
REPORT 3
(1215/52/IM)

SUBMISSION ON THE REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

The report seeks approval of a submission on the proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2011-22 ('PT Plan').

2. Executive Summary

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has called for submissions on the PT Plan, which sets out how GWRC intends to give effect to the public transport components of the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS). The RLTS includes the following key outcomes that are influenced by public transport:

- increased peak period public transport mode share
- increased mode share for pedestrians and cyclists
- reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- reduced severe road congestions
- improved land use and transport integration.

Wellingtonians are high users of public transport relative to other cities in New Zealand, but patronage has not been growing in recent years, partly as a result of reliability issues and fare increases. Achieving the RLTS goals for public transport will require improvements in how public transport services are planned and delivered.

A draft submission has been prepared (attached), which is generally supportive of the PT Plan but identifies some issues that need to be addressed before the plan is adopted. These issues largely relate to making sure that the layered network based on high frequency, high capacity core services is integrated, easy to use, and is supported by operators working together. This includes ensuring that it is easy to transfer between services, and that it does not cost more to make a journey involving a transfer than to make the same journey on a single vehicle.

The draft submission proposes changes to the details of the layered network plan, the fare policy, the addition of more concrete goals relating to improving vehicle standards, and additional safety objectives.

Feedback on the draft submission has been sought from the Youth Council and members of the Accessibility Advisory Group. Preliminary feedback has been included in the draft submission, and more detailed feedback will be provided to the Committee at the meeting.

The PT Plan will be reviewed in 2012, so there will be further opportunities to give input to GWRC in the relatively near future.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to the draft submission on the proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan attached as appendix 1, with the following key positions:*
 - (a) *Support for the introduction of a layered approach to network services, with a service hierarchy, standardised service levels, and a focus on providing high frequency high capacity services at the core of the public transport network.*
 - (b) *Support for rolling programme of area-wide service reviews.*
 - (c) *Support for commercial arrangements that provide value for money.*
 - (d) *Seeking review of the classification of routes and service levels for the rapid transit network and quality transit network.*
 - (e) *Seeking confirmation that existing barriers to transferring between services will be addressed prior to changing service patterns.*
 - (f) *Seeking a reduction in the farebox recovery target to 'not less than 50%', and consideration of the introduction of concessionary fares for students.*
 - (g) *Seeking the inclusion of concrete goals and timelines for improving the accessibility of buses and for reducing the emissions profile of the bus fleet.*
 - (h) *Seeking the inclusion of safety objectives, including objectives for pedestrian safety, in operator contracts and the performance monitoring framework.*
 - (i) *Seeking the inclusion of a requirement to provide owners of public transport assets with the information required for long term planning of maintenance and renewals.*
3. *Agree to delegate to the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Leader Transport: Public Transport and Roads the authority to make changes to the submission required as a result of decisions of this Committee, as well as minor editorial amendments, prior to the submission being sent to Greater Wellington Regional Council.*

4. Background

GWRC has called for submissions on the PT Plan, which sets out how GWRC intends to give effect to the public transport components of the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS). The PT Plan is used as the basis of the contract requirements for public transport services.

GWRC must adopt the PT Plan by 31 December 2011 to meet the requirements of the Public Transport Management Act 2008, but legislation requires the PT Plan to be reviewed after GWRC adopts its 2012 Long Term Plan and prior to implementation of the Wellington Bus Review or changes to commercial arrangements. As a result, the PT Plan is to some extent a work in progress, and there will be opportunities for the Council to have further input in the reasonably near future.

A draft submission on the PT Plan has been prepared (attached).

5. Discussion

A high-functioning public transport network is an essential element of Wellington's future as a smart green city, and the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) has targets to increase annual passenger trips from 36 million in 2009/10 to at least 50 million trips in 2020. In recent years there has only been minimal patronage growth, and the region's annual public transport patronage in 2009/10 was only slightly higher than the patronage in 2005/6.

Achieving the RLTS goals for public transport will require major improvements in how public transport services are delivered. While major improvements are now being made to rail infrastructure and services, 2/3 of Wellington's passenger transport trips are made by bus, and improvements in how bus services operate are also critical.

The high level objectives of the PT Plan are to provide simple, easy to understand services that go where people want to go, with an integrated network of services that makes interchange between and within modes easy, while providing a high quality, reliable system with improved accessibility and environmental outcomes.

To achieve this, the PT Plan proposes consolidating the general direction of recent planning by:

- Introducing a layered approach to network services, with a service hierarchy, standardised service levels, and a focus on providing high frequency high capacity services at the core of the public transport network.
- Continuing the rolling programme of area-wide service reviews.
- Adopting vehicle quality standards, to address issues including vehicle emissions and accessibility.
- Introducing commercial arrangements for public transport operators that provide value for money. Negotiations relating to these arrangements have been underway since 2009.

It is recommended that this general approach is supported, but that a number of changes are made to the details in the PT Plan.

