

19. Application to the Capital Endowment Fund - Mainland Rail Event Express Train

Reference Te Tohutoro: 25/2174211

Responsible Officer(s) Te Pou Matua: Jane Cameron (Team Leader, Strategic Transport)

Accountable ELT Member Pouwhakarae: John Higgins, General Manager Strategy, Planning & Regulatory Services

Confidentiality

Section under the Act:	The public conduct of the part of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under section 7.
Sub-clause and Reason:	s7(2)(b)(ii) - The withholding of the information is necessary to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information. s7(2)(i) - The withholding of the information is necessary to enable the local authority to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations).
Public Interest Consideration:	This report contains commercially sensitive information provided in confidence by Mainland Rail about their proposed express event service train and their funding request to Council to fund Phase 1 of their rail platform in the Central City.
Potential Release Review Date and Conditions:	24 April 2026 Following the launch date of the first event train service on 24 April 2026.

1. Purpose and Origin of the Report Te Pūtake Pūrongo

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Council to consider an application of \$51,053 to its Capital Endowment Fund (CEF) from Mainland Rail for Phase 1 of its Event Express Train project.
- 1.2 This report follows a presentation from Mainland Rail at a Council Information Session on Tuesday 27 January 2026, where Mainland Rail updated the Council with their new two-phase approach to the rail platform in Pilgrim Place.

2. Officer Recommendations Ngā Tūtohu

That the Finance and Performance Committee:

1. Receives the information in the application to the Application to the Endowment Fund – Mainland Rail.
2. Notes that the decision in this report is assessed as low significance based on the Christchurch City Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

3. Makes a grant of \$51,053 from the Capital Endowment Fund to Mainland Rail to support the acquisition of the necessary equipment and upgrades to launch Phase 1 of the Central City rail platform, conditional on the applicant demonstrating they have the financial resources and a robust project plan prior to the grant drawdown.
4. Notes that the Council may be asked to consider further financial support to implement Phase 2 – a permanent, purpose-built platform.
5. Agrees to publicly release this report after the Council has considered whether to financially support Mainland Rail to implement Phase 1 of the project and following the conclusion of any commercial negotiations relating to this decision.

3. Executive Summary Te Whakarāpopoto Matua

- 3.1 On Tuesday 27 January, Mainland Rail presented an update on their proposed express event train to Christchurch Central City to the Council. Mainland Rail have revised their approach and are now proposing the construction of a rail platform at 9 Pilgrim Place in two phases.
- 3.2 Mainland Rail is requesting \$51,053 from Council for Phase 1 of the project, which involves purchasing a temporary ramp to use for disembarkation. Mainland Rail intend to build the full platform in Phase 2 of the project, following further work on the business case and costs.
- 3.3 This report provides information and options for the Council to consider in coming to a decision whether to fund Phase 1 of the project, and options for funding and financing the requested amount from Mainland Rail.
- 3.4 The preferred option:
 - Supports an opportunity to test the viability of the service encouraging attendees from Rolleston and Rangiora using the rail services instead of private vehicles.
 - Ensures that evidence and feedback gathered during the trial phase will contribute to the evaluation and future decision making regarding any potential investment from the Council for Phase 2 of the project.
- 3.5 Considerations for the Council to weigh up in coming to a decision include:
 - The level of information provided by Mainland Rail to support their proposal.
 - Mainland Rail's progress in securing the necessary approvals from KiwiRail to enable the launch of the service by 24 April 2026.
 - The risk involved with funding an initial proof of concept model and options for reducing Council's liability if funding is provided.
 - The financial impact on Christchurch City ratepayers.

4. Background/Context Te Horopaki

- 4.1 Mainland Rail Limited (Mainland Rail) is a Christchurch-based rail company. Mainland Rail has been preparing to launch an event express train into Christchurch Central City in time for the opening weekend of One NZ Stadium – Te Kaha (the Stadium) on 24 April 2026.
- 4.2 The company are seeking Council funding for a central city platform which is a current infrastructure gap. A preferred location for the platform has been identified at 9 Pilgrim Place.

- The site is owned by C3 Church and Mainland Rail have secured an access arrangement with the church.
- 4.3 The Council received a presentation from staff on 2 December 2025 on a proposal from Mainland Rail for the Council to consider funding [REDACTED] for the construction of a central city platform for their proposed event rail service.
- 4.4 Councillors provided feedback on additional information that would be required for a decision to be made on the proposal. This included:
- Additional business case information demonstrating the viability of the proposal.
 - A fully costed proposal and timeline (including a pathway for any regulatory approvals required ahead of launching).
 - Advice on whether a lower cost platform infrastructure option is feasible for trial purposes.
- 4.5 Mainland Rail representatives provided further details about their proposal at an Information Session to the Council on 27 January in response to this feedback. A revised proposal, notably a two-phased approach incorporating a proof-of-concept stage (see details below) was introduced.
- 4.6 Mainland Rail also noted their openness to a 'buy-back' arrangement with the Council. Councillors raised some concerns with this approach with regard to liability risk associated with the Council owning portable rail platform infrastructure.

