

# ALERT LEVEL 4/2: COVID-19 Guidance for Transport Operators

**Last updated: 2330 hrs, 7 September 2021**

1. This guidance is applicable to operators for the provision of all transport services, including public transport, aviation, maritime and other land-based passenger services. To the extent that it is relevant, it may also be used by organisations transporting passengers without hire or reward.
2. It is intended to be read in conjunction with:
  - the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 11) 2021 ; and
  - official information about COVID19 Alert Levels 2 & 4 contained on, or linked from, the [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) webpage and on the [Ministry of Transport website](https://www.transport.govt.nz).
3. This guidance subject to change as the response develops. This version contains the following key updates:
  - the move to Alert Level 2 for all of New Zealand (except Auckland) at 11.59pm on 7 September 2021
  - changes to the Alert Level 2 physical distancing settings
  - new mandatory testing requirement that come into effect at 11.59pm on 9 September.

## Executive summary

- Community transmission remains under investigation in Auckland. At 11.59pm on 7 September 2021, all of New Zealand (except Auckland) will move to Alert Level 2. Auckland remains at Alert Level 4.
- The Alert Level 2 and 4 areas are defined by the [Order](#).
- Only Alert Level 4 businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 4. Transport entities that are able to operate at Alert Level 4 include: passenger transport services (including micromobility), freight transport services, airports and ports, essential vehicle safety and recovery services (subject to specified conditions), the transport Crown Entities (subject to specified conditions), the transport State Owned Enterprises (subject to specified conditions).
- Businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 2 with restrictions.
- Travel remains severely restricted within the Alert Level 4 area.
- Travel is not restricted within the Alert Level 2 Area.
- Interregional travel between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland) and the Alert Level 2 area (rest of New Zealand) is also restricted.
- Transit between Alert Level 2 areas through Alert Level 4 is allowed in some circumstances under some conditions.
- *Persons traveling across the Alert Level boundary for the purpose of providing a business or service, will be subject to testing requirements (delayed commencement).* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].
- *Relevant business and services must have systems and processes, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure their workers are not required to travel into, out of, or through the alert level 4 area unless the worker has evidence of having had a COVID-19 test administered no more than 7 days before the worker's journey began.* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].
- At Alert Level 2 physical distancing is generally not required on public transport services, except passengers on certain services must be seated (i.e. no passengers may be standing in so far as is reasonably practicable). The 'no standing' rule for public transport services does not apply to air transport, small passenger service vehicles, or any public transport service where the service supplies

all passengers with a confirmation of their guaranteed seat on booking (including the Cook Strait ferry or interregional buses).

- Physical distancing requirements on public transport services remain the same at Alert Level 4.
- For public transport services that are travelling between Alert Levels (whether to or from Auckland), the Alert Level 4 physical distancing rules apply for the whole journey (and no passengers may be standing in so far as is reasonably practicable). The 'no standing' rule for public transport services does not apply to air transport, small passenger service vehicles, or any public transport service where the service supplies all passengers with a confirmation of their guaranteed seat on booking (including the Cook Strait ferry or interregional buses).
- At both Alert Levels (2 and 4), physical distancing needs to be observed at terminals, stations, and airports.
- Face coverings are required to be worn (with some exceptions) on public transport services and at arrival and departure points (for example bus stops, train stations and airports).
- Operators are required to support contact tracing. Most transport operators are required to display QR codes. Public transport services that require passengers to provide their name and a contact phone number (in order to use the service) do not need to display QR codes.
- Operators should continue to clean vehicles, vessels, aircraft and facilities (e.g terminals) in line with Ministry of Health guidance.

