

# Wellington City Council Accessibility Advisory Group

Submission for:

## Wellington Public Transport Spine Study



Prepared on: 30 September 2013

*In association with*



## 1. The Wellington Public Transport Spine Study

We believe that the Wellington Public Transport Spine Study is an opportunity to create a lasting commitment towards improving the accessibility and usability of this valuable amenity to the people of our city.

## 2. The Accessibility Advisory Group's Background

The Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) is one of the longest standing Council advisory groups (*previously called the Disability Reference Group*). It was established in 1996 to provide advice on issues that concern people with impairments.

Advisory groups provide advice to the Council on a broad range of issues from the perspective of a particular community. They provide preliminary feedback on Council planning, projects and policy development.

The role of the Accessibility Advisory Group is to raise awareness and understanding of disability and accessibility issues. It also gives the Council information, advice, and feedback on policy development and specific Council projects.

## 3. Accessible Public Transport

Providing reliable, accessible public transport options is vital for all of the community especially those who have a disability, who often rely on public transport as their only means to get to and from work, medical appointments and for essential shopping to name just a few. This group is more commonly referred to as being transport disadvantaged however in reality, disabled persons and the elderly face a multitude of barriers/obstacles when using public transport which is mainly a result of poor design both of the modes of transport or and the infrastructure. Eg. Bus stops that include obstacles that block the door ways of buses. Or signage that is not readable by Blind, vision impaired or those who English is their second language.

## 4. Our Preference moving forward

Our preferred option of the three given would be Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) this is because it seems like the easiest to get right in terms of accessibility provided the supporting infrastructure and fleet are designed and procured with accessibility in mind.

### **Accessibility means,**

*Environments, information and buildings that are accessible and usable by everyone in the community. This includes: the able bodied, people pushing strollers, the elderly and people with impairments or disabilities.*

## **5. Future considerations for our preferred option – BRT**

### **5.1 Accessible information**

Accessible information is key to maximising usage of any transport system by people with impairments. This includes:

- Timetables that are easy to read in printed, electronic (accessible versions) and audio versions
- Clear well lit signage at stops including information in braille
- Clear signage, using large print and high contrast colours, on the front of the buses advising the route number and destination
- Real time indicators of bus arrival times (in visual and audio form)
- On board visual displays and audio announcements of imminent arrival at stops

By providing information in an accessible manner it means that the transport system can be used by a wider number of people including those with impairments. Many people with impairments have fewer transport options as they may be unable to drive a vehicle resulting in a greater reliance on public transport. Any transport system must be able to be easily understood and get the person to the right place at the right time.

### **5.2 Affordability**

Affordability must be considered for all users of a transport system. Many people with impairments are on a restricted income and for them affordability may be a barrier to use of public transport.

### **5.3 The location of the interchanges where in the centre of the road**

The central in road location of BRT interchanges has the potential to create two barriers to access if not designed properly.

**a) Transfer time and distance at interchanges** could be challenging if the BRT system is located in the centre of the road, particularly if individual must cross the road in a short period of time to transfer. As a result access, practicality and attractiveness of the BRT to potential users could be reduced. For example a mother with children may find the practicalities of making a transfer between BRT vehicles, within the time available in the centre of the road too challenging (or too daunting) and therefore may choose not to attempt to use the BRT.

**b) The infrastructure must be accessible at the centre of the road, crossing the road and the footpath.** For example this means controlled pedestrian crossings, ramps and tactile cues. Tactile cues will be needed at transition points of the accessible route to enable safe usage by the blind and vision impaired community. There are two specific types of tactile cues commonly used:

- 'Directional' or 'Dash' cues are important in assisting a blind person to navigate in the correct direction where no other indication of change in travel direction is available (e.g. bus door stop location off the main footpath)
- 'Warning' or 'Dotted' cues are important to identify points of interest (signage) danger (road crossing).

#### **5.4 The Procurement of the fleet**

The introduction of new BRT vehicles to Wellington is an opportunity to build on the accessibility attributes that are already a part of Wellington's public transport network e.g. kneeling vehicles and accessible seating. Further improvements such as increased safety features and improving the visibility of bus numbers and signage could be added to increase the accessibility of public transport vehicles.

## **6. Recommendations for your consideration**

We feel that a commitment to accessibility must be made to ensure that whichever of the three options proceeds in Wellington remains a feasible transport solution for all people regardless of ability.

The Key Areas of this commitment would be directed at;

- 1) The Built Environment (*e.g. Stops and Interchanges*)
- 2) Signage (*both at stops and on the buses themselves*)
- 3) Affordability
- 4) Communication to the public of Information about the new system

*Individuals are not disabled. They have impairments.  
It's the environment we live in, which creates  
disability.*

## **7. Final Note**

Let's work together and prove that Wellington can be an Accessible city by developing practical and creative solutions that all Wellingtonians regardless of ability benefit from and can be proud of.