5.1 Layered Service Approach

The introduction of a layered service approach with frequent high capacity services on the rapid and quality transit networks provides the opportunity to significantly improve the public transport system in Wellington. However there are a number of things required for this approach to work effectively, including:

- Clear definition of the roles of the different layers of the network, with the appropriate services levels.
- The ability to easily transfer between services, because a layered services approach involves an assumption that some journeys will involve transfers.

This will require:

- some form of integrated fares and ticketing
- infrastructure at interchange points, including shelter and information
- measures that mitigate the impact of transfers on the transport disadvantaged, including wheel chair users, unsteady or frail walkers, and the visually or hearing impaired who may have difficulty accessing information or identifying transfer stops.

The draft submission requests these issues are addressed prior to any changes to implement a layered approach. This will require input from local authorities, who provide infrastructure at bus stops.

The draft submission also seeks the re-categorisation of bus routes south of the Wellington Railway station that are currently part of the rapid transit network. The infrastructure requirements for the rapid transit network include operation on a fully separate right of way (ie dedicated bus lane), which is not feasible for these routes at this point. It is recommended that the routes are categorised as part of the quality transit network, which described as operating on a shared right of way but with extensive priority including bus lanes and signal priority in congested areas. This level of infrastructure is consistent with the Council's existing bus priority programme.

The draft submission requests that standard service levels for the quality transit network are increased, including increasing the off-peak frequency to 15 minutes, and that the public transport funding priorities recognise that standard service levels may be insufficient to meet demand.

5.2 Fare Policy

GWRC is required to have a farebox recovery policy that identifies the percentage of operating costs that will be paid for directly by users through fares, with remaining costs paid for by ratepayers and taxpayers. NZTA has a national farebox recovery target of not less than 50%, and regional councils are required to contribute to achieving this target.

GWRC has a farebox recovery target of 55-60% for rail and bus services, 80-90% for ferry services, and 100% for the cable car. The estimated farebox recovery for 2010/11 was 57% across the network. The fare schedule provides for concession fares for children and senior citizens.

Public transport affordability is increasingly an issue in Wellington. Quality of Life surveys have shown a decrease in the percentage of Wellingtonians who agree or strongly agree that public transport is affordable, from 72% in 2003, to 68% in 2007, and 46% in 2010.

The draft submission proposes a reduction of the farebox recovery target from 55-60% to 'not less than 50%' in order to improve affordability, either generally or for specific target groups, while still contributing fairly to NZTA's national target. GWRC and NZTA funding levels would increase to make up the difference.

The draft submission also recommends that consideration is given to establishing concessions for students. This was identified as the highest priority public transport issue by the Youth Council, who also supported other improvements to public transport to the extent they did not impact on affordability.

5.3 Other matters

The draft submission requests additional information and targets in a number of areas, including:

- more concrete targets for improving the accessibility of buses and the information available to people with disabilities
- information about proposals to reduce the emissions profile of the diesel bus fleet and
- the inclusion of safety objectives, including objectives for pedestrian safety, in operator contracts and the performance monitoring framework.

5.4 Consultation and Engagement

The draft Council submission has been informed by community views expressed through previous consultation processes (including consultation on *Wellington 2040*). Feedback has been sought from the Youth Council and members of the Accessibility Advisory Group. Their preliminary comments have been included, and more detailed feedback will be provided to the Committee at the meeting.

5.5 Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial implications of the proposed submission on the PT Plan, although infrastructure for bus priority measures and bus stops is funded by the Council, and improvements to the public transport network are likely to increase Council funding requirements over time. The implications of the PT Plan for the Council will be considered as part of the Long Term Plan process.

5.6 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

There are no climate change considerations arising from the proposed submission. The PT Plan contributes to the achievement of Regional Land Transport Strategy goals relating to increased public transport patronage and includes policies relating to vehicle emissions standards.

5.7 Long-Term Council Community Plan Considerations

There are no implications for the 2009-19 LTCCP of the proposed submission. Any implications of the PT Plan for Council infrastructure will be considered as part of the 2012-2 Long Term Plan process.

6. Conclusion

Improvements in public transport are vital for the future of Wellington, and this reports recommends that the Council submits to GWRC seeking improvements in the PT Plan in order to achieve the RLTS goals for public transport.

Attached:

Draft Wellington City Council submission on the proposed PT Plan
Proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2011-21

Contact Officer: Tass Larsen, Principal Advisor Transport Strategy

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The submission recommended by this report supports the Council's strategic outcomes

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

There are no LTCCP impacts of this report.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

No Treaty of Waitangi issues have been identified in this report.

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision. The decision making body for the PT Plan is GWRC.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

GWRC is undertaking consultation on the draft PT Plan.

b) Consultation with Maori

GWRC is undertaking consultation on the draft PT Plan.

6) Legal Implications

No legal issues are identified in this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report recommends a submission on the draft PT Plan that is consistent with existing WCC policy, in particular the Transport Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan