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**REPORT 1**  
*(1215/52/IM)*

## **SUBMISSION ON THE WELLINGTON CITY BUS REVIEW**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider a submission to the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) on the Wellington City Bus Review. Submissions close on 16 March 2012.

### **2. Executive Summary**

GWRC commenced a review of Wellington city bus services in 2009. This review is part of a rolling programme of reviews that:

- take a short to medium term view,
- focus on operational improvements to the network in an area,
- work within existing public transport expenditure.

GWRC is now consulting on a draft bus network that aims to address the following issues:

- public feedback requesting more frequent bus services, and more evening and weekend services;
- public feedback requesting better access to places outside the CBD;
- CBD congestion, particularly bus congestion on the Golden Mile;
- providing for future growth.

The principles underpinning GWRC's approach to these issues are:

- reduce or eliminate duplication;
- focus on a frequent all-day network;
- provide frequency, simplicity, and connections;
- use a layered service approach.

GWRC is proposing major changes to bus routes that introduce a layered service approach based on core routes of frequent all day services, providing more buses on main routes. The proposals increase the percentage of people within a 10 minute walk of a frequent bus service from 58% to 75%, and there would be 15% more bus trips providing more buses throughout the day, in the evenings, and at weekends.

However, there would be significant change in the network, and approximately 10% of people would need to make a connection between services where they don't at present. Most of these trips would be off-peak. The proposals also include shifting some peak-only bus routes away from the Golden Mile onto an alternative corridor, to manage peak-time bus flows and reliability in the future.

A draft submission to GWRC has been developed (attached), which takes the following positions:

- Support for the increase in service frequency and service hours, including the increase in the access to frequent all day services.
- Support for the layered service approach that allows these increases to occur, subject to GWRC addressing issues with connections.
- Making connections easier: in addition to the timetable, critical elements that GWRC must address are integrated fares, accessibility, weather proofing, security (eg lighting, CCTV if appropriate), real time information, and driver training.
- Alternate CBD route for peak only services: An alternate CBD route 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.
- Implementation of any new bus network should allow for significant resources for marketing and information to assist people to adjust to the changes, and for driver training.
- There is public concern about the affordability of public transport in Wellington, and the need for long term planning for the future of trolley buses. Although these issues are out of scope for this project, Council is interested in further involvement on reviews to address these issues.

### **3. Recommendations**

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to the attached draft submission to Greater Wellington Regional Council on the Wellington City Bus Review.*
- 3. Delegate to the Chief Executive and the Transport (Public Transport and Roads) Portfolio leader, the authority to amend the proposed submission from Wellington City Council to Greater Wellington Regional Council on the Wellington City Bus Review to include any amendments agreed by the Committee and any associated minor consequential edits.*

### **4. Background**

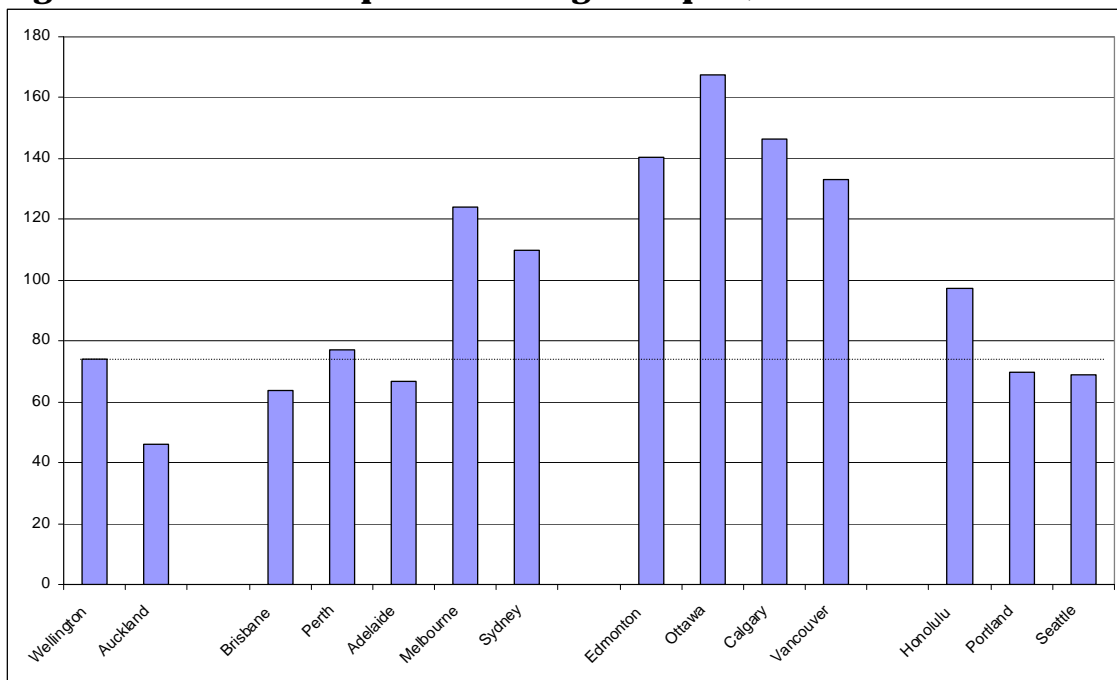
Wellington City is recognised as having a good public transport system, with relatively high levels of service and patronage. The proportion of people who

