

11 July 2025

Project Team
White Horse Hill Carpark Charging
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Department of Conservation



Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc. White Horse Hill Carpark Charging Feedback

Kia ora,

Federated Mountain Clubs was founded in 1931 and advocates for the backcountry and outdoor recreation on behalf of over 22,000 members in 96 clubs. FMC speaks, also for the many other New Zealanders who enjoy our backcountry.

FMC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Department of Conservation's proposal received 12 June 2025 to conduct a pilot of car parking charges at White Horse Hill carpark at Aoraki/Mount Cook.

Backcountry User Impact

We note that your pricing model is still under consideration, with a number of options to be considered.

This is the area of most interest to us, especially related to how this will impact those users who embark on multi-day backcountry trips from this location. The volume of these users is tiny compared to the volume of day users - with the latter being the cause of the current congestion issues.

We will therefore be very keen to review the proposed pricing model once it is available, to ensure that multi-day trip participants are not penalised because of an issue they don't noticeably contribute to.

As a general rule nationally where car parking charges are being introduced, it is important to also facilitate an exemption for volunteers involved in hut and track maintenance or conservation work - they donate their own time and expenditure in the pursuit of activities that support the Department, so should never have to pay carpark charges as part of their volunteer mahi.

DOC Considerations

There are a lot of components to this proposal, and we trust that you are taking all of these into account, balancing the costs and expected revenue, so that there is a net gain to the Department.

This includes:

- The pricing model complexity, leading to costs and time frame for design, development, testing and ongoing maintenance (people time and software)
- Clear and transparent costs and processes that identify whether this will be cost neutral to merely control volume of people and cars to this area, or whether net financial gain is planned and where this will be spent e.g. local infrastructure, tracks, huts and so on (which we would prefer), or elsewhere regionally or nationally which should be specifically clarified.
- Compliance monitoring will be a significant issue, requiring staff and funding. Given your intention to have an open payment approach, how will you manage the expected proportion of people who will park without paying, given some of these people will only be in the country for a short time ?
- Will a regular or occasional on-site parking warden be able to determine which vehicles have in fact paid ?
- The costs of implementing this in terms of systems, people, on site hardware, signage and site physical modifications will be significant, with ongoing maintenance required. Do these stack up against realistic revenue projections ?
- Given the information that you will be capturing, will there be an option for potential visitors to remotely check for the availability of car park spaces ?
- You note that vehicles may try to park for free on Hooker Valley Road as they currently do especially in summer peak season and you are looking into this. We suggest that you extend consideration of this issue to Mt Cook Village and beyond, where parking may become congested, vehicles may shuttle back & forth between WHH and the Village, such that WHH parking will merely be displaced to Hooker Valley Road, the Village, and beyond, causing yet more congestion and potential road traffic incidents. Such consideration may include collaboration with tourism operators.

We look forward to receiving the pilot design to be shared with stakeholders around September 2025 and providing constructive feedback.

Yours faithfully,



Megan Dimozantos
President
Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