#### *Advice for traveling safely under either Alert Level 4*

#### 4. We all need to remain vigilant in the battle against COVID-19. We recommend travellers:

- Note that travel restrictions are in place, please check <https://covid19.govt.nz/> before travelling.
- Be kind and patient with each other and transport staff, especially your driver or crew.
- Observe physical distancing measures on board public transport services, at terminals, at stations, and at airports.
- Wear a face covering while on public transport, and while waiting for a service
- Keep a record of where they go and their interactions on the NZ COVID Tracer App; including scanning QR codes (where available), or manually recording travel information in the NZ COVID Tracer App (where QR codes are not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
- Practice good hygiene and follow Ministry of Health advice. This includes washing and drying their hands thoroughly with soap and water (or hand sanitiser if soap and water not available), coughing and sneezing into their elbow, and not touching their face.
- Plan ahead, and allow extra time to ensure their journey is as comfortable as possible.
- Stay home if they're unwell, or may have COVID-19. They should also not travel if they: have been requested to self-isolate/quarantine, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results.

#### 5. We also recommend operators:

- encourage their passengers and users to follow the safe travel tips (list above) by publicly displaying COVID-19 educational posters on site, and through social media and public announcements (e.g. in terminals and on-board)
- provide information/direct people to information on Alert Level restrictions on their websites, including wherever possible at the time of booking.

*Advice for traveling safely under either Alert Level 2*

6. We all need to remain vigilant in the battle against COVID-19. We recommend travellers:
  - Note that travel to, from, or through Auckland is restricted, please check <https://covid19.govt.nz/> before travelling to, from, or through Auckland.
  - Be kind and patient with each other and transport staff, especially your driver or crew.
  - Observe physical distancing measures at terminals, at stations, and at airports.
  - Remain seated when travelling on public transport services.
  - Observe Alert Level 4 physical distancing measures on public transport services when travelling to, from, or through Auckland.
  - Wear a face covering while on public transport, and while waiting for a service
  - Keep a record of where they go and their interactions on the NZ COVID Tracer App; including scanning QR codes (where available), or manually recording travel information in the NZ COVID Tracer App (where QR codes are not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
  - Practice good hygiene and follow Ministry of Health advice. This includes washing and drying their hands thoroughly with soap and water (or hand sanitiser if soap and water not available), coughing and sneezing into their elbow, and not touching their face.
  - Plan ahead, and allow extra time to ensure their journey is as comfortable as possible.
  - Stay home if they're unwell, or may have COVID-19. They should also not travel if they: have been requested to self-isolate/quarantine, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results.
7. We recommend operators:
  - encourage their passengers and users to follow the safe travel tips (list above) by publicly displaying COVID-19 educational posters on site, and through social media and public announcements (e.g. in terminals and on-board)
  - provide information/direct people to information on Alert Level restrictions on their websites, including wherever possible at the time of booking.
8. If you require further information or advice, please email the Ministry of Transport at: [essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz](mailto:essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz). We will do our best to address your questions as soon as we can.

### **About this guidance**

9. This guidance outlines key information for transport service operators under the current alert level settings. Specifically, the following matters are covered:

- Section 1:** Workplace health and safety
- Section 2:** Alert Level 4 businesses
- Section 3:** Alert Level 3 businesses
- Section 4:** Travel restrictions
- Section 5:** Testing requirements
- Section 6:** Physical distancing
- Section 7:** Face coverings
- Section 8:** Supporting contact tracing efforts
- Section 9:** Cleaning practices

#### **Section 1: Workplace health and safety**

10. When considering workplace health and safety arrangements, transport operators should consider:

- any advice or guidance issued by Worksafe <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/>
- advice or guidance issue by the Ministry of Health <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> (where this may be relevant to their health and safety arrangements).

#### **Section 2: Alert Level 4 businesses**

11. Only designated Alert Level 4 businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 4.
12. Transport entities that are able to operate at Alert Level 4 include: passenger transport services (including micromobility), freight transport services, airports and ports, essential vehicle safety and recovery services (subject to specified conditions), the transport Crown Entities (subject to specified conditions), the transport State Owned Enterprises (subject to specified conditions).
13. For the full list of Alert Level 4 businesses and services (including the conditions) see [Schedule 2](#). Also please note the entities specified in [clause 50](#) are fully exempt from the Order.

#### **Section 3: Alert Level 2 businesses**

14. Generally all businesses can operate at Alert Level 2. However, there are restrictions on how businesses can operate. See the [Unite Against Covid Website](#) for more information.
15. Please note physical distancing restrictions of 1 metre do apply to stations, terminals, and airports; and the number of people that can be within the building is restricted on the basis of being able to maintain physical distancing (rather than an absolute number restriction).

