



Chairperson's Report for the Year 01.04.2025 – 31.03.2026

What a fantastic year for the North Canterbury Mini Bus Trust, undoubtedly the most significant in our history and totally achieved by the support, dedication and efforts of our team of Trustees. In brief, we completed and opened our new garage, purchased three vehicles, (one with the assistance of Mainpower's Decarbonisation programme), and still maintained a credit balance in our bank account. No mean achievement for a comparatively small "Not for Profit" Charity.

The year also showed increases in our services. Our passenger journeys totalled 9,285 (8,121 last year), our vehicles travelled 134,205 kms (105,292) our drivers provided 3,832 hours (3,472) and our Trustees contributed 1,023 (1,006) hours. The passengers to kilometre figures show an increase due to our numerous hospital appointments in Christchurch with minimum numbers of passengers on board. The medical appointments, while they do not show favourable passenger to kilometres figures are a valuable service that has shown popularity by the increases in all three areas of our operations.

The greatest achievement in the Mini Bus' history has been the planning, financing and completing of the garage at Rangiora. Apart from yard sealing and landscaping, this project is now complete. Perhaps a sign of the confidence we had in where the Trust is going is that we created two extra bays to allow for future expansion. To date those two bays are now occupied and there seems little sign that this state will not continue.

Our vehicle replacement policy is still a priority as two of the three vehicles we have purchased have been additional units. Our fleet now totals thirteen.

During the year we commissioned our own website giving information about us and our services. The website a great effort put together by Greg Wright and Nicky Hatton who donated her time. It can be reached at "North Canterbury Mini Bus Trust."

Reports:

Operations:

In 2024 we had our greatest year ever for passenger journeys at 10,467. Due to a client purchasing their own vehicle our numbers dropped 2,000. It has been our aim to recover and surpass our previous best year. We increased our numbers by over 1,000 this year and if we can keep this momentum a new record is attainable. Oxford, Cust and Rangiora have all shown increases in passenger journeys. However in the last weeks of March a World crisis in the form of an attack on Iran has seen fuel prices starting to escalate. The downside is this will have a financial effect on our operation this year, and the prospect for next year is daunting. The upside is more people may choose to take advantage of our very affordable fares. We have sustained the March increases, but have advised our customers that from next month there will be fuel surcharges. Our

Mission Statement of “Virtually Free Transport” is a commitment we will maintain for as long as viably possible.

Our medical appointment service has shown the most gains. Oxford is consistent, Cust has doubled their trips especially since commissioning a VW Caddy, and Rangiora has shown an increase of over 60%. As mentioned, passengers carried in comparison to kilometres travelled is not great due to most trips being for one person, but we feel the service is vital for the Waimakariri District.

Financial:

Our monthly reports that our treasurer provides are our means of keeping a finger on the pulse. As we have developed into a larger operation these reports have become not only valuable but vital. Our changing market of both income and expenditure have made budgeting difficult. Our income exceeded budget by \$11,000, but our income from grants was \$21,000 less than we had requested. Our expenses were \$3,000 less than budgeted which as a percentage of \$140,000 was very close.

Recently our treasurer has introduced a monthly Executive Summary, which gives us even more and comprehensive accounting. We have come a long way from our original accounting which was hand written, recorded and then typed up at year's end.

Fleet:

With the exception of cleaning, every facet of our vehicle operation was more expensive than last year, with insurance 20% over budget, and repairs and maintenance 12%, and this was with repairs being virtually double last year's expenditure at \$22,800 (\$11,883). Fuel on the other hand was less than budget by 21%, a situation that will not last. Not all of the repairs and maintenance applies to the vehicles as the wheelchair hoists also have received extra maintenance this year. An unexpected differential replacement on our Nissan took thousands that we were not counting on.

Our Five Year Business plan calls for us selling the oldest Toyota at Oxford in 2026, the oldest Transit at Cust in 2027, the Toyota Funcargo in Cust in 2028, and the last Transit in 2029. Two things happened to change our plans. Presbyterian Support requested an additional vehicle for nine months. Our prior vehicle supplier offered us a new Toyota 12 seat Hi Ace for \$10,000 less than currently available in Christchurch. We had funds available for capital expenditure and went ahead with the purchase. This meant that the Oxford replacement did not happen. In the meantime NZ Transport Agency determined that our Toyota hatchbacks with wheelchair ramps could not be used as Passenger Service vehicles as they did not meet NZ regulations. Research proved that the VW Caddy did meet the regulations and Mike Neason at Cust located one with low kms at half the new price. A quick decision was made to sell the Funcargo and purchase the Caddy which we have located in Cust where it services both the Cust and Oxford wheelchair requirements. Oxford still use their Toyota hatch but only as a car. That made two purchases for the year but only one replacement.

