



Improving bus driver safety and working environments

Invitation to Public Transport Authorities to submit applications to the Bus Driver Fund

Deadline for applications: 12 Noon Monday 17 November 2025

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi

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More information

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi

This document has been sent to you from NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch via email: busdriverfund@nzta.govt.nz

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Glossary

Acronym or term	Meaning
PTA	Public Transport Authority
PTO	Public Transport Operator that provides public transport services under contract with a PTA
TA	Territorial Authority
PT	Public Transport
NLTF	National Land Transport Fund
NZTA	New Zealand Transport Agency
Application	A proposal submitted by a PTA
Applicant	A PTA that submits an Application
Eligible Initiatives	Initiatives that demonstrably improve safety and / or working environments for bus drivers utilised to deliver public bus services contracted by a PTA.
Q and A	Question and Answer

Background

What is the fund?

Through Budget 2024 the Government allocated \$15 million of Crown funding over 2 years to improve working environments for bus drivers and support recruitment and retention (the **Bus Driver Fund**).

The Bus Driver Fund will be administered by the NZTA through one-off funding contributions on a co-funding basis towards the cost of agreed initiatives.

What's important to us?

NZTA's aim is to maximise benefits for bus drivers for every dollar spent. We are seeking applications for initiatives that address demonstrable needs for as many drivers as possible. We are also looking for innovation to help drive cost efficiency and maximise the number of initiatives that can be funded.

Why should you apply?

The Bus Driver Fund presents an opportunity for PTAs, PTOs, workforce representatives and TAs to work together, identify and deliver initiatives, to improve bus driver safety and working environments.

Section 1: Key Information



1.1. Context

- This is an invitation to PTAs to submit one or more funding applications for initiatives that will improve the safety and/or physical working environment for bus drivers.
- While PTAs are responsible for submitting applications, they must coordinate and work with their operators, workforce representatives and territorial authorities as needed.
- This invitation includes an opportunity for PTAs to schedule a meeting with NZTA to discuss applications before they submit it to ensure potential applications are fit for purpose.



1.2. Our timeline

- Here is the indicative timeline for applications for funding:

Steps in Application process:	Date:
Invitation to PTAs issued	17 October
Application period closes 12 noon	17 November
NZTA assessment complete and applicants notified	by 5 December
Funding agreements executed and funding made available for approved applications	by 30 January



1.3. How to contact us

Please direct all enquiries to the NZTA point of contact email address:

busdriverfund@nzta.govt.nz



1.4. Preparing your application

- a. This is a closed submission process with eligibility limited to PTAs. This document sets out the step-by-step process and conditions that apply.
- b. Take time to read and understand it. In particular:
 - i) develop a strong understanding of NZTA's requirements detailed in [Section 2](#)
 - ii) when structuring your application, consider how it will be evaluated. [Section 3](#) describes our evaluation approach.
- c. If anything is unclear or you have a question, ask NZTA to explain by emailing the Point of Contact. Please do so before the deadline for questions.
- d. In submitting your application, you must use the response form provided or otherwise a form that is substantially the same in layout and content to ensure ease of evaluation by NZTA.
- e. You must also complete and sign the declaration at the end of the response form.
- f. Check you have provided all information requested, and in the format and order asked for.
- g. Having done the work don't be late – please ensure you get your application, to us before the deadline for applications.

Deadline for applications is 12 Noon, Monday 17 November 2025.



1.5. Submitting your Application

- a. Applications must be submitted electronically to the email address busdriverfund@nzta.govt.nz
- b. Proposals sent by post or fax, or to any other email address, or hard copy delivered to our office, will not be accepted.
- c. To assist evaluation of Applications by NZTA, submitted files are to be submitted using the following naming convention:
 - i. Response Form: [PTA name] 1_BD Response Form.doc
 - ii. Budget spreadsheet: [PTA name] 2_BD Budget.xls
 - iii. Other supporting information (if any): [PTA name] 3_BD [description]



1.6. Later changes to the Application or Application process

- a. If, after publishing the Invitation to PTAs, we need to change anything about the process or want to provide PTAs with additional information we will directly let all PTAs know.

