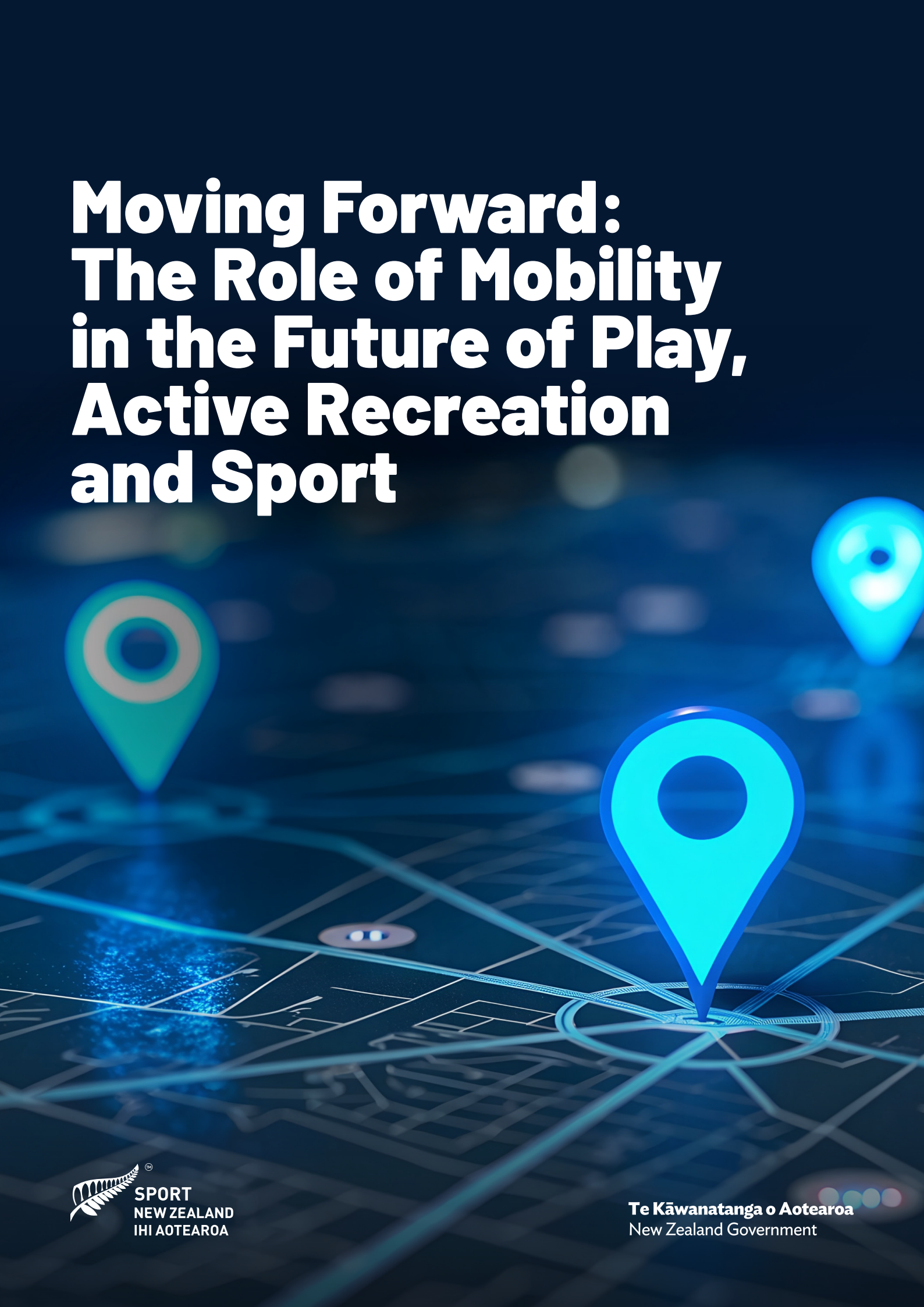
Moving Forward: The Role of Mobility in the Future of Play, Active Recreation and Sport



SPORT NEW ZEALAND IHI AOTEAROA

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Aotearoa New Zealand's play, active recreation and sport sector faces a decade of disruptive mobility change driven by decarbonisation, urban transformation, technological innovation and shifting social patterns. Major infrastructure spend, such as Auckland's City Rail Link opening in 2026, illustrates how urban transformation and transport investment can radically reshape participation access, housing density and sport event logistics. Decisive actions taken now will determine sector resilience, community inclusion and the accessibility of play, active recreation and sport opportunities for all.

