

Oral submission to Wellington City Council Long Term Plan

May 2021

Thank you for the opportunity for me (Cr Thomas Nash) to speak to Greater Wellington Regional Council's submission to your Long Term Plan.

As noted in our submission, GW shares Wellington City's commitment to action on climate change, with our Declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Together we need to take urgent action to significantly reduce carbon emissions over the next decade. We endorse your proposal to fully fund Te Atākura – First to Zero, to reduce emissions by the full amount planned by 2030. We also strongly support the other climate related elements in your draft plan, including on waste, biodiversity and resilience.

It's well understood that for Wellington, the most significant single action we can take to reduce emissions is providing all means and support to residents and visitors to shift to using public and active transport. Moving more people with fewer vehicles is at the heart of our Let's Get Wellington Moving partnership, and will be key both to opening up our streets for more people and to reducing emissions. Like you, we want to really energise this programme and see real progress soon.

As two different councils we each have different levers that we can pull to accelerate mode shift. As the road controlling authority WCC controls the powerful car parking lever. As the public transport authority, GWRC controls the public transport lever. If we can pull these levers in unison we can make major progress. Obviously we need help from central government to do this and we can work together to secure that too.

We can also work together to demonstrate how good a central city open to people can be. Think ahead to the Guns and Roses concert on 19 November. What if we worked together to organise a trial for pedestrianised streets with free public transport throughout the central city? We could work together on other similar trials and really show the advantages that open streets and accessible public transport will bring to businesses, residents and visitors alike.

Much has already been discussed about a dedicated Wellington Airport bus service. We seek your commitment to facilitating its provision for the greater benefit to Wellington City and regional residents.

We believe that a Metlink airport bus service on a dedicated priority route is an essential element in reducing traffic congestion between the station and the airport and of course reducing our carbon emissions.

This is backed up by the strong support received through submissions to the Regional Public Transport Plan; calls for an airport bus service were some of the loudest that we received.

The public is not alone on this – we received communications from Wellington International Airport Limited in 2019 and are currently engaged in very productive discussions with them.

Considering the regional context, a Metlink airport bus service will also help contribute to the ambitious targets identified in the Regional Land Transport Plan:

By 2030 we will have

- 40% fewer deaths and serious injuries

- 30% less carbon emissions; and
- 40% increase in the share of trips by active travel and public transport

All parties and many submitters to these plans believe that we must have a reliable, fast, direct service that is good value for money. For residents and visitors to the city there is huge potential to enhance flows of people to and from the city, and to greatly enhance the arrival and departure experience for all.

We are pleased to confirm that GW and Wellington Airport discussions are progressing well, and we are expecting to see a Metlink airport bus service in place by 1 July 2022, with the following to feature:

- Provided on electric buses
- It runs frequently
- Competitively priced
- Fully "joined up" with the Metlink network and visible on the Metlink real time information boards. This includes the ability to pay using Snapper.
- has limited stops on a similar route as the previous Airport Flyer (between the Airport and the Wellington Railway Station)
- Will be integrated into the Metlink integrated ticketing system, coming in 2023.

We are excited about the opportunities that will become available through integrated ticketing to provide seamless travel for users of public transport. Finally we will be getting a 21st century system that will improve access and connections, offer more options for concessions and overall better value for money.

While we progress this new integrated ticketing system, we are keen to trial discounted or free public transport for people who have less access to the Metlink network, including Community Services Card holders, people with disabilities and students.

Jumping back to the new airport bus service, top of mind for us is the need to both minimise costs and maximise the attraction of the service. With the airport bus being provided through Metlink, costs will be funded either by users or ratepayers; as with other parts of our public transport network. There is no capacity for extraneous costs to be absorbed through profit margins; they will need to be passed on.

So GW seeks your help in minimising the costs of a Metlink airport bus service. We appreciate all of Wellington City Council's work to date in support of this venture. We ask that you consider any and all methods at your disposal to support the negotiation process and minimise the cost overhead imposed on a new airport bus service.

In closing we would like to thank Wellington City Council for your commitment to climate action, expressed through Te Atākura, the Regional Land Transport Plan, and as a shareholder in Wellington International Airport Limited.

We endorse Option 3 (fully funding Te Atākura), and look forward to the conclusion of agreements underpinning the launch of a Metlink Airport Bus service in mid-2022.

We would be pleased to answer any questions.