The big event for our fleet in 2025 was when we were contacted by Mainpower advising they had \$100,000 for a decarbonisation programme and had received no requests for vehicles, were we interested? We were given a week to apply. Wayne, Mike and I spent two days scouring Christchurch for suitable vehicles. Vans were our first choice, but they did not qualify due to low loading capabilities. Cars were next. We made application for two for under \$100,000, one for Rangiora and one for Oxford so that we could compare the operating costs. We were allocated funds for one which we purchased and located in Rangiora. Our only expense was for the power outlet. The car has proved very popular with the drivers, being Chinese it is loaded with extras which most likely appeals to them. We use it principally for our medical appointment service and it has proved to be very economical. Since the fuel crisis it has proved its worth and has taken over the bulk of this service as our other car is petrol driven. Timing could not have better



for us as it has helped us maintain our low charges. We have established a very important relationship with Mainpower who were very helpful both with our application and follow up since we made the purchase. We have been able to give a report on what the car has meant to us. They in turn regarded our operation as worthy by allocating us virtually half of the grant available in the decarbonisation programme.

Don Fairbrother with Penny Kibblewhite
General Manager Customer and Corporate
Relations at Mainpower

Garage:

The big achievement for 2025 – 2026 was the garage. Proudly (for me) named the “Don Fairbrother Building.” At a total cost of \$700,000 (incl GST) to date with yard sealing and landscaping still to come, this has been a great achievement for our team that we can look back on with satisfaction. The idea first envisaged by Wayne Holton-Jeffreys has finally become a reality. Originally a ten bay garage, we reserved one bay for our office / kitchen area and a second larger bay for storage or whatever. Two bays were for future expansion as our Rangiora fleet was six. As mentioned those two bays are already full.

Our opening was on June 6, 2025 by Dan Gordon the Mayor of Waimakariri District Council. The original founding four members of the North Canterbury Mini Bus Trust were in attendance, Dorothy Mitchell (who Had a Dream), Mary Sparrow, Wayne Milne and Don Fairbrother. A large crowd attended the opening representing many organisations and people that the Trust has been associated with, including Ron Mackie our second driver who drove on our second day of operation in 1986.

The garage has already proved its worth by being a secure area for our vehicles, drivers not having to put frost cloths on the screens in winter, a safe place for drivers to leave their cars out of the cold or heat, and an announcement that we are here with signage. We have used it for our committee meetings and have found there is adequate room in the office area for this purpose, although we do miss the morning teas that Valda Reveley used to produce when committee meetings were held at her home.



Trustees:

This has been a big year for the Team. All have worked toward the garage project, from planning, organising contractors, obtaining permissions and legal requirements, to planning and arranging catering for the opening day. There is no way any one person could have achieved this especially in a volunteering role. We can be justifiably proud of what and who we are. Added to that, the team has assessed the need and availability of three vehicles to suit our purposes with our treasurer ensuring that we kept within our limits. To repeat the opening of this report, it has been a fantastic year. During the year Susan Fairbrother has been co-opted to the committee to assist with fundraising and other duties to relieve the chairperson, a welcome addition.

At the end of 2025 the Salvation Army representative who had arranged our driver roster for the medical appointments, advised that they would not be able to do this in 2026. Helen Hewertson who is our administrator, agreed to take over the extra duty which could involve several hours per week. She has since developed a better system which is working very satisfactorily for this most important part of our operations.

At the opening of the garage in his address, Dan Gordon mentioned – or let slip – that he would be giving a Mayor’s Award to our chairperson later in the year. This was presented on Sept 9 to Don Fairbrother for, it states “Exceptional Service to the Waimakariri Community.” A very handsome trophy complete with a greenstone insertion.

The Future:

We still have to save for our yard sealing and landscaping but they are not urgent priorities. Our Shopper Bus service has shown satisfactory progress and the Waimakariri District Council are keen that we could establish a similar service in Kaiapoi. This would depend on vehicle availability and a team of volunteers. The medical appointments are increasing in all areas, and we have extended this service to Kaiapoi. With our electric car proving its worth, and having a charging station in the garage we would certainly be looking at this type of vehicle for future operations. The international fuel situation will influence our decisions.

We are on track to exceed our record year for passengers and hopefully next year we will reach that target. 10,000 passenger journeys is a massive target but with a growing population, our ability to advertise our services and the vehicles and volunteers available it is within reach.

The North Canterbury Mini Bus Trust is a large enterprise now, and is receiving recognition where in the past getting known was always a challenge. With our fleet of vehicles, garage, website and advertising, our future looks positive.

Don Fairbrother QSM,
Chair
21.5.2026