Critical insights

- Lack of suitable or conveniently located facilities and transport barriers limit participation for around 8% of adults and 7% of young people in New Zealand, while housing intensification increases demand for parks.
- Decarbonisation is reshaping transport systems, including rapid electric vehicle (EV) uptake, hydrogen pilots and direct cycling incentives, which will alter how communities access sport and recreation assets.
- Urban designs like the '15-minute city' and public space reclamation are moving daily activity closer to home, intensifying local access but raising equity questions for rural and remote groups.
- Technology – from wireless charging and autonomous vehicles to Mobility as a Service (MaaS) – promises to transform participant mobility and logistics, with digital infrastructure introducing new opportunities but also cybersecurity risks.
- Social trends, including remote work, tourism caps and modular living, will shift participation patterns, driving demand for decentralised, pop-up and digital approaches to play, active recreation and sport (PARS).

Background

Mobility is about more than getting from place to place – it shapes cities, communities and how people connect and participate in daily life. As the world confronts climate challenges, rapid urban redesign, technological change and shifting lifestyles, the ways people move are set to transform. These shifts will significantly affect New Zealand, influencing how towns and cities are planned and who can easily access play, active recreation and sport.

Mobility in New Zealand, and globally, is now at a pivotal turning point. The country's drive toward decarbonisation, its urban–rural mix, bicultural foundations and innovative yet capacity limited transport network all determine where, how and when people can move. Choices made today around energy systems, urban design, transport technology and cultural attitudes will shape whether opportunities for participation expand or contract – impacting equity of access, community connection, climate outcomes and the health benefits of active living.

Insights from international trends offers both inspiration and caution on how mobility decisions can support – or restrict – New Zealand's ability to keep our people moving. This report explores 4 major forces shaping the future of mobility: decarbonising transport, reimagining urban spaces, advancing new technologies and evolving cultural and lifestyle patterns. Together, they highlight the opportunities and challenges for keeping New Zealanders active and connected in the years ahead.

Decarbonising movement

Global trends

The global push to decarbonise transport systems is reshaping economies, geopolitics and the future of industry. The EV market is projected to reach over US$3.8 trillion by 2034, with rapid regional expansion led by China, Europe and North America. Battery manufacturing is highly China-centric, with Chinese firms CATL and BYD produce over half of the world's batteries, driving international investment and fierce competition. Most lithium processing is also concentrated in China, though Australia and Chile control much of the mining, creating supply chain vulnerabilities and strategic dependencies.

Hydrogen is gaining global momentum as a fuel for buses, trucks and trains. Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia are all treating it as a key decarbonisation tool and future industrial asset. Germany has deployed the world's first hydrogen trains, and pilot projects are running for public transport and heavy industry across Asia Pacific and North America. Globally, 73.8% of hydrogen remains 'grey' (fossil-based), but governments are ramping up investment in infrastructure to accelerate the transition to 'green'.

In aviation, the rush is towards sustainable aviation fuels and synthetic e-fuels, with national targets for fuel switching tied to decarbonisation mandates. The transition from oil to alternative fuels not only addresses the climate crisis but also reduces exposure to geopolitical shocks, such as Russia's energy leverage over Europe since the Ukraine conflict began.

Direct incentives for low-carbon mobility are spreading: 'climate tickets' that provide heavily subsidised public transport passes are being rolled out in Austria, Spain, Germany and Luxembourg, targeting shifts away from private vehicles. European countries, like France and the Netherlands, are even experimenting with direct payments for cycling commuters to promote active transport, reduce urban congestion and improve public health. These measures point towards broader transformations of urban mobility funding models and potentially universal access to low-cost, low-emission transit.

New Zealand adaptations

Carbon targets

New Zealand's climate legislation and the 2050 net-zero goal mean decarbonising land and air transport is a policy priority. New Zealand's unique reliance on imported vehicles and its hydro-heavy electricity grid give opportunities for rapid decarbonisation but also create supply chain risks. This was evidenced by the November 2025 changes to the clean car standards, due in part to a shortage of cleaner used vehicles.

EV uptake

In 2025, about 2.8% of all light vehicles in New Zealand were electric, and new electric vehicle registrations made up 10% of all new car sales. Projections suggest that the proportion of electric vehicles in New Zealand's vehicle fleet will continue to rise as policy targets and infrastructure investment support the transition. However, recent changes to the clean car standards run counter to this.

Hydrogen and rail

KiwiRail's hydrogen pilot and emergent hydrogen bus projects position New Zealand alongside European leaders, aiming to service routes where battery electrification proves challenging.

Active transport and cycling

Some cities are piloting cycling incentives, including limited e-bike subsidy trials and bike-to-work programmes inspired by European models. The expansion of cycling lanes has sparked significant controversy over traffic impacts and the effects on local businesses.

Climate tickets and public transport

While Europe's climate tickets (low-cost, long-term public transport passes) promote a shift from cars to transit, adopting them in New Zealand would require new funding models and major infrastructure upgrades to serve both rural and urban areas. Auckland's City Rail Link illustrates the shift from cars to transit, by doubling rail capacity, adding 4 stations and cutting commute times by over 20 minutes. This highlights how low-emission mass transit can expand equitable access to recreation and events.

Possible implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Growing adoption of electric and hydrogen vehicles, alongside supporting infrastructure, may alter travel patterns for participants, teams and spectators attending sports events, with potential benefits for air quality and climate.
- Direct incentives for cycling and active transport such as climate tickets and payments for bike commuters) combined with safer bike infrastructure, could boost participation in recreational and sporting activities near urban centres and encourage more unstructured outdoor play after school and on weekends.
- Expansion of low-cost, low-emission public transit could improve access to sport and recreation for diverse groups – including youth, disabled people and remote communities – though rural transport equity remains a challenge.
- New Zealand's broader decarbonisation drive may prompt sport organisations to rethink event logistics, travel strategies and facility energy sources, influencing both financial and strategic planning at club and elite levels.
- Increased availability of public and active transport options supports children and families walking, biking, scooting and engaging in informal physical activity, especially in neighbourhoods close to parks, playgrounds and schools.
- Increased operating costs may arise from the need to maintain new infrastructure or adapt spaces for multi-modal use, stretching already limited funds for field and facility upkeep.
- Sport venues with sustainable mobility features (such as EV chargers or end-of-trip facilities for cyclists) may gain a slight competitive edge in attracting certain events or bookings, though this advantage is marginal unless widely adopted.

Cities reimagined

Global trends

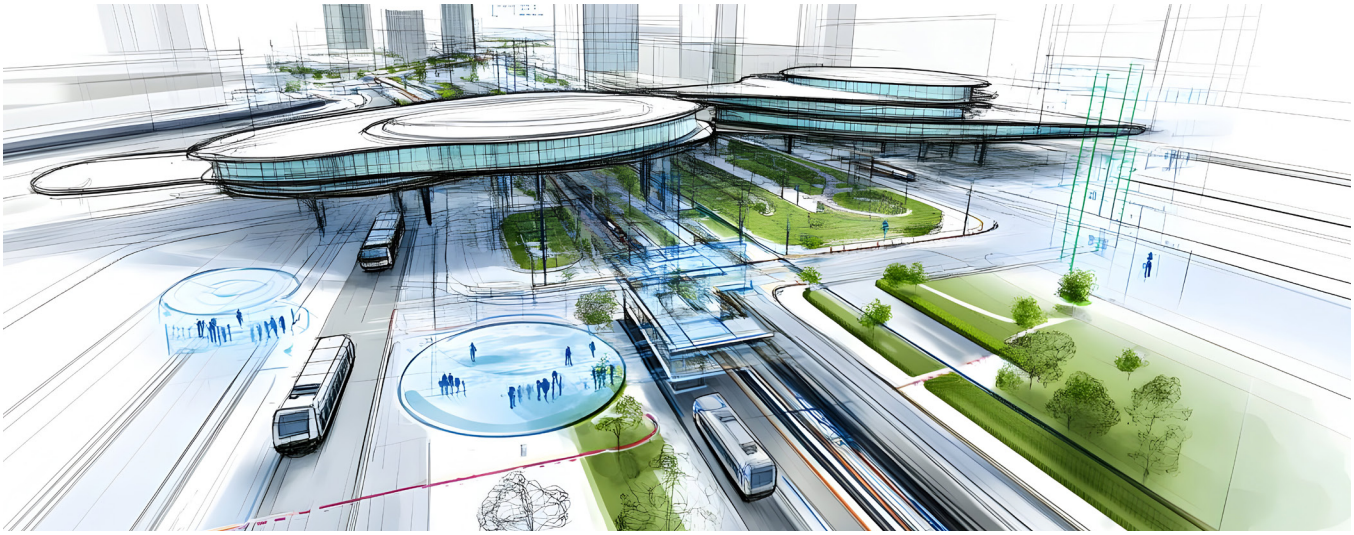
Globally, cities are undergoing a profound transformation as they try to claw back urban space from cars and redesign infrastructure to support liveability, climate adaptation and resilience. The 15-minute city model, gaining ground from Paris to Melbourne to Chengdu, is envisioned as a way to ensure residents can access work, school, shops and recreation within a short, non-car trip. Paris has turned the 15-minute city into an urban policy centrepiece, building bike lanes, repurposing roads and fostering local mixed-use hubs.

Smart transport systems anchored by AI are changing the nature of traffic and congestion management. Pilots in Mumbai, Abu Dhabi, Boston and Vienna are showing double-digit reductions in delays. These platforms coordinate signals and vehicle flows in real time, shifting road management from physical infrastructure to programmable, digital systems. Some cities are also investing heavily in intelligent public transport and pricing systems as part of broader 'smart city' agendas.

Micromobility, with shared and private e-scooters, e-bikes and unicycles, is surging globally. Cities like Sydney report e-scooter ownership among 10% of residents, and Berlin, Brussels and Los Angeles have integrated shared micromobility into their public transport systems. Europe and Asia are building extensive 'bicycle highways', such as Germany's regional routes and South Korea's solar-powered cycling corridors that connect suburbs through protected, rapid cycling infrastructure.

Urban highway removals, once rare, are gaining traction in the US, South Korea and Europe, repurposing outdated car-centric corridors for parks, public space and mixed-use developments. These projects restore community connections, improve air quality and address the historic harms of urban transport infrastructure, but they also require strong equity protections to prevent gentrification.

The privatisation of urban space and development of tech-driven 'private cities' is an emergent but controversial global trend. From Berlin's Panasonic-backed smart districts to Elon Musk's Starbase in Texas, private actors are taking greater roles in governance, infrastructure and even legal frameworks, raising critical questions about sovereignty, equity and inclusion.



New Zealand adaptations

15-minute cities

Wellington and Auckland are experimenting with the 15-minute city paradigm, leveraging mixed-use, transport-oriented developments and digital infrastructure, though gentrification and affordability are ongoing risks.

Public space reclamation

With a projected decline in parking demand as autonomous and shared vehicle use expands, New Zealand cities can follow global leaders in converting car parks to green space, housing and community facilities. The city rail link-associated high density zoning around Te Waihorotiu, Karanga-a-Hape and Maungawhau stations illustrates Auckland's move toward transport oriented urban intensification. As thousands more residents live within walking or cycling distance of city centre facilities, pressure and opportunity will grow for new play, sport and recreation infrastructure downtown.

Privatisation risks

The global trend toward privatised urban development (like tech-run districts or private cities) has limited scope in New Zealand due to strong planning and Treaty obligations. However, the emergence of residential cruise ships and floating urban concepts elsewhere signals possible future debates over mobility, sovereignty and equity.

Bicultural and equity dimensions

Māori-led urban planning and housing innovations demonstrate the importance of inclusive Treaty-based urban strategies and access. Equity in transport, especially for youth, disabled people and remote communities, remains central to New Zealand's mobility redesign.

Reimagine urban environments through play

Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa (Sport NZ) is fostering bicultural, inclusive and equitable play space guidelines and processes – built from both Māori and international best practice – which help local authorities and communities adapt play provision as urban spaces are reconfigured in New Zealand.

Possible implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Growth of 15-minute city models may concentrate sport and recreation facilities within short distances, influencing club geographies, participation patterns and facility planning priorities.
- Concentrating public facilities and green spaces near homes increases opportunities for everyday play, such as informal exercise, pick-up games and family activities.
- Redevelopment of public spaces, including converting car parks into green or community sport, recreation and play areas, can expand opportunities for both informal and formal activity, while requiring responses to gentrification and demographic change.
- Creation of multi-use community areas enables unstructured play and flexible use for physical activity alongside formal sport.
- Expansion of micromobility networks (e-scooters, e-bikes, cycling corridors) enhances access to recreation sites and supports active transport connections with sport and recreation participation.
- Greater independent mobility for young people, with initiatives like shared bikes and e-scooters, strengthens access to playgrounds, skateparks and trails, encouraging habitual movement and social play.
- Inclusive and bicultural urban planning can improve facility access for Māori, children, families and people with disabilities, supporting equity and co-designed sport and recreation spaces.
- Growth of private and tech-driven urban developments may reshape facility ownership, access, pricing, and governance of sport and elite training spaces.

Technology frontiers

Global trends

Technological disruption is accelerating in the mobility sector, with implications across transport, energy and digital industries. The advance of autonomous vehicles (AVs) is most visible in the US and China, where Waymo, Baidu and other companies operate robotaxi fleets in large cities. Baidu's Apollo Go has delivered over 14 million rides since 2019, while Waymo's fully driverless vehicles operate in Phoenix, San Francisco, Austin and Atlanta. Yet broad adoption is hampered by regulatory uncertainties and complex safety and ethical questions.

Wireless charging is one of the most promising solutions for scaling EV fleets, with trials underway in Oslo, Detroit and Sweden. These systems allow for inductive charging at taxi stands and bus stops, or embedded in roads, reducing downtime and enabling more flexible, continuous urban EV operations. Vehicle manufacturers, such as BMW, Volvo and Renault, are developing built-in wireless tech for new models. Public sector initiatives aim to embed this infrastructure directly into the streetscape.

Electric and hybrid aviation is progressing, with more than 200 startups developing air taxis, drones and small passenger planes. Innovations such as the 9-seat eCaravan, have shown viability for short commercial flights, and airlines like easyJet are investing in mid-distance electric aircraft. The regulatory, technological and safety hurdles for large-scale commercial electric flight are significant, but decarbonising short-haul regional travel is a major international focus.

New Zealand adaptations

Robotaxis and autonomous systems

While New Zealand's regulatory environment is conservative, groundwork is emerging for limited AV trials in controlled city precincts and campus-style environments, leveraging international standards and local safety priorities.

Wireless charging and smart infrastructure

Trials in Stockholm, Detroit and Oslo point to wireless road charging for fleets. New Zealand's ongoing upgrades to charging infrastructure must consider future-proofing for inductive and smart-grid models.

Electric and hybrid aviation

With regional distances well matched to the range of early electric and hybrid planes, New Zealand could emerge as a testbed for low-carbon regional flights, especially with government support for pilot projects in Queenstown and the Central Plateau.

Cybersecurity

As mobility becomes digitalised, ensuring robust cyber protections – especially for critical transit and emergency fleets – is an emerging national priority.

Possible implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Rise of autonomous vehicles (robotaxis, shuttles, driverless buses) may change how athletes, spectators and communities reach venues, play parks and recreation spaces, reducing access barriers for children and older adults.
- Development of wireless charging infrastructure and smart mobility grids can improve efficiency for multi-sport trips, club logistics and team travel planning.
- Electric and hybrid aviation advances may enable low-carbon regional travel for elite teams, competitions and talent pathways, particularly in geographically dispersed countries such as New Zealand.
- Increased digitalisation of mobility platforms and infrastructure raises cybersecurity and privacy questions for sport organisations, athletes and participants, especially with digital ticketing and integrated transport services.
- Modular and flexible transport technologies can support temporary play zones, mobile sports facilities and cross-regional pop-up events, expanding reach to underserved neighbourhoods.
- New mobility infrastructure might not be equally distributed, with high-profile venues benefiting first, increasing geographic inequity in access to play, active recreation and sport opportunities.
- Advances in connected digital infrastructure can enable gamified active commute initiatives, such as walking and cycling challenges, fostering fun and social physical activity across communities and age groups.