Section 2: Our Requirements

2.1 About the Fund

The objective of the Bus Driver Fund is to improve safety and working environments for bus drivers by co-funding initiatives that address a demonstrable need.

Examples of eligible initiatives include, but are not limited to,

- toilet and rest facilities at key network locations,
- installation of driver protection screens on buses, and
- initiatives that improve driver and passenger safety, such as CCTV enhancements on buses.

Funding will be allocated as one-off grants towards the establishment costs of agreed initiatives. The Fund will not cover any ongoing costs or cost escalation associated with an initiative.

Funding may be fully allocated via this funding round. However, subsequent funding rounds may be implemented as needed until the funding is fully allocated or the Crown appropriation expires.

Co-funding for an approved application will be allocated via Transport Investment Online (TIO) once a funding agreement has been signed by NZTA and the PTA. PTAs will be able to claim monthly for actual costs incurred up to a maximum agreed amount.

2.2 PTAs have a lead role

The Bus Driver Fund is open to applications from PTAs only and funding will only be allocated to, or via, PTAs.

It is important PTAs work with their PTOs, their workforce representatives and territorial authorities as needed to identify initiatives and maximise value for money spent.

PTAs may procure and deliver agreed initiatives directly or may pass funding to PTOs or relevant territorial authority to deliver initiatives in accordance with agreed terms. Delivery should be undertaken by the party best able to manage risk and maximise cost efficiencies.

PTAs will be responsible for, and will need to manage, cost escalation. For the avoidance of doubt, neither NZTA, the Crown nor NLTF will co-fund costs beyond the value stated in signed funding agreements for successful applications.

2.3 Prioritised funding list

NZTA aims to maximise funding certainty for PTAs and stakeholders in order to enable efficient and effective implementation.

We also understand that the submission timeframe may result in applications having outstanding dependencies that need to be addressed before PTAs and key stakeholders can commit to implementation.

In such cases, PTAs should still submit applications and clearly outline key dependencies. For example, applications might depend on confirming local share funding or completing other critical pre-implementation milestones.

To accommodate this NZTA will evaluate and prioritise all eligible applications as per the evaluation approach defined in Section 3. All applications that make it through this process will be included on a Prioritised Funding List. Initiatives on the list will either:

- Receive funding approval.
- Receive preliminary funding approval, subject to addressing any matters necessary to confirm final approval.
- Be identified as a potential initiative subject to funding availability. For example, additional projects on the prioritised list may be funded via obtaining cost efficiencies across funded projects or in the event higher ranked projects do not proceed.

Applications not included on the list will not receive funding, and the relevant PTA will be notified accordingly.

2.4 Eligible initiatives

We are seeking Applications from PTAs that are within the scope of the following funding parameters:

- a) Initiatives must offer demonstrable improvements to safety and / or working environments for bus drivers utilised to deliver public bus services contracted by a PTA. Initiatives that improve both driver and passenger safety are also eligible (Eligible Initiatives).

- b) Funding is for one-off establishment costs only. The fund will not cover any ongoing costs or cost escalation associated with an initiative.
- c) Funding must be for new improvements that are not already funded, irrespective of the funding source.
- d) Improvements must start within the 2024/25 or 2025/26 financial years and should be completed within a 12-month period from commencement.

2.5 Co-funding

Applications will be organised into three categories that have a maximum Crown funding contribution and funding criteria as follows:

a) On-network driver facilities

For driver facilities (such as toilet and rest facilities) at key network locations (such as bus hubs and layover locations) the maximum crown contribution will be up to 75% of agreed one-off establishment costs.

Funding will only be provided to on-network facilities owned or controlled by a PTA or local authorities. This is because such facilities may be utilised by drivers employed by different PTOs and such facilities are expected to have asset lives that exceed the term of service delivery contracts between PTAs and PTOs.

Guidance regarding bus layover and driver facilities is available online as part of [NZTA's Public Transport Design Guidance](#).

b) On-vehicle initiatives

For on-vehicle initiatives (such as installation of bus driver protection screens or CCTV enhancements), the maximum crown contribution is up to 51% of agreed one-off establishment costs.