Mainland Rail's Revised Two-Phase Approach

- 4.7 Following this Information Session, Mainland Rail have revised their proposal and are now proposing the construction of a rail platform in two phases:
- **Phase 1 (proof of concept):** the first phase will involve the use of a temporary ramp for disembarkation at Pilgrim Place. Phase 1 is intended to be a pilot that will allow Mainland Rail to understand the viability of the service using a lower cost option than a permanent platform. Mainland Rail have requested \$51,053 from the Council to purchase the ramp and portable lighting, and to expand the access ways. At the end of Phase 1, Mainland Rail have offered to buy back the assets from Council for an agreed price.
 - **Phase 2 (full platform):** the second phase will involve the design, planning and construction of the permanent platform. During Phase 2, Mainland Rail will fully cost the platform and would like the Council to consider working with them to deliver the project.
- 4.8 Mainland Rail have advised that the Phase 1 will start from 210 customers on the first return trip from Rolleston, moving up to 1,784 customers delivered to the ramp location over 3 return trips each from Rolleston and Rangiora as the service gains popularity. Mainland Rail will continually introduce more rolling stock assets into service – Mainland Rail ultimately see the event express train being able to service nearly 20% of the stadium's capacity (approximately 5,700 customers) for each event at Phase 2.
- 4.9 Based on Mainland Rail's modelling of anticipated revenue and costs, an adult return ticket is estimated to cost [REDACTED], and a family package to cost [REDACTED] (2 adults and 2 children). This ticket price is not subsidised because it is a private rail operation.
- 4.10 9 Pilgrim Place is owned by C3 Church. Mainland Rail have been in discussions with C3 Church who have expressed support for this project. C3 Church has given Mainland Rail permission to build a boundary gate in their fence, which will give access to the rail corridor. C3 Church has also given permission for a footpath to be create across their land to connect to this gate. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- 4.11 Mainland Rail has supplied Council with an image of the proposed ramp design and layout of where the gate and pathway will be located at Pilgrim Place (Attachment 1).

Detailed cost breakdown

- 4.12 Mainland Rail have requested funding of \$51,053 from Council to progress Phase 1:

Item	Cost
x1 Temporary ramp	
x1 Lighting tower	
Cones	
Groundworks (pathway and gate)	
Total	\$51,053

- 4.13 The full quotes for the equipment to be purchased for Phase 1 can be found in Attachment 2.
- 4.14 This quote is lower than the initial quote provided by Mainland Rail at the Council Information Session on 27 January 2026. Most notably, they are now proposing the use of only one temporary ramp (instead of two) which has allowed for the budget to be revised downwards.
- 4.15 Mainland Rail will be paying for the other operating costs associated with the events – including security at Pilgrim Place during events, staff to help passengers board and disembark from the temporary platforms, and advertising and marketing. Mainland Rail’s coach and touring business, Leisure Tours Ltd, will deliver, clear away and store the equipment for each event service.

Strategic Considerations

- 4.16 Having good event transport options for the stadium’s attendees will be critical to its successful operation. However, as the Council is not currently an owner of rail infrastructure, the precedent setting nature of Mainland Rail’s proposal requires careful consideration of the potential costs and benefits of agreeing to fund Phase 1 of the project, including:
- The level of information provided by Mainland Rail to support their proposal.
 - Mainland Rail’s progress in securing the necessary approvals from KiwiRail to enable the launch of the service by 24 April 2026.
 - The risk involved with funding an initial proof of concept model and options for reducing Council’s liability if funding is provided.
 - The financial impact on Christchurch City ratepayers.

Assessment of Mainland Rail’s Revised Two-Phase Approach

- 4.17 Staff are supportive of the revised two-phase approach. The use of the rail network may play a valuable part in the mix of event transport options, especially as Canterbury Regional Council’s (ECan) chartered event shuttles will not be servicing Rangiora or Rolleston.
- 4.18 The requested \$51,053 represents a significantly smaller amount than the [REDACTED] originally requested. Given the potential full costs for a permanent platform, staff are of the view that temporary options that are potentially lower cost should be trialled in the first instance.
- 4.19 A trial service will reduce the risk of investing significant funding upfront, whilst still being able to collect data on the viability of a permanent service. Splitting the construction in two phases will also enable Mainland Rail more time to develop a more robust business case with refined costings and community feedback.
- 4.20 While the Council does not operate rail infrastructure and assets, the Council’s main concern is ensuring that the Council is not responsible for any liability and risks associated with the use

of the temporary ramps, e.g. ACC and health and safety. Providing the funding as a grant means that the asset is owned by Mainland Rail, removing Council from any liability.

