

Submission from Wellington City Council on the Wellington City Bus Review

Submission to: **Greater Wellington Regional Council**

Plan: **Wellington City Bus Review**

From: **Wellington City Council**

Date: **16 March 2012**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Wellington City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Wellington City Bus Review.
- 1.2. Public transport is a critical element of the transport system. It must work effectively for the city to function, and the bus review offers the opportunity to make changes to achieve the Regional Land Transport targets for growth in public transport patronage and mode share.
- 1.3. The Council has specific roles in planning for the future of the city and providing transport infrastructure. The comments in this submission reflect these roles, and do not focus on the details of specific routes. While these details are critical to the success of any public transport system, the people best placed to provide feedback at this level are the users and potential users of the service, and the Council urges Greater Wellington to make the changes required to address public feedback.

2. Approach to the network plan

- 2.1. In principle, the Council supports the layered service approach, with the fundamental premise of a frequent all day core service which will allow people to rely on buses being available with no need to consult a timetable.
- 2.2. The increase in service frequency, service hours, and increase in the access to frequent all day services are the major benefits of the review, and in Council's view these are all necessary features of the Wellington bus network if the service is going to grow in a sustainable manner and meet city and regional targets.
- 2.3. The details of the individual bus routes will however be critical in the overall success of the network, and it is essential that Greater Wellington works through the issues raised by the public in the next phase of detailed planning. While Council acknowledges that reallocation of public transport resources will involve trade-offs, and some users will be disadvantaged to achieve a network that provides better access on core routes and more overall patronage for a given level of public subsidy, it is important that the trade-offs are made carefully taking into account community feedback.
- 2.4. Given the major benefits from a new network plan, it is disappointing that implementation is expected to take so long. Greater Wellington should investigate re-prioritising resources so that implementation can occur more quickly and the city can start to realise the benefits.

3. Making connections easier

- 3.1. The ability to transfer between buses operated by the same company without paying an additional fare is an absolute requirement for a layered network, but this should be seen as a minimum requirement or as a short term measure in the transition towards a fully integrated fare. Council supports a fare policy which charges for a trip, rather than one which is based on how many buses are boarded for the trip.
- 3.2. The role of the Johnsonville rail line in providing a core service makes the fare situation in the northern suburbs more complicated than the situation

in the rest of the city. Greater Wellington should consider delaying the implementation of the network in the northern suburbs until fare integration between bus and rail services has been achieved.

- 3.3. Connections also require infrastructure. Stops where connections occur should have appropriate facilities, including weather proofing, lighting, CCTV if appropriate, real time information, and should be audited for accessibility (including accessible information). Council will continue to work with GWRC to agree the placement (where required) and infrastructure required for stops. Council's expectation is the infrastructure investment required will be provided by GWRC.
- 3.4. The detailed timetable and the attitude of the drivers will also be major factors in how people experience connections. It is important that these factors are not neglected in the more detailed planning and implementation. Successful implementation of the proposed bus network plan will require up-front and ongoing investment in driver training.

4. CBD Peak Only Route

- 4.1. Council supports core all day services remaining on the Golden Mile. If any bus services need to be moved from the Golden Mile, the choice of peak-only services is logical. This would allow all the routes that run all day to remain on the Golden Mile with no change to the service at different times of the day, maintaining the ability to connect between buses and reinforcing the Golden Mile as the core bus corridor.
- 4.2. Even if the alternate peak-only CBD route is acceptable to bus users of peak-only services, it should only be used as last resort – i.e. it should be used only to the extent that bus numbers are demonstrated to remain a problem once other changes are made, and it should be used for the minimum number of services possible.
- 4.3. If the peak-only corridor is required, Council will work with GWRC to determine the best route and stop locations between Courtenay Place and the Railway Station, noting there are still a number of possible routes and bus stop locations that need to be evaluated.
- 4.4. Council would not support bus priority measures for a peak-only corridor, due to the impact on other traffic. Bus priority measures will continue to be focused on the core bus route on the Golden Mile.
- 4.5. Council notes that this proposal is for a short to medium term solution to congestion on the Golden Mile, as the longer term solution to these capacity issues will be agreed through the Wellington Public Transport Spine Study process.

5. Other Issues

- 5.1. The level of change proposed is significant. The implementation process needs to include significant resources for marketing and information to assist people to adjust to the changes.
- 5.2. In addition to the integration with ferry, rail, and cable car services, the detailed scheduling of bus routes needs to take into account the integration

of the school services with the rest of the network to enable students to make easy connections with other services.

- 5.3. Although out of scope for this review, the Council notes public concern about the affordability of public transport in Wellington, and the need for long term planning for the future of trolley buses, and looks forward to being involved in these reviews.