## Section 4: Travel restrictions

### ***Travel within the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland)***

16. Travel within the Alert Level 4 area remains severely restricted. Travel is only permitted for the reasons [listed](#).
17. Transport operators should not carry passengers who are not travelling for a permitted reason.
18. Passengers are recommended to provide documentary evidence to support their reason for travel (where possible). Recommended documents, which the passenger should provide to support their reason for travel, can be found at Appendix A.

### ***Travel within the Alert Level 2 Area (rest of the country)***

19. Travel within the Alert Level 2 Area (rest of the country) is not restricted. However, travel to, from, or through Auckland is restricted (see below).

### ***Interregional travel between Alert Level 4 (Auckland) and Alert Level 2 (the rest of the country)***

20. Interregional travel between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland) and the Alert Level 2 Area (rest of the New Zealand) will be severely restricted. Anyone who travels across the Alert Level Boundary will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility to travel.
21. Everyone should work remotely if they can. Travel across an Alert Level Boundary will be very limited. Maintaining public health is paramount as we move down Alert Levels. Travel is only permitted for the reasons listed: **[MoT comment – we understand some of the links below will be updated]**.
  - Link: [Personal Travel](#);
  - Link: [Business Travel](#).
22. Businesses must have systems and processes in place to minimise travel across the boundary or between regions within an alert level area.
23. Transport operators should not carry passengers, between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland) and the Alert Level 2 Area (rest of New Zealand), who are not travelling for a permitted reason. Passengers are required to provide documentary evidence to support their reason for travel.
24. Examples of relevant evidence can be found at Appendix A and include but may include a document issued by MBIE. If you are uncertain about the situation with respect to permitted movements, please email [essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz](mailto:essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz)

### ***Transit across Alert Level 4 (Auckland)***

25. Transit between Alert Level 2 Areas across Alert Level 4 (e.g. to or from Northland via Auckland) is permitted for certain reasons under some conditions [see links under relevant titles]. **[MoT comment – we understand some of the links below will be updated]**.
  - [Airport Transfer](#)
  - [Personal travel through Alert Level 4 without stopping](#)

- [Travelling directly through an Alert Level 4 area](#)

26. In particular please note that for personal travel through Alert Level 4 without stopping, people can only travel if their reason to travel is permitted under the Public Health Response Order. The traveller will also require evidence that they are permitted to cross the Alert Level 2/4 boundary. For more information please see the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

### Section 5: Testing requirements – travel across boundary

27. *Persons traveling across the Alert Level boundary for the purpose of providing a business or service, will be subject to testing requirements (delayed commencement).* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].

28. *Relevant business and services must have systems and processes, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure their workers are not required to travel into, out of, or through the alert level 4 area unless the worker has evidence of having had a COVID-19 test administered no more than 7 days before the worker's journey began.* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].

### Section 6: Physical distancing

#### Public transport services at Alert Level 4

29. In the table below, please find the Alert Level 4 physical distancing restrictions for public transport services

Service type	Physical distancing requirement
Air passenger services	Maintain physical distancing to the extent practicable - <i>please refer to previous guidance which advises to leave the middle seat, or the aisle seat, vacant (depending on the seating configuration of the aircraft).</i>
Small passenger services	Maintain physical distancing to the extent practicable - <i>in accordance with previous guidance the passenger(s) should be seated as far from the driver as practicable, and the front passenger seat should be unoccupied; passengers can travel together in the back seats if they are part of the same bubble.</i>
Other public transport services (buses, trains, and ferries etc)	1 metre to the extent practical (taking into account the nature of the service) – <i>for trains and buses, please see Appendix B with regards to further guidance.</i>

30. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also issue public messaging that discourages people who are unwell from using their services.

#### Public transport services at Alert Level 2

31. At Alert Level 2 public transport services physical distancing is generally not required, except passengers on some services must be seated.

32. The requirement to be seated does not apply to services provided by means of air transport, a small passenger service vehicle, and any public transport service where the service supplies all passengers with a confirmation of their guaranteed seat on booking

(including the Cook Strait Ferry or Interregional buses).