- 4.21 As discussed in the Options section below, our key priority is for Mainland Rail to own and operate the assets throughout all of Phase 1. Staff note that Mainland Rail already have insurance cover in place for public liability of up to [REDACTED]. Therefore, staff's recommendation is for the Council to agree to a funding option that allows Council to remain separate from the trial and the use of the temporary ramps.

Pathway to Launch Date

- 4.22 Mainland Rail have advised that they are on-track to secure the requisite regulatory approvals from KiwiRail ahead of the launch date. They will be working closely with the KiwiRail Network Access Authority throughout the risk assessment and safety sign-off process.
- 4.23 Mainland Rail has provided the Council with the following timeline to launch:

Milestone	Date
Ground assets and ground works quote	Completed
Discussions with Kiwi Rail and Steam Inc on the procedure, train path and access	Commenced
Risk management process and review	Commenced
Procurement of ground assets	March 2026
Risk management sign-off	March 2026
Trial service	March 2026
Delivery of ground assets	April 2026
Service introduction	April 2026

Integration with wider One NZ Stadium at Te Kaha Travel Planning

Council note - this modelling came from Christchurch City Council, not ECan.

- 4.24 ECan have forecasted that public transport (PT) use to Te Kaha events to be anywhere between 2% and 19% of mode share. ECan have advised that the PT system would not be able to transport 19% of attendees without significant additional capacity being operated, but the existing network could support 2% without additional intervention.
- 4.25 ECan is developing a supplementary PT service for Te Kaha events. This will involve the provision of shuttle buses from a number of destinations within Christchurch city (destinations are currently under review).
- 4.26 Under the proposal, the shuttle buses will operate to and from Latimer Square. The service would operate on a pre-booking system to allow demand to match additional capacity, to avoid oversupply. Shuttle fares are still being established but will be set a higher price point to reflect that the shuttles provide a premium service.
- 4.27 It is important to note that ECan's bus service will only operate within Christchurch city and will not be offering services into the city to and from Rolleston and Rangiora. Therefore, there still exists a gap for attendees living in Selwyn and Waimakariri, which this event train would be able to address. [REDACTED]

Alignment with wider public transport network strategic directions

- 4.28 Mainland Rail has a long-term goal of scaling up to daily commuter services, and they view the event express train as a way of trialling commuter services before making this expansion.

- 4.29 At this stage, is not clear how the event train proposal would complement any future passenger rail services. The Greater Christchurch Spatial Plan and Mass Rapid Transit Business Case opted against using the railway lines, in favour of a street-running system that would better service the Priority Growth Areas. However, it did not preclude some sort of lower-frequency passenger rail to complement MRT in the longer-term, potentially regional or inter-regional.
- 4.30 ECan have advised that a planned regional passenger rail investigation study planned has been deferred to the next LTP period and is not an immediate priority. The deferment of the passenger rail investigation study means that any special train services may not align with longer-term infrastructure and network requirements. If Phase 1 is successful, there would need to be consideration of how a potential permanent platform would function in the long-term, as well as the other rail services it could support.
- 4.31 The following related information session/workshops have taken place for the members of the meeting:

Date	Subject
17 June 2025	CCC PX Staff Information Session
8 August 2025	GCPC PX Information Session
2 December 2025	CCC PX Staff Information Session
27 January 2026	Mainland Rail Presentation at PX Staff Information Session

Options Considered Ngā Kōwhiringa Whaiwhakaaro

- 4.32 The following reasonably practicable options were considered and are assessed in this report:
- 4.33 **Option 1: Grant (preferred)** - Council provides a grant of \$51,053 to Mainland Rail to purchase the necessary assets and upgrades.
- 4.34 **Option 2: Decline the application** - Council declines the application and asks staff to provide ongoing active support to Phase 1 implementation.

Options Descriptions Ngā Kōwhiringa

- 4.35 **Preferred Option:** Provide a grant of \$51,053.

4.35.1 **Option description:** The Council provides a grant of \$51,053 to purchase the necessary assets and upgrades. Noting that the Council may be asked to consider further financial support for implementation of Phase 2 of the project.

