



Aerial view of White Horse Hill carpark. Source: Department of Conservation

Seeking feedback on paid parking pilot at White Horse Hill carpark - Aoraki/Mount Cook

Introduction

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is piloting paid car parking at the White Horse Hill (WHH) carpark in Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. We expect the pilot to run, beginning summer 2025/2026, for approximately nine months.

This car park provides access to several popular day and overnight walks such as Hooker Valley Track, Kea Point Track, Mueller and Hooker huts. The White Horse Hill Campground next to the carpark is DOC's most visited campground and provides around 102 campsites.

This is part of a pilot at three popular sites to help manage visitor numbers. By paying for parking, visitors can give back to the environment they are visiting, helping create a more sustainable model to help protect New Zealand's precious biodiversity. This approach is already used at popular national parks and tourism sites in other countries.

Paid parking hardware and potential effects

Introducing paid parking requires designing and installing specialist equipment to collect payments and monitor use. We have sought proposals from suppliers to design and install these. We expect to confirm a provider by August 2025.

The paid parking hardware will likely be a series of cameras that log vehicles number plates entering or exiting a specific area. This information is reconciled with parking payments made via on-site payment machines or a mobile phone application.

We are aware that running this pilot at WHH car park may result in more vehicles parking for free on Hooker Valley Road. DOC is investigating potential paid parking impacts and designing a pilot to discourage and manage this behaviour. Options include implementing existing bylaws to restrict and control where vehicles can park and temporary road safety improvements. The pilot design will be shared with stakeholders for their feedback around September 2025.

Pricing

We will set pricing based on market research, data analysis and a pricing strategy. We are developing our pricing strategy and expect to share with the local community for feedback in September 2025. It will consider what is a reasonable rate, when rates apply and who rates apply to, including:

- A free parking period for vehicles making drop offs/pick-ups.
- Parking exemptions for campground, Wyn Irwin lodge and Thar lodge users.
- Fee structure options including fixed length of stay rates, daily rates and multi-day rates.
- Options for charging based on vehicle category that includes buses and motorbikes.
- When the pricing should be in effect, including off peak pricing options and time of day options.
- How to accommodate local use.

Carpark capacity improvements

DOC is aware that the WHH car park is often at over-capacity with cars parking along Hooker Valley Road during peak periods. We acknowledge that running a paid parking pilot this coming summer won't immediately solve this issue. We want to use this pilot opportunity to investigate a range of options designed to improve the long-term car parking experience, such as:

- Travel demand management, including improved real-time visitor information and marketing.
- Maximising capacity at existing WHH carpark.
- Multiple locations for park and ride solutions.
- Operational improvements to restrict parking.

Implementation of the above options is dependent on available funding.

Timeline

Action	Date (2025)
Initial stakeholder engagement	June /July
Pilot design: including solutions to manage / mitigate parking along Hooker Valley Rd	July/August
Draft pricing strategy	July
Share pilot design and pricing strategy with stakeholders	September
Stakeholders provide feedback	September
Finalise paid car park pricing and advise stakeholders	November
Implementation of paid parking	December
Seek stakeholder feedback during paid parking pilot	Time to be confirmed

Tell us what you think before 11 July 2025

We are seeking feedback from stakeholders on our approach to the pilot at Aoraki/Mount Cook.

If you would like to provide any feedback, please contact the project team at paidcarparking@doc.govt.nz or call 0800 ASK DOC (0800 275 362).