community Waikato

Note Taker: Amantha Bowen, Community Transport, Waikato Regional Council

Attendees: St John; Te Aroha Shuttle; Waikato Regional Council; Community Waikato; Paeroa Volunteer Drivers; Paeroa Community Trust; Coromandel Independent Living Trust; Tairua Shuttle; Air Auckland (Whitianga).

Of the 21 attendees, 6 do not reside in the locality area.

The attendees discussed several issues related to health and well-being in the local community, including the top-of-mind issue with precarious roads that are difficult to navigate safely after the cyclones. It was pointed out that there are too many differing websites providing information on roading changes – **need a reliable and centralised point of information**. All groups also have **funding concerns** for things like the need to seek out a replacement vehicle at some stage. An example issue was highlighted of how in Tairua health services tend to be in Thames, which necessitates a lot of transportation between the two areas. There is a desire to see services offered closer to other towns, perhaps **mobile clinics and outer hospitals with expanded services**.

Attendees noted the need for a **possible room to stay over in** due to exhaustion or other circumstances that might occur **for a volunteer driver** doing a long distance transport, and suggested seeking out options and checking whether Te Whata Ora has any solutions. Representatives of Air Auckland said they would look at breaking down for us what the costs could be to support Community Transport trips as it may be a good **option for some health trips to be flights**.

While discussing their views on health and well-being in the locality and what services they would like to see improved or made available, attendees identified a few gaps in the current system, including:

- Concern over continuity of health transport funding from the DHB and whether the dispersal formula is transparent & fair
- Wanting strong communication between health agencies & transport providers (one issue is appointment scheduling, this could be much more successful with strong communication)
- Community's accessibility to services/affordability – providing a mobile service (if you can't provide it locally)
- IT Solutions/Online are problematic for many patients which puts increasing pressures on the volunteers to help them navigate it, for example: There is a huge pressure-making appts etc for others (which is outside scope) and then the communication chain after
 - Loss of human contact is a major issue
- Recommend looking at more ways to provide "Zoom" buddy Digital Assistance for people who are not tech savvy or don't have technological services/signal.
- Needing funding for the rides that don't fit in Te Whata Ora criteria & having to rely on alternative funding, e.g. lack of transportation options for people without community services cards
- Urgent need for NTA update, e.g. flat fee or actual travel
- Succession of volunteers and the longevity of community transport groups
- Community/voluntary organisations cannot and will not operate like a commercial business but DO run a business

The relationship between the community and its health and wellbeing is deeply reliant on its transport providers. Strengths of the community serving itself include:

- Generosity from volunteers and kindness going both ways. Trying to “thank” the volunteers through the extras, e.g. meals as a koha to drivers
- Compassion from people who understand where you're coming from
- Engagement that delivers beyond transport
- Support from outside the area, that can influence local options

- Communication is very good IN our communities. We know our own communities.

The attendees identified several opportunities for collaboration and partnerships to improve health and well-being services in the community. They also discussed the need to take care of volunteers and the potential benefits of a Stagecoach concept (one group taking clients part of the distance and another carrying them forward to the ultimate destination). There was also the concept of a digital reliance and what that means for aging and deprived members of the community who need to access services and avoid isolation.

Finally, the attendees discussed potential solutions for ongoing treatment needs, such as the use of local spaces with a support person or practitioner for zoom appointments with a remote medical practitioner; and bringing doctors to the locality through mobile clinics - or perhaps building a hospital in Whitianga. They also discussed the need to ensure continuity of funding for these transport services and the importance of communication between agencies and providers.

Below are some photos of attendees during the hui