walk, cycle, or take public transport to access the central city is 67%, contributing to the sustainability of the city.

Although Wellington’s public transport use is high relative to other New Zealand cities, it is at a more comparable level internationally– for example, see Figure 1 below which shows trips per capita for a number of Australian, Canadian, and American cities. Patronage levels are often higher again in Europe.

The Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) objectives for public transport are for increases in both trips and peak period mode share by 2020. The objective for mode share is for an increase from 17% up to 21% of all trips to work region-wide. However, overall public transport patronage has hardly grown since 2005. Bus patronage has grown by between 1-2% annually over this period; this growth has largely occurred off-peak, with peak period bus patronage having declined in 3 of the last 5 years. This level of growth will not achieve RLTS targets.

**Figure 1: Public Transport Patronage / Capita, 2008-10<sup>1</sup>**



The review of Wellington city bus services is part of the GWRC programme of area-wide bus service reviews that aim to ensure services continue to meet the needs of the community, and to review effectiveness and efficiency. GWRC’s service reviews:

- take a short to medium term view,
- focus on operational improvements to the network in an area,

<sup>1</sup> 2008 data for US and Canadian cities, 2008/09 or 2009/10 for NZ and Australian cities sourced from Auckland Passenger Transport Performance Benchmark Study, 2011, Ian Wallis Associates Ltd in association with McCormick Rankin Cagney

- work within existing public transport expenditure.

The Wellington City Bus Review commenced in 2009, and is the first comprehensive review of city services since the early 1990s. It focuses on bus services, and their integration with train, ferry & cable car, and covers the urban areas of Wellington City south of Grenada North. The review does not cover school and After Midnight Services, or train, ferry, or cable car services.

If the RLTS objectives are going to be achieved, it is important that the outcome of the review is a bus network that leads to substantial patronage growth.

In addition to the review, there are a number of other reviews / studies that will influence Wellington's public transport, but which are outside the scope of the review. These include:

- a review of fares and ticketing (underway),
- a review of the long term options for trolley buses (commencing shortly),
- the future operation of the public transport spine between the Railway Station and the Hospital (discussed further below).

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Review Proposals**

The review aims to address the following issues identified by GWRC:

- public feedback requesting more frequent bus services, and more evening and weekend services;
- public feedback requesting better access to places outside the CBD, partially reflecting new travel destinations;
- CBD congestion, particularly bus congestion on the Golden Mile;
- providing for future growth.

The principles underpinning GWRC's approach to these issues are:

- reduce or eliminate duplication;
- focus on a frequent all-day network;
- provide frequency, simplicity, and connections;
- use a layered service approach.

The layered service approach is consistent with the approach outlined in the Regional Public Transport Plan, and consists of:

- Core services: frequent routes running at least every 15 minutes on main corridors, with increased frequency during peak periods.
- Secondary services: all-day routes running every 30-60 min in lower population areas, which may focus on the local centre rather than the CBD.
- Peak-only services: supplement the all-day services to provide additional capacity, coverage, and directness.

Based on these principles, and using ticketing and trip data from public transport operators, information gained from public consultation and focus groups, GWRC has developed a proposed bus network that has been released for public consultation (summary maps attached), with submissions closing on 16 March 2012. The proposed network rearranges services without increasing overall service kilometres, meaning that the services can be provided without increasing operating funding. The new network is however expected to lead to an increase in patronage.

GWRC has identified the benefits of the proposed network as:

- a simpler, easier to understand network;
- better connections, making it easier to reach a greater range of destinations;
- greater access to high-frequency all-day routes - 75% of people in the study area would be within a 10 minute walk of core services (ie with a bus at least every 15 minutes), compared to 58% at present;
- no need to pay another fare when transferring between services operated by the same company;
- more buses throughout the day, in the evenings and at weekends (the number of bus trips would increase by 15%);
- reduced bus congestion in the CBD, resulting in more reliable services.

These benefits will not be fully realised until the implementation of the network is complete.

However, nearly every bus route would change to some extent (except the Airport Flyer), and approximately 10% of passengers would need to connect between services where they don't at present. The majority of these trips would occur off-peak. In most cases, even with connections, modelling shows that the increased frequency of services would lead to a reduction in travel times; however there will be specific trips which take longer.

Another change would be that some routes currently operated by trolley buses would be replaced by routes that are not fully serviced by overhead wires, so the existing trolley bus fleet would be concentrated onto a smaller number of routes.

If approved by GWRC, the new network will take considerable time to put in place, with a staged implementation occurring over several years commencing in 2013. The proposed network plan has been modelled to demonstrate that the proposed routes and frequencies have enough capacity to match demand, but considerable work will be required to develop more detailed schedules and to negotiate commercial arrangements. This work will include additional modelling to confirm the capacity requirements.

## **5.2 Issues addressed in draft submission**

### **Individual route changes**

GWRC's proposed network plan changes nearly every bus route in the city, although in many cases the majority of the route will remain the same. The detail of these changes (such as movement of buses from one street to another) will affect different people differently, and the impact of these changes can best be described by the users and potential users of each specific service.

It is therefore recommended that the submission does not address the detailed route proposals, but comments on network-wide issues and issues related to Council's role and responsibilities, such as infrastructure and traffic movement.

The details of the individual bus routes will however be critical in the overall success of the network, and it is essential that GWRC works through the issues raised by the public in the next phase of detailed planning. However, 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.

Understanding the proposed trade-offs requires both feedback from the community and data on the number of people making specific trips and the costs of services. The travel data has largely been obtained from surveys, transport models, and ticketing information from existing services, however the ticketing information is not available to the Council as it is the property of the individual bus operators. Without this data or the specific information on costs which is also commercially sensitive, Council is not in a position to evaluate the trade-offs inherent in the network design except at a high level.

### **General Comments**

It is recommended that the submission takes the following general positions:

- Support for the increase in service frequency and service hours, including the increase in the access to frequent all day services.
- Support for the layered service approach, subject to GWRC addressing issues with connections identified below.
- Given the benefits of the proposed network, Council believes GWRC should re-prioritise resources so that implementation can occur more quickly.

### **Connections**

The layered service approach means that more passengers will need to make connections (i.e. travel on more than one bus) to complete their journey. This would affect approximately 10% of existing passengers. The intention is that connections between core routes and local secondary routes would be planned to minimise waiting times, and that connections between core routes would be easy since these services would be frequent throughout the day.

This provides major efficiencies to the service provider, allowing the provision of much more frequent services, but it is not an additional benefit to the passenger. It is a basic requirement of a successful layered network that passengers do not have to pay an additional fee when they transfer.

GWRC's proposal is that there would be no need to pay another fare when transferring between services operated by the same company. This will address the issue in the short term for most passengers, as currently the bus companies largely operate in different parts of the city. However issues will remain in some areas, particularly in the northern suburbs where the proposal is that there will be no off-peak direct bus route between Johnsonville and the CBD, on the rationale that public subsidies should not be provided to two services that directly compete with each other (rail and bus). This reliance on rail as a core service raises the issue of integrated fares between bus and rail services in this area.