Social shifts

Global trends

Lifestyle and cultural changes are fundamentally altering what people demand from mobility. Remote work and distance education have triggered decentralised travel patterns, reducing the peak congestion that defined 20th-century mobility in major cities. Central business districts are becoming more mixed-use, and suburban or rural areas are seeing increased demand for active transport options.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) – integrating trains, buses, car-share, ride-hailing, and micromobility into seamless platforms – is scaling globally. Pioneered in Finland, MaaS apps like Whim enable subscription-based, multi-modal journeys, with pilots now operating in cities across Europe, Asia and North America. Toyota is integrating AVs and MaaS platforms to lower costs and expand reach, and partnerships between public sector agencies and tech providers are accelerating adoption.

There is a rising trend in anti-tourism sentiment worldwide, as seen in popular European destinations, parts of Asia and New Zealand, where overtourism has prompted authorities to regulate visitor caps, increase tourism levies and rebalance local needs. Social movements and government responses, such as Greece's cruise ship caps and Amsterdam's 'de-marketing' campaigns, foreshadow a new politics of mobility that prioritises resident wellbeing and environmental limits.

Portable and modular living – ranging from prefabricated homes to 'van life' and floating residences – is gaining market share as housing pressures mount and digital nomad lifestyles proliferate. This trend points towards the convergence of place, transport and autonomy, and is reflected in innovations from European and North American startups, as well as luxury and mid-market cruise ship residences.

The rise of the 'passenger economy', driven by autonomous vehicles, is set to unlock trillions of dollars in new services and consumer experiences by 2050, according to projections by technology firms like Intel. Vehicles will become mobile spaces for work, leisure, health and commerce, requiring cities and businesses to rethink their approach to real estate, infrastructure and customer engagement.

New Zealand adaptations

Remote work

The COVID era catalysed permanent changes in work and education travel, sharply reducing commuter peaks in cities and driving new demands for cycling, walking and suburban public transport.

Mobility as a service

New Zealand already has leading examples of MaaS integration (such as the Auckland Transport HOP card and associated app), but further innovation and investment are needed to integrate national rail, bus and shared mobility providers.

Tourism and anti-tourism

New Zealand increased its International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL) in 2024, specifically to fund local infrastructure and address overtourism. This positions Aotearoa alongside Southern Europe in using policy innovation to balance local needs and sustainability.

Portable and modular living

With rising housing costs, modular and portable homes are gaining popularity, supported by Māori and iwi-led models of ancestral land housing that enhance mobility and resilience for whānau and communities.

Play approach responding to social shifts

Sport NZ uses play as a strategic tool to address changing social and urban realities by advancing inclusive, bicultural and locally led initiatives that prioritise tamariki and rangatahi, ensuring equitable opportunities wherever they live.

Possible implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Growth of remote work and distance education is reshaping commute patterns, increasing demand for suburban and decentralised play, active recreation and sport opportunities.
- Flexible work and study hours enable more family and community-based physical activities during non-peak times, spreading participation across parks, neighbourhood spaces and community centres.
- MaaS platforms that integrate multiple travel modes can simplify logistics for clubs, teams and event organisers, while lowering participation barriers through subsidised or convenient access to recreation hubs.
- Trends in anti-tourism and local sustainability may drive sport organisers to prioritise resident benefit, smaller-scale events and sustainable infrastructure over mass visitor numbers.
- Auckland's City Rail Link is expected to significantly improve access to play, active recreation and sport through faster, frequent public transport and dense housing near new stations, while creating demand for upgraded central facilities and event management that align with transit schedules.
- Portable and modular living solutions can support pop-up or temporary recreation spaces, neighbourhood play areas and informal activity groups in shared community or residential spaces.
- Autonomous and mobile transport options could enable new delivery models like pop-up gyms, bus-based recreation offerings, and flexible sponsorship or service structures for elite sport.

What the future could look like: Mobility in New Zealand in 2035

Scenario	Outlook 2035	Key impacts on sector	Risks and opportunities
Green rush	Rapid, inclusive mobility transformation	Universal access, surging participation	Requires strategic partnerships and facility redesign
Restrained paths	Highly regulated transport, constrained travel	Shift to ultra-local and digital formats	Barriers for travel-dependent activities, equity focus
Shattered roads	Fragmented mobility from crisis/shocks	Large drop-in events, rise in informal play	Necessitates local resilience and digital solutions
Next horizon	Radical tech, seamless digital mobility	Flexible, hyper-personalised access	Privacy, regulation and digital equity challenges

Green rush: Streets alive in the age of decarbonisation (continued growth)

Overview

By 2035, New Zealand experiences rapid progress in low-emission mobility. Electric vehicles, active transport, bicycle highways and seamless MaaS platforms become widespread, supporting universally accessible and decarbonised public transport. Urban shifts toward 15-minute city living make walking and cycling daily norms, expanding accessibility to sporting facilities and recreation spaces.

