



The Value of Companion Transport Services:

Independent research prepared for Driving Miss Daisy by Bridget Doran (2025)

Transport is not just about getting from A to B. For many people in New Zealand – older adults, people with disabilities, those recovering from injury – safe, trusted and supported journeys are the key to independence, dignity and better wellbeing.

Driving Miss Daisy commissioned independent research to evaluate the benefits of *trusted companion transport services* – where a driver accompanies a passenger from *place-to-place*, not just *door-to-door*. The findings provide strong evidence that companion transport delivers significant benefits for individuals, communities, and the wider system.

Key Findings

1. Companion transport is distinct and proven

- Unlike taxis or rideshare, companion transport is place-to-place: drivers meet passengers inside their home or facility and accompany them to their destination, ensuring comfort, safety and dignity.
- This distinction reduces risks of falls, pain, trauma and abuse, and provides trusted, person-centred journeys.

2. Benefits for individuals

- **Health & wellbeing:** Reduced stress and anxiety, improved mental health, more social connectedness, and support to age in place.
- **Safety:** Fewer falls and injuries entering/exiting vehicles; reduced vulnerability to harassment or unsafe driver behaviour.
- **Independence:** Enables trips that otherwise would not happen – from GP appointments to social outings.

3. Benefits for society and funders

- **Reduced health system costs:** Missed GP and specialist appointments due to transport barriers cost NZ an estimated \$37 million annually in wasted staff time alone – excluding downstream health costs. Trusted companion transport directly reduces these missed appointments.
- **Delayed residential care:** Safe, supported transport helps older people live independently for longer.
- **Social and economic participation:** More people able to work, study, shop and connect.

4. Broad avoided costs

- Falls in and around homes cost ACC over \$4 billion in the last decade. Companion transport reduces these risks.
- Transport barriers drive social isolation, which is linked to chronic illness, dementia, and higher long-term health and social costs.

Implications for policy and funding

This research highlights that companion transport is:

- **An essential service, not a luxury.** It fills a critical gap that neither taxis/ rideshare nor public transport can meet.
- **Cost-effective.** By preventing missed appointments, injuries and social isolation, it delivers significant system savings.
- **Equity-driven.** It enables participation for those with the fewest other options, supporting inclusion and wellbeing.