# Real access for regional Nelson

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| Discussions about public transport often focus on larger urban areas, particularly the major cities, where people are usually close to the services and activities they need, and typically have several options to access them. Yet around 30% of us live in towns of less than 20,000 residents or in rural areas, where people are reliant on nearby towns and cities for a wide range of services and activities, such as education, shopping, social activities, and work. Their access options are generally limited, often just to car and school bus, which excludes many from full participation in society and contributes to wider social, physical, and mental isolation. Providing travel connections and options reduces and minimises this isolation.  Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council recently reviewed public transport across the wider Nelson region with the assistance of Stantec. Access and connectivity were key design principles, particularly in the more densely populated areas near the Nelson-Richmond conurbation, as far as Motueka in the west and Wakefield in the south, which are not currently served by public transport. Here urban and rural populations have been growing strongly and access needs and expectations are increasing. The outcome is a planned network of regional (non-urban) bus services, which will connect people between points along two key corridors, and into Richmond and Nelson for the services and activities that they cannot access locally, complementing improvements to urban bus services. The new routes will be supplemented by planned community transport where the population base is lower. These improvements will help to create a connected and inclusive region where people feel valued regardless of their location and their wellbeing is enhanced. |