On vehicle improvements should be for vehicles where there is good asset life (i.e. buses that are not close to replacement), and where there is a financial contribution from the PTO who owns or controls the asset.

Any on-vehicle initiatives must comply with the [Requirements for Urban Buses in New Zealand](#).

c) Other initiatives

This category relates to Eligible Initiatives that do not otherwise fall within the above two categories. The maximum crown contribution for other initiatives is up to 51% of agreed one-off establishment costs.

2.6 Financial information

Applicants must provide financial information in accordance with an Excel spreadsheet provided by NZTA (Budget workbook) as part of their application.

2.7 Out of scope initiatives

Examples of initiatives for which funding applications will not be considered include, but are not limited to:

- a) Improvements that are already funded, or where there is an existing commitment to fund.
- b) Driver facilities at PTO owned or controlled locations such as bus depots. It is the responsibility of the PTO to provide fit for purpose driver facilities at such locations.
- c) Initiatives that may provide unfair competitive advantage to a PTO when competing for the right to supply bus services under contract.
- d) Temporary initiatives.

Section 3: Our Evaluation Approach

This section sets out our Evaluation Approach that will be used to assess and prioritise applications.

3.1 Initial assessment

NZTA will conduct an initial review of applications received based on the criteria listed below. NZTA reserves the right to set aside applications that do not meet these criteria. Applications that pass the initial assessment will move on to an evaluation and prioritisation stage.

Table 1: Initial assessment criteria

Criteria	Assessment
Completeness	Whether the response templates have been completed correctly and there is sufficient information to evaluate and prioritise applications.
Eligibility	Whether the Application is within scope of the funding parameters in section 2.4
Co-funding	Whether the Application meets the minimum co-funding requirements in section 2.5
Competition	Whether the Application supports fair competition and avoids undue advantage for PTOs when competing for bus service contracts.

3.2 Evaluation and prioritisation

Applications that pass the initial assessment will then be evaluated by members of an NZTA Assessment Panel both individually and then collectively to determine a final moderated score for each of the four assessment categories defined in the table below. Scoring will be undertaken generally in accordance with section 3.3.

The initial order of initiatives on the Prioritised Funding List will be determined from highest to lowest based on the total moderated score across all categories. The final order may be adjusted by NZTA in its sole discretion to optimise outcomes. Funding will be allocated from the highest ranked initiative onwards, until funding is fully allocated.

Table 2: Assessment categories

Need and benefits	What's important to us
<p>Assessment criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Scale and significance of the issue being addressed and the expected benefits.b) Approach to maximising benefits for drivers and where relevant passengers.c) Demonstrable support from relevant PTOs and their workforce representatives.d) Estimated number of bus drivers that will benefit the initiative over the course of a typical 7-day period.	<p>We are seeking improvement initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• that clearly address a demonstrable need• that deliver benefits for as many bus drivers as possible, and passengers where relevant• where there is demonstrable support from the relevant PTOs and their workforce representatives. <p>Applications will be assessed on a comparative basis to inform relative need and benefits.</p>
Value for money and innovation	What's important to us
<p>Assessment criteria</p>	<p>As a minimum we are seeking proposals that include practical approaches to maximise value for money.</p>