Key signals

- National roll-out of EV and cycling infrastructure
- Universal access to decarbonised public transport
- High rates of walking/cycling, especially among families
- Increasing diversity in participants due to improved transport equity

Action triggers

- Play, active recreation and sport organisations partner with urban planners and transport providers
- Facility planning shifts to compact, multi-use spaces accessible by active transport
- Clubs adapt membership models to match new participation patterns

How the scenario is experienced by the play, active recreation and sport sector

- Outdoor and youth sports participation surges as families rely less on cars
- Clubs and facilities benefit from increased inclusion, especially among low-income communities
- Planning focuses on equity of access for both rural and urban populations

Questions for play, active recreation and sport

- How can clubs, facilities and events take advantage of increased accessibility provided by low-emission, universally accessible transport and 15-minute city designs?
- In what ways will better transport options for lower income and diverse families reshape participation rates and club membership demographics?
- What new partnerships could be forged between sport and recreation organisations and urban planners or transport providers to maximise mutual benefits?
- How might club and facility planning change, given a decline in car dependence and the rise of walking and cycling?
- What measures will ensure equity in access for rural versus urban communities?

Restrained paths: Hubs and home turf in a constrained mobility world (discipline)

Overview

Mobility in 2035 is shaped by stringent climate policies, high fuel prices, and major investments in public and active transport. Mass transport becomes affordable (with initiatives such as climate tickets) but car use is restricted, leading sport and recreation organisations to cluster activities in accessible hubs and shift toward hyper-local and virtual participation.

Key signals

- Implementation of strict climate and emission regulations
- Rising costs and reduced availability of private vehicle travel
- Mass transport options designed to support sport event scheduling

Action triggers

- Clubs time and locate activities based on public transport schedules
- Traditional regional competitions are replaced by virtual or hyper-local formats
- Providers pivot to new models for equity as travel is increasingly regulated

How the scenario is experienced by the play, active recreation and sport sector

- Focus shifts to home-based fitness, digital community sport and neighbourhood leagues
- Some traditional sport formats struggle or become unsustainable
- Equity concerns grow as barriers rise for travel-dependent participation

Questions for play, active recreation and sport

- How will restricted car use and increased reliance on public or active transport reshape event logistics, competition structures and club activity?
- What is the right balance between highly local sport, virtual delivery and traditional regional/national models?
- How can sport organisations adapt to align schedules and locations with public transport availability?
- Which existing sports or participation models may become unsustainable, and what alternatives could arise?
- How can clubs and providers continue to address equity as transport becomes more regulated and costly?

Shattered roads: Patchwork play in an era of breakdown (collapse)

Overview

Social, economic or environmental shocks in the late 2020s to 2030s disrupt mobility infrastructure, fragmenting regional networks. Participation in sport and recreation drops sharply as long-distance travel becomes unreliable and expensive. Communities must improvise, shifting toward local, low-cost, peer-organised play.

Key signals

- Major breakdowns in mobility infrastructure
- High travel costs and unreliable regional connections
- Decline in large tournaments; rise in informal neighbourhood sports

Action triggers

- Clubs and sector organisations invest in local resilience and digital solutions
- Support for do-it-yourself and community-driven sport increases
- Focus intensifies on equitable provision amid resource gaps

How the scenario is experienced by the play, active recreation and sport sector

- Well-resourced clubs adapt with local facilities and digital events
- Many organisations close, especially those unable to improvise
- Inequality grows, but informal peer-oriented sport becomes dominant

Questions for play, active recreation and sport

- How do sport and recreation organisations build resilience to sudden, severe disruptions in mobility infrastructure and supply chains?
- What does equitable provision of informal, local, peer-organised sport look like amid infrastructure breakdown?
- How can community-driven, improvised activity be supported when formal structures are under stress?
- What digital or low-cost alternatives could help keep participation alive when travel is severely limited?
- How might inequalities between resource-rich and resource-poor clubs be managed or mitigated?

Next horizon: Play, active recreation and sport unbound by fluid digital movement (transformation)

Overview

By 2035, radical advances in mobility technology – autonomous vehicles, flying taxis, modular cabins and MaaS platforms – revolutionise movement. Vehicle ownership declines, and embedded digital infrastructure blurs the boundaries between transport, leisure and sport.

Key signals

- Large-scale adoption of autonomous and app-based transport
- Emergence of floating/flexible recreation hubs and modular mobility platforms
- Growth in VR/AR-enabled and mobile sport and recreation experiences

Action triggers

- Sport and recreation organisations pilot mobile, pop-up and digital event delivery
- Partnerships established with transport and tech providers
- Sector plans for privacy, cybersecurity and digital equity

How the scenario is experienced by the play, active recreation and sport sector

- Flexible, hyper-personalised access to play and sport events
- Increased inclusion for remote and underserved communities
- Participation becomes spontaneous and complex, supported by smart infrastructure and digital engagement

Questions for play, active recreation and sport

- How could new tech – autonomous vehicles, MaaS, modular transport, floating/flexible facilities – enable radically new models of sport and recreation participation and event delivery?
- What are the opportunities and risks in blurring boundaries between sport, leisure and mobility experiences?
- How can underserved or remote communities be newly included using next-generation mobility offerings?
- What regulatory and equity considerations must be addressed as digital, data-driven and private sector-led mobility platforms proliferate?
- How should privacy and cybersecurity be managed for athletes, organisations and events in a digitised mobility context?

Actionable recommendations

- Forge strategic partnerships with urban planners, transport agencies and tech providers to align facility planning, event logistics and resource investments with future mobility scenarios.
- Pilot innovative approaches to local access, such as mobile sport hubs, subsidised active transport initiatives and digital event delivery that reach diverse and remote communities.
- Develop ongoing horizon scanning and scenario planning capacity to test assumptions and adapt to emerging transport, technology or social shocks.
- Proactively address equity by prioritising rural, disabled, youth and Māori-led models in mobility and facility development, ensuring fair access amid change.
- Integrate cybersecurity, privacy and data management strategies into organisational planning as transport and recreation operations become increasingly digitised.

Must-do actions for 2026–2028

- Establish cross-sector working groups or pilot programmes focused on inclusive, low-emission transport access for play, active recreation and sport, especially in underserved areas.
- Leverage major public transport upgrades, like the Auckland City Rail Link, to pilot integrated active transport access to play, active recreation and sport facilities, such as secure bike hubs, event linked train scheduling and local wayfinding partnerships.
- Initiate club and facility audits to identify and address barriers created by current transport modes and prepare for rapid change.
- Trial technology-driven solutions (MaaS integration, pop-up venues, remote participation tools) to expand reach and future-proof delivery models.
- Advocate for policy and infrastructure investment in multi-modal, active and public transport systems that explicitly serve sport and recreation needs.
- Co-design equity-focused facility and access plans in partnership with Māori, disabled people, youth leaders and local communities.

Sector specific

Sector Group	Challenges	Innovations/responses
Clubs	• Rising operational costs • Volunteer shortages and new governance needs • Need for climate resilience planning	• Shared services and alternative funding streams • Leadership and digital training • Partnerships with schools and local sponsors • Facility upgrades for resilience
Schools	• Increased demand for accessible sport and play • Facility pressures and integration needs	• Subsidised active commuting and facility sharing • Virtual sport and digital engagement platforms
Facilities	• Need for multi-use, flexible spaces • Pressure to upgrade for energy and connectivity • Greater inclusion for diverse users	• Modular and pop-up facility models • EV charging and MaaS integration • Accessibility upgrades and inclusion strategies
Event organisers	• Changed logistics due to mobility innovation • Need for resilient and flexible formats • Cybersecurity and privacy risks	• Aligning events with mass transport and active mobility • Digital and pop-up event delivery • Cybersecurity protocols
Local/regional government	• Investment pressure for active transport and new infrastructure • Facility funding and access balancing • Inclusive planning requirements	• Strategic urban and transport planning (15-minute cities, climate tickets) • Partnership models with iwi, youth and diverse groups

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