4.35.2 **Option Advantages:**

- Supports an opportunity to test the viability of the service and could promote attendees from Rangiora and Rolleston using the rail service instead of private vehicles during events.
- Funding via a grant means ownership of the platform stays with Mainland Rail and allows the Council to be better-placed in divesting itself of any risk or liability associated with the use of the temporary platforms.
- Contemplates the opportunity to explore the project but does not set any firm expectation on Council funding going forward.

- Funding Phase 1 will provide a different transport option for people in Rolleston and Rangiora getting to the stadium. This would reduce the number of vehicles on the road and promote public transport to the stadium during events.

4.35.3 **Option Disadvantages:**

- Despite the reduced funding request, there is still a risk that the service is found to be unfeasible after the trial and the Council has already invested some funding in this project.
- The Council is providing a grant in a fiscally constrained environment.
- This proposal is not assessed alongside other competing demands on the Council's capital funding – it is not clear whether this is the highest priority use of Council funds.

4.36 **Option Two:** Decline the application.

4.36.1 **Option description:** Decline the application and ask staff to work with Mainland Rail to provide active support for the project.

4.36.2 **Option advantages**

- No direct impact on rates and ratepayers.

4.36.3 **Option disadvantages**

- Reduced transport options for events at the Stadium. Attendees coming in from the districts will have to rely on other forms of transport and are reliant on other providers operating to fill this gap. This could result in greater congestion if private vehicles remain the only viable option for those coming from the districts.

Analysis Criteria Ngā Paearu Wetekina

4.37 In assessing the provided options, staff have considered:

- **Council liability:** the Council's main priority is to ensure that it is not responsible for any accidents or incidents arising from the use of the temporary ramps, nor is the trial service associated with the Council. These considerations support the provision of a grant from the CEF where the Council would not have any responsibilities after funding is provided to Mainland Rail as they would own and operate the assets. A grant would also make it clear that the trial service is a Mainland Rail, and not Council, initiative.
- **Asset ownership:** given the bespoke nature of the temporary ramps, the Council would not have use for these assets if they remained in our ownership. This supports the use of a grant (Option 1), as Mainland Rail would be granted funding to purchase and own these assets.
- **Fiscal impact:** the funding requested is of a level where it would not have a significant fiscal impact on the Council.
- **Funding availability:** the funding can be met through the CEF.
- **Benefits of the revised proposal:** the proposed two-phase approach allows Mainland Rail and the Council to trial the service and understand the viability of the service, without investing significant capital upfront.
- **Timeframes:** Mainland Rail intend on launching the trial service on 24 April 2026. A decision is required to provide Mainland Rail with sufficient time to purchase assets and secure safety approvals in time for opening weekend.

5. Financial Implications Ngā Hiraunga Rauemi

Capex/Opex Ngā Utu Whakahaere

	Recommended Option	Option 2 – Decline
Cost to Implement	Grant \$51,053	None
Maintenance/Ongoing Costs	Potential for future funding for Phase 2	N/A
Funding Source	Capital Endowment Fund	N/A
Funding Availability	Immediate	N/A
Impact on Rates	None	None

- 5.1 After accounting for all current commitments to the CEF, the unallocated portion for 2025/26 is **\$1,757,344**. If the recommendations in this report are accepted, the remaining available balance for this financial year will be **\$1,706,291**.
- 5.2 A report will be presented to Council on 4 March 2026 recommending the allocation of \$75,000 to the Jetty Trust. If the current grant and grants proposed for 4 March are approved the remaining available balance for this financial year will be **\$1,631,291**.
- 5.3 Anticipated applications to the CEF include but are not limited to Halswell Tennis Charitable Trust, Dogwatch Sanctuary Trust and Te Tahi Youth Board. Staff are confident that the CEF will have the capacity to accommodate Councils decision making on these anticipated applications.

6. Considerations Ngā Whai Whakaaro

Risks and Mitigations Ngā Mōrearea me ngā Whakamātautau

- 6.1 **Council liabilities:** Council wants to ensure that it is not responsible or liable for the use of the temporary platforms, and to make it clear that the event train is Mainland Rail's, and not the Council's, initiative. To mitigate this risk, the staff recommendation providing a CEF grant.
- 6.2 **Viability of the service:** it is a possibility that the service is assessed to be unviable at the end of Phase 1. This risk cannot be completely mitigated, but the cost of the trial reduces the fiscal impact on the Council.
- 6.3 **Cost overruns:** while Mainland Rail are confident about Phase 1 costings, there may still be additional, unforeseen or unexpected costs. To mitigate this, the Council will only provide the funding for the items identified in their detailed cost breakdown (see section 4.11) – any other costs will need to be met by Mainland Rail. In addition, the recommended grant is conditional on the applicant demonstrating they have the financial resources and a robust project plan prior to the grant drawdown.

Legal Considerations Ngā Hiraunga ā-Ture

- 6.4 Statutory and/or delegated authority to undertake proposals in the report:
- 6.4.1 The allocation of the CEF lies with the Council or the Finance & Performance Committee of the Council.

Strategy and Policy Considerations Te Whai Kaupapa here

- 6.5 The required decision:

- 6.5.1 Aligns with the [Christchurch City Council's Strategic Framework](#) as it relates to the Council's priorities of achieving accessible and well-connected neighbourhoods and communities and creating a thriving and prosperous city.
- 6.5.2 Is assessed as low significance based on the Christchurch City Council's Significance and Engagement Policy. The level of significance was determined by the fact that the CEF is a fully consulted level of service in the 2024/34 Long term plan and the limited number of direct stakeholders with interests in the construction of the rail platform.
- 6.5.3 Is consistent with Council's Plans and Policies, notably the Central City Action Plan.
- 6.6 This report does not support the [Council's Long Term Plan \(2024 - 2034\)](#).

Community Impacts and Views Ngā Mariu ā-Hāpori

- 6.7 The decision in this report contains commercially sensitive information and is therefore confidential in nature and not subject to community views.
- 6.8 Staff note that this proposal has benefits that also directly benefit Greater Christchurch residents, notably residents in Selwyn and Waimakariri travelling to and from the stadium.

Impact on Mana Whenua Ngā Whai Take Mana Whenua

- 6.9 The decision does not involve a significant decision in relation to ancestral land, a body of water or other elements of intrinsic value, therefore this decision does not specifically impact Mana Whenua, their culture, and traditions. This is primarily because the decision involves the allocation of the Capital Endowment Fund and not a substantive project in its own right.

Climate Change Impact Considerations Ngā Whai Whakaaro mā te Āhuarangi

- 6.10 The decisions in this report are likely to:
- 6.10.1 Contribute positively to emissions reductions.
- 6.11 Encouraging the use of rail to events at the stadium will lead to reduced private vehicle usage.

7. Next Steps Ngā Mahinga ā-muri

- 7.1 Staff will inform Mainland Rail of the Council's decision.
- 7.2 If the Council approves of the funding request, staff will work with Mainland Rail to finalise the terms of the funding agreement, including any relevant terms and conditions.
- 7.3 If the Council decides not to progress the proposal and decline funding for Phase 1 of Mainland Rail's project, staff will continue working with Greater Christchurch Partners to collaborate on event transport options.

Attachments Ngā Tāpirihanga

No.	Title	Reference	Page
A	Attachment 1 - Proposed Ramp Design and Layout of Pilgrim Place - CONFIDENTIAL	26/248572	
B	Attachment 2 - Phase 1 Equipment Quotes - CONFIDENTIAL	26/313601	

In addition to the attached documents, the following background information is available:

Document Name - Location / File Link
N/A

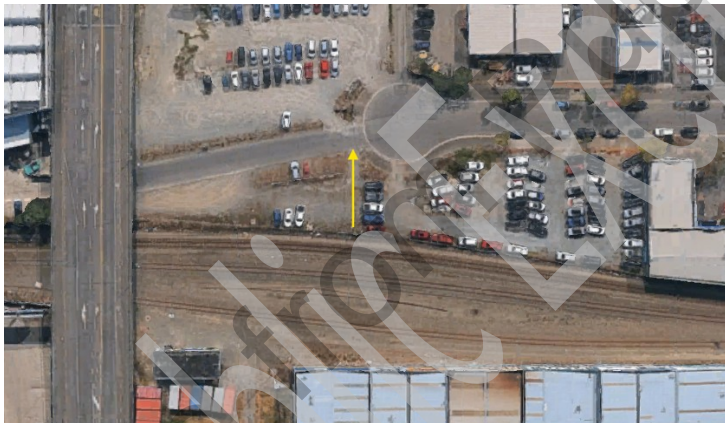
Signatories Ngā Kaiwaitohu

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Approved By	John Filsell - Head of Community Support and Partnerships John Higgins - General Manager Strategy, Planning & Regulatory Services

Attachment 1: Proposed Ramp Design and Layout of Pilgrim Place (Supplied by Mainland Rail)



Rectangle – Lockable gate for access to insert ramp
Arrow – constructed safe pathway being installed



Disembarkation point

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



Carriage ramp



Walk through to Stadium