33. Further information on this will be provided by Waka Kotahi (i.e. for buses and trains etc).
34. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also issue public messaging that discourages people who are unwell from using their services.

#### Public transport services travelling between Alert Level 2 and Alert Level 4

35. Public transport services that are travelling to, from, or through Auckland are required to maintain Alert Level 4 physical distancing measures (for the entire journey). See the Alert Level 4 physical distancing requirements above (i.e. as far as practicable for air passenger services and small passenger vehicles; and 1 metre to the extent practicable for other services).

#### Airports, bus stations, train stations, and ferry terminals

36. At both Alert Levels 2 and 4, 1 metre distance between people and passengers at the airport, station, or terminal is required (unless they are travelling together (*noting at Alert Level 4 persons can only travel together within their 'household bubble'*)).

### **Section 7: Face coverings at Alert Levels 2 and 4**

#### *Who needs to wear a face covering?*

37. Face coverings must be worn on all public transport services and any public transport arrival or departure points, this includes train stations, bus stations and airports.
38. However, there are some exemptions, these include:
  - persons on Cook Strait ferry services
  - the following specific services:
    - school buses (meaning dedicated school services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
    - a ship that has no enclosed space for passengers
    - charter services and tours.

#### *What kind of face covering can be used?*

39. Any face covering that adequately covers the mouth and nostrils can be used, these include: single use disposable masks, washable reusable masks (whether purchased or homemade), or other types of face coverings (e.g. a scarf wrapped around the face).

#### *Is anybody exempt from wearing a mask?*

40. Yes. Transport operators should be aware that the following persons are not required to wear face coverings:
  - persons under the age of 12, and
  - persons who have a medical condition or disability that make it unsuitable to wear a face covering (*please note it might not always be clear why someone may need to be exempt from*

wearing a face covering); and

- drivers or staff, if:
  - they are in a space separated from passengers (e.g. pilots in a cockpit, or train drivers in a train cab), or
  - wearing a face covering could make it unsafe to operate the vehicle (e.g. wearing a face covering means drivers or staff are unable to properly communicate, or causes the eyeglasses of the driver to fog).

41. In addition, transport operators should note that the use of face coverings is not required in the following situations:

- if it is unsafe to wear a face covering (e.g. if the person's only face covering is wet, or wearing a face covering means a driver cannot safely operate the vehicle),
- if there is an emergency that requires the face covering to be removed (e.g. to perform CPR),
- if removal of the face covering is required to prove identity,
- if visibility of the mouth is required for communication (e.g. when communicating with someone who is deaf),
- if there is a need to remove the face covering to take medicine,
- if there is a need to remove the face covering to eat or drink (if eating or drinking is permitted by the conditions of carriage), (Please note: the Ministry of Health advises that the eating of food and drink should be discouraged on services at Alert levels 2 and 4).

42. Information from the Ministry of Health, regarding the use of face coverings in the community, is available [here](#).

*What about enforcement?*

43. The obligation to wear a face covering on public transport is the responsibility of the individual.

44. Operators, drivers and staff are not expected to assume the role of enforcement officer; but they still have their usual customer relations role to remind people about face coverings. The role is to educate and encourage passengers to do the right thing, but not be the enforcer. Staff are not expected to refuse boarding to people who do not have a face covering. This kind of issue should be dealt with as you would normally manage a difficult passenger situation.

45. Passengers and staff should not be encouraged to call Police if someone is not wearing a face covering. As per normal procedures, if the situation is dangerous or a passenger is displaying threatening behaviour, for example, Police should be called.

*Should operators be encouraging and educating passengers about wearing face coverings?*

46. Yes, the support of operators and staff in encouraging and educating passengers about the wearing of face coverings is appreciated. A range of collateral is provided with this guidance including posters which operators are asked to display across their fleets, terminals, stations and other facilities.

47. The government will continue to remind people to follow the instructions of the public transport workforce regarding face coverings.

48. These messages will be reinforced through a major All of Government public communications campaign, including COVID-19 TV advertising.

## **Section 8: Supporting contact tracing**

*What is contact tracing and why is it important?*

49. The purpose of contact tracing is to prevent potential onward transmission, raise awareness about the disease and its symptoms and support early detection of suspected cases.

50. It is important that everyone undertakes practicable actions to support a quick and robust contact tracing process. Contact tracing (coupled with testing and quarantine/isolation measures) is a critical pillar in supporting New Zealand's goal to eliminate COVID-19.

*Who undertakes contact tracing?*

51. Contact tracing is undertaken by Public Health Units (in the DHB where the confirmed or probable case was diagnosed), or by the Ministry of Health's National Close Contact Service.

*What should regional authorities and transport operators do to support contact tracing?*

52. Under Alert Levels 2 and 4, transport operators are required to support contact tracing.

53. Regional authorities, and transport operators, are required to display QR codes that are compatible with the NZ COVID Tracer App for their transport assets. Those QR codes need to be displayed in an easily accessible prominent place.

54. Public transport services are not required to obtain and display QR codes if they require all passengers to provide their name and a contact telephone number (in order to use the service); these may include services, such as:

- air passenger services,
- interregional bus services,
- interregional passenger train services.

55. In addition the following services do not need to obtain and display QR codes:

- school buses (meaning dedicated school services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
- car sharing services and carpooling services.

56. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also take steps to promote and enable users and passengers to keep records for contact tracing purposes. We recommend transport operators issue public messaging (e.g. through posters, announcements, social media) to encourage users and passengers to:

- use the NZ COVID Tracer App by scanning the QR code (where display of the QR code is available) or recording the trip manually in the NZ COVID Tracer App (if the QR code is not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
- use public electronic ticketing cards where these are available (e.g. AT HOP, Snapper, Metrocard or Bee Card) and make sure those cards are registered with the passenger's contact information.

*What can regional authorities and operators expect if there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on their transport service?*

57. If there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on a transport service, a health official will notify the regional authority (in the case of public transport) and/or operator and request your support with identifying the contacts of that person. The health official will be particularly interested in details you might have of any people who were in 'close contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry they are investigating.
58. For example, you may be asked to review CCTV footage, or online passenger registers (e.g. public transport electronic ticketing card registration details).
59. The health official may also ask you to provide any contact information you might have for people who were in 'casual contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry/aircraft they are investigating. This is so they can ask these 'casual contacts' to get tested if they have (or develop) symptoms of COVID-19.
60. If you do not have this information (but are not certain that there were no 'close contacts') the health official will discuss with you what action should be taken. For example, they may request that you undertake public messaging asking people that travelled on the service to contact the COVID-19 Healthline.
61. If you are certain that there were no 'close contacts' (e.g. CCTV footage shows no 'close contacts' were established), then you should advise the health official of this and ask if there is anything more that you should do.

*What is contact recording and who is required to do it?*

62. Mandatory record keeping at specified places has been introduced and is required from 11.59pm on Tuesday 7 September. People responsible for these places must now have systems and processes in place to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that each person aged 12 or over who enters the place or attends the gathering:
  - scans the QR Code for the place; or
  - provides a contact record that the person in control of the place collects.
63. This requirement does not extend to:
  - transport stations (including terminals)
  - passenger services (air, rail, road and sea);
  - public transport services provided by air or small passenger services.
64. For more information on record keeping, please see the [website of the Privacy Commissioner](#).

## **Section 9: Cleaning**

65. Transport operators should apply cleaning practices consistent with Ministry of Health guidance.
  - Ministry of Health general guidance on cleaning can be found [here](#)
  - Ministry of Health cleaning FAQs can be found [here](#)
66. Cleaning regimes should include:

- cleaning the vehicle/vessel/aircraft regularly with particular attention to high-touch surfaces (where possible, at the end of each shift/sailing/flight, but at least at the end of each day).
- as far as practicable, frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces throughout the day.

### **Section 10: Customer compliance**

67. Transport operators are not legally required to enforce passenger compliance with:

- the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 11) 2021, or
- Ministry of Health guidelines.