GWRC has signalled its intention to make further changes in the future to make it easier and cheaper to connect to trains, the Cable Car, and buses operated by other bus companies. This will require changes to the commercial arrangements with the operators, and it would be appropriate to delay the implementation of changes in the northern suburbs until these changes are in place.

In addition to the overall journey time and fares, another major factor in making connections is the physical environment at the stop. The key factors are accessibility, weather proofing, security (eg lighting, CCTV if appropriate), and real time information.

Bus stops where there are likely to be people regularly transferring between services are Miramar, Kilbirnie, Island Bay, Wellington Hospital, Brooklyn, Karori Tunnel, Wellington Station, Newlands, and Johnsonville. Some of these stops already have appropriate facilities (enough space, weather proof, well lit, with real time information), but others will need to be upgraded over time. Council officers have had discussions with GWRC officials over the location of some of these stops and what infrastructure would be required, and these discussions would continue if GWRC confirms the network proposals.

While the frequency of buses, timetable, fares, and infrastructure are all important elements in influencing connections, in the end many connections are influenced by the behaviour of the bus driver – the proposed bus network plan will require up-front and ongoing investment in driver training as well as the factors identified in the consultation documents.

It is recommended that the submission takes the following positions:

- 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 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.
- GWRC should consider delaying the implementation of the network in the northern suburbs until fare integration between bus and rail services has been achieved, given the role of the Johnsonville rail line in providing a core service.
- 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 specific stops. Council's expectation is that the infrastructure investment required will be provided by GWRC.
- In addition to the issues identified above, the proposed bus network plan will require up-front and ongoing investment in driver training.

### **Alternate CBD peak only route**

GWRC proposes shifting some bus routes that only operate during peak periods away from the Golden Mile, onto an alternative corridor, to manage peak-time bus flows and reliability in the future. This corridor might be used by peak-only bus routes from any part of Wellington City and other places such as the Hutt Valley.

This route is intended to improve the reliability on this section of the route by reducing the number of buses at peak times. Reliability is still a real issue - although improvements such as bus priority in Manners Street and the introduction of improved ticketing on Go Wellington buses years have improved travel time and reliability through the CBD, the variation in bus travel times is still significant. For example, the range of times for two thirds of peak south bound bus trips on the Golden Mile is between 4.9 and 16.3 minutes. In the evening peak period the equivalent figures are 7.9 to 15.7 minutes<sup>2</sup>. This variation in trip times disrupts the even spacing of buses – for example, the morning range of 11.4 minutes on services timetabled every 10 minutes commonly leads to situations where a 20 minute gap is followed by two buses arriving at once.

There are a number of ways to improve reliability, including improving the speed people can enter and exit buses (ticketing, bus stop design, change in entry / exit patterns etc) changing signal phasing, and reducing the number of intersections – although improvements in journey times for buses through signal phasing would largely come at the expense of delays for pedestrians, who have equal or greater priority under Council's existing policy. However, the major remaining factor influencing reliability is the number of buses using the corridor, which at peak times can be up to 133 per hour<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> 2011 data, sourced from Wellington City Bus Review: Network Recommendations prepared by MRCagney Pty Ltd.

<sup>3</sup> MRCagney, page 54



For large sections of the Golden Mile buses cannot overtake each other due to lack of street room, and trolley buses cannot overtake where they share the same overhead wire, meaning that if one bus is delayed, for example by unusually heavy passenger boardings, slow boarding, or mechanical issues, all the following buses are also delayed.

The proposed network changes would reduce the number of buses using the Golden Mile as a result of the elimination of duplication and the introduction of a core route that uses The Terrace, as part of a route that links Seatoun to the CBD via Kilbirnie, Newtown, and Mt Cook.

The extent of the overall reduction in bus numbers on the Golden Mile will depend on the detailed decisions around individual routes that follow public consultation, and so it is not clear how close bus numbers will be to the recommended guideline of 60 buses per hour or a bus per minute. Even if this guideline can be met in the short term, growth in demand over time is likely to see bus numbers continue to grow.

GWRC has proposed managing the number of buses using the Golden Mile by having some of the peak-only buses travel via Cable, Wakefield, Jervois, Customhouse and Whitmore, or a similar route between Courtenay Place and Wellington Station, in both directions. Bus stops would be located at key points, but there would be fewer bus stops than on the Golden Mile route. This would provide a faster bus journey, but require more of a walk to the bus stop or a change of buses for some people.