<p>a) Proposed approach to enabling value for money and cost efficiency.</p> <p>b) Additional innovation to drive cost efficiency and value for money over and above good practice.</p> <p>c) Cost per driver shift benefited. Calculated by dividing the total cost of the initiative by the estimated total number of driver shifts that will benefit from the initiative over a 12-month period based on current timetables and scheduled driver duties.</p>	<p>Value for money is achieved when desired outcomes are achieved for lowest reasonable price over the life of the initiative while maintaining or enhancing quality of the solution.</p> <p>Desired outcomes for the Bus Driver Fund are to maximise benefits for bus drivers, and where relevant, passengers. Applications will be assessed comparatively to inform relative cost efficiencies and value for money.</p> <p>Higher evaluation scores may be given to applications that propose additional innovative approaches to enhancing cost efficiency and value for money, even if these are initially beyond the applicant's immediate control.</p> <p>For example, a PTA might propose to lead or join initiatives like bulk procurement across regions to help reduce costs, streamline implementation, and deliver greater value for money. Developing a Prioritised Funding List will help identify opportunities for regional coordination if and where relevant.</p>
Co-funding	What's important to us
<p>Assessment Criteria:</p> <p>a) The level of local share co-funding proposed.</p> <p>b) The sources of funding, including the extent to which stakeholders are contributing their fair share to proposed initiatives where relevant.</p>	<p>Our goal is to maximise the number of improvements delivered through the Bus Driver Fund nationally.</p> <p>All initiatives must include co-funding. Section 2.5 outlines the maximum Crown contribution and the minimum local share required for different application types.</p> <p>Applications that propose a higher local share compared to the minimum will receive a higher evaluation score and funding priority as this help maximises the number of initiatives that can be co-funded nationally.</p> <p>Local share co-funding can come from a PTA, territorial authority, or PTO, or any combination of these entities.</p> <p>Relevant stakeholders should contribute their fair share to proposed initiatives where relevant. For example, PTOs should co-fund improvements on vehicles they own or control and it may be appropriate for PTAs, territorial authorities and / or PTO to co-fund toilet and rest facilities at key network locations.</p>
Readiness	What's important to us
<p>Assessment Criteria:</p> <p>a) Readiness for implementation, considering any significant dependencies and key risks that could affect timely delivery.</p> <p>Timely delivery means starting within the 2024/25 or 2025/26 financial years and completing within 12 months of commencement.</p>	<p>It's important that approved initiatives proceed to implementation in timely manner. Crown funding is available for a limited time, and delays can prevent funding from being allocated to other initiatives, representing an opportunity cost.</p> <p>To mitigate this risk, PTAs must identify key milestones and timeframes for each initiative. This includes milestones where funding may be reallocated to another project by NZTA if the milestone is not achieved.</p> <p>Proposals with fewer dependencies, lower risks, or those ready for implementation will receive higher evaluation scores and funding priority.</p>

b) Clearly defined milestones and timeframes to monitor implementation progress.	
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3.3 Evaluation scoring

Individual and moderated scoring will use the scoring scale and description defined in the table below. Applications that receive a moderated score below 3 for any assessment category will not be included on the Prioritised Funding List.

Table 3: Evaluation scoring

Description	Scoring	Definition
Exceptional	9 to 10	Exceptional alignment with all relevant assessment criteria.
Very good	7 to 8	Good alignment with all relevant assessment criteria in all material aspects.
Good	5 to 6	Good alignment with most assessment criteria with only minor reservations that can be addressed.
Adequate	3 to 4	Adequate alignment with some deficiencies that can likely be addressed or mitigated.
Inadequate	1 to 2	Inadequate alignment with relevant assessment criteria, improvement required before application can be considered further.
Unacceptable	0	Application does not demonstrate sufficient alignment with relevant assessment criteria.

3.4 Further due diligence

In addition to, or to assist with the above evaluation, the Assessment Panel may undertake other processes and due diligence in relation to any Application for funding, such as:

- a) Interviewing applicants.
- b) Requesting clarification and, if appropriate, modification of aspects of the application.
- c) Engaging with other relevant Government agencies on aspects of the application.
- d) Conducting internal and/or external due diligence checks including with relevant stakeholders such as PTOs and local authorities.

3.5 Decision making

NZTA will invite successful applicants (and relevant third parties) to execute Funding Agreements for initiatives on the Prioritised Funding List that are eligible for funding approval.

For initiatives identified as being eligible for preliminary funding approval, NZTA will notify the PTA, including any matters that need to be addressed to enable final funding approval.

Aspects of applications may be negotiated with the applicant before funding is confirmed and a Funding Agreement is offered.

NZTA intends to further explore viability of a bulk procurement approach across multiple regions for bus driver toilet and rest facilities. If viable, PTAs will be encouraged to participate in a sector-wide approach. PTAs may still opt for bespoke solutions, but the maximum contribution may be limited to the equivalent value achievable via the bulk procurement approach.

There is no obligation on NZTA to provide funding until a funding agreement is executed by all relevant parties. The decision of NZTA is final. Funding outcomes will be communicated publicly. Unsuccessful applicants will be offered a debrief on the decision related to their application.