68. Transport operators, however, may choose to stop passengers boarding, where it is lawful to do so on health and safety grounds as per their standard operating procedures or as a condition of carriage for example. Transport operators should encourage potential passengers to check what the current restrictions are prior to making a booking or using their services.

69. Transport operators may also provide advice to passengers for travelling safely for example by displaying public information posters.

# Appendix A: Recommended Evidence for Travel

## **Evidence is required for travel across the Alert Level Boundary**

People may only cross the Alert Level Boundary if that travel is [legally permitted](#), or if they have a current travel exemption granted by the Director-General of Health. If people are travelling across the Alert Level Boundary, they are required to have evidence of that permitted reason.

### **Business Travel Across Alert Levels –**

Businesses with workers needing to cross the Alert Level boundary can apply for Business Travel Documents if they meet the criteria for permitted travel. Getting the official Business or Personal Travel Document will make the process of crossing a boundary much quicker and easier. The eligible business categories, types of travel permitted and link to start an application through Business Connect are available on the [business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz) website.

*Persons traveling across the Alert Level boundary for the purpose of providing a business or service, will be subject to testing requirements (delayed commencement).* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].

*Relevant business and services must have systems and processes, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure their workers are not required to travel into, out of, or through the alert level 4 area unless the worker has evidence of having had a COVID-19 test administered no more than 7 days before the worker's journey began.* [MoT comment: Further information will be provided about this change on 8 September].

For more information please see the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

### **Personal Travel Across Alert Levels –**

If you are travelling for permitted personal reasons across Alert Levels will also need to illustrate evidence for that travel.

## **Evidence is recommended for travel within Alert Level 4**

If you are leaving home for a permitted reason to travel within the Alert Level area, you do not need any other form of approval. It is recommended that you carry some evidence of your reason to leave your home, for example proof of address for both households if you are maintaining a shared childcare arrangement. You should be prepared to show evidence of your reason for travel. For examples of evidence please see the Unite Against COVID website:

[Permitted reasons for travel and recommended documentation - Level 4](#)

# Appendix B: further physical distancing guidance for bus and train operators

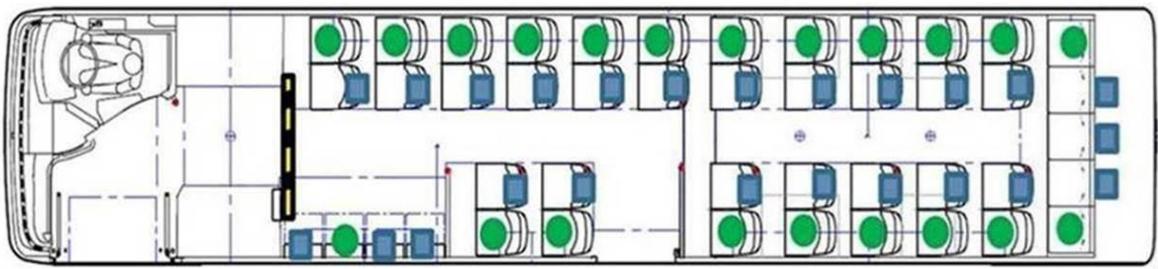
## Alert Level 4 requirements

Regional authorities and operators should put in place measures that promote and enable passengers to maintain 1m physical distancing. This could include:

- markings on the ground where people can stand at bus or train stops.
- seating configurations on vehicles that indicate appropriate seating distances.

However, it is understood that in some circumstances, fully adhering to the 1m physical distancing requirement may not be practical. In particular, we are aware that achieving a 1m physical distancing seating configuration may be problematic in some public transport vehicles.

To address this, the seating configuration below could be used (where people are seated in the green dots only, and the blue squares are vacant – additionally there should be no standing passengers).



## Alert Level 2 requirements

### At transport stations

Regional authorities and operators should put in place measures that promote and enable passengers to maintain 1m physical distancing. This could include markings on the ground where people can stand at bus or train stops.

### On board buses and trains

Regional authorities and operators should put in place measures that promote passengers to be seated, such as PA announcements or posters (noting at Alert Level 2 all passengers must be seated, but there are no distancing requirements between passengers). Further information on this will be provided by Waka Kotahi.