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. Peak-only services largely serve specific commuter groups who catch the same bus regularly. These groups are less likely than others to be confused by having bus stops on a different alignment due to their regular use of the service, and the fact that the peak-only buses already depart from the core all day routes.

If this proposal is implemented, it would be a short to medium term solution. The options for the longer term solution to the capacity issues on this corridor are being studied as part of the Wellington Public Transport Spine Study. There would be significant further work required to determine the best route between the Railway Station and Courtenay Place, and to site new bus stops in locations that do not obstruct traffic.

It is recommended that the submission takes the following positions:

- Council supports core all day services remaining on the Golden Mile.
- If the alternate peak-only CBD route is confirmed for some peak-only services following feedback from bus users, it should still 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.

- 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.
- 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.

### **Other issues**

It is recommended that the submission also raises the following points:

- The level of change proposed is significant. The implementation process should include significant resources for marketing and information to assist people to adjust to the changes.
- The consultation material comments on achieving integration with cable car, rail, and ferry services. In addition, the detailed scheduling of bus routes should 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.
- 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.

### **5.3 Connection with the Wellington Public Transport Spine Study**

The Wellington Public Transport Spine Study is investigating the feasibility of options for high quality public transport between the railway station and the hospital. While the current review is seeking to improve the existing service, it reinforces the approach taken in the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor Plan by introducing the layered service approach, making it easier to make connections, and identifying this corridor as the most frequent core route with all day services every 7.5 minutes. As a result, the review is fully consistent with the approach taken in the PT Spine Study, which will identify options for the future service on the spine after the current service improvements can no longer cope with demand.

### **5.4 Consultation and Engagement**

The development of the draft submission has included input from Council advisory groups. The Committee will be provided with any additional feedback from advisory groups at the time of the committee meeting.

### **5.5 Financial Considerations**

Public transport information and services are funded by GWRC, the New Zealand Transport Agency, and users. Council provides infrastructure to support the services, including roads, bus shelters, and the built environment more generally, particularly in urban centres.

## **5.6 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations**

Regional and city transport strategies include objectives to continue the modal shift of commuter traffic to public transport, walking and cycling to reduce congestion and decrease energy use.

## **5.7 Long-Term Plan Considerations**

There are no direct long term plan considerations. At the time of writing, the draft 2012-22 Long Term Plans for Council and GWRC were still in development, however the proposed Council budgets do not include provision for any additional public transport infrastructure expenditure to implement a new bus network. Council's expectation is that any infrastructure investment required will be made by GWRC.

## **6. Conclusion**

GWRC is undertaking a review of bus services in Wellington city, and is seeking feedback on major changes to bus routes that introduce a layered service approach based on core routes of frequent all day services. The proposals increase the percentage of people within a 10 minute walk to frequent services from 58% to 75%, and there would be 15% more bus trips providing more buses throughout the day, in the evenings, and at weekends. However, there would be significant change in the network, and approximately 10% of people would need to make a connection between services where they don't at present.

### **Appendices:**

- Core Network Map
- Secondary network map
- Peak-only services map
- Peak only corridor map

Contact Officer: *Tass Larsen, Programme Manager Policy*

## Supporting Information

### **1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*The report recommends a submission that is consistent with the having a connected city, and also with the Council transport strategy.*

### **2) LTP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

*The submission to GWRC has no direct financial impact.*

### **3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*There are no specific Treaty of Waitangi considerations.*

### **4) Decision-Making**

*This is not a significant decision. It recommends input to a decision of Greater Wellington Regional Council on future bus services.*

### **5) Consultation**

#### **a) General Consultation**

*This report supports consultation being undertaken by Greater Wellington Regional Council.*

#### **b) Consultation with Maori**

*No specific consultation has been undertaken with Maori.*

### **6) Legal Implications**

*No legal issues are identified in this report.*

### **7) Consistency with existing policy**

*This report is consistent with existing transport strategy and policy, and is consistent with earlier submissions to Greater Wellington Regional Council on Wellington public transport issues.*