

Report No.

19-97

Decision Required

PALMERSTON NORTH TRIAL BUS SERVICE EXTENDED WEEKDAY HOURS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To review performance of the Palmerston North Urban bus service extended weekday hours trial and to determine the appropriate level of service for the future.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 19-97.
- b. recommends that the extended weekday hours of operation of the Palmerston North urban bus services be either:
 - i. discontinued following one month's notice to the public transport provider and public; OR
 - ii. continued with only the 6.40pm service continuing to operate following one months' notice to the public transport provider and public.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. Funding for the service is accounted for within the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan transport budgets.
- 3.2. All cost information quoted in this report is exclusive of GST, unless otherwise stated.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Community engagement with public transport customers will be undertaken if any changes to the services arise as a result of this report.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. No significant business risk impact.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. In 2013-14, a comprehensive review of the Palmerston North Urban Bus Services was undertaken which resulted in a number of improvements to be implemented over a three to four year period. This report deals with the trial to extend the weekday hours of operation across all urban routes (not including the Summerhill urban route).
- 6.2. Since commencement of the trial in July 2017, uptake of these improvements has been limited. This report identifies which services are less well utilised than others and if any changes can be made to provide a more efficient service.
- 6.3. Farebox recovery for the service has been calculated at approximately 3%. Budget forecasts for performance of the service were based on a farebox recovery ratio of 20% at the end of two years which is why the service has run over budget for the past two years.

7. ANALYSIS

- 7.1. Prior to introducing the extended hours of operation, the last urban service departed the Main Street Terminal at 6.00pm. Feedback collected during the urban services review noted that with more workers moving away from the traditional 9.00am to 5.00pm working day, having the last service departing at 6.00pm did not provide workers with sufficient flexibility to seriously consider using public transport. In addition, many submitters requested services later into the evening to provide increased options for access to late night shopping at The Plaza and social outings such as dinner and movies/shows.
- 7.2. On this basis, three additional weekday services per urban loop were introduced on 31 July 2017 (services at 6.40pm, 7.20pm and 8.00pm).
- 7.3. To 31 March 2019, a total of 20,888 trips have been taken across the extended hours of operation being approximately 1,000 trips per month. A series of graphs is provided in this report analysing those trips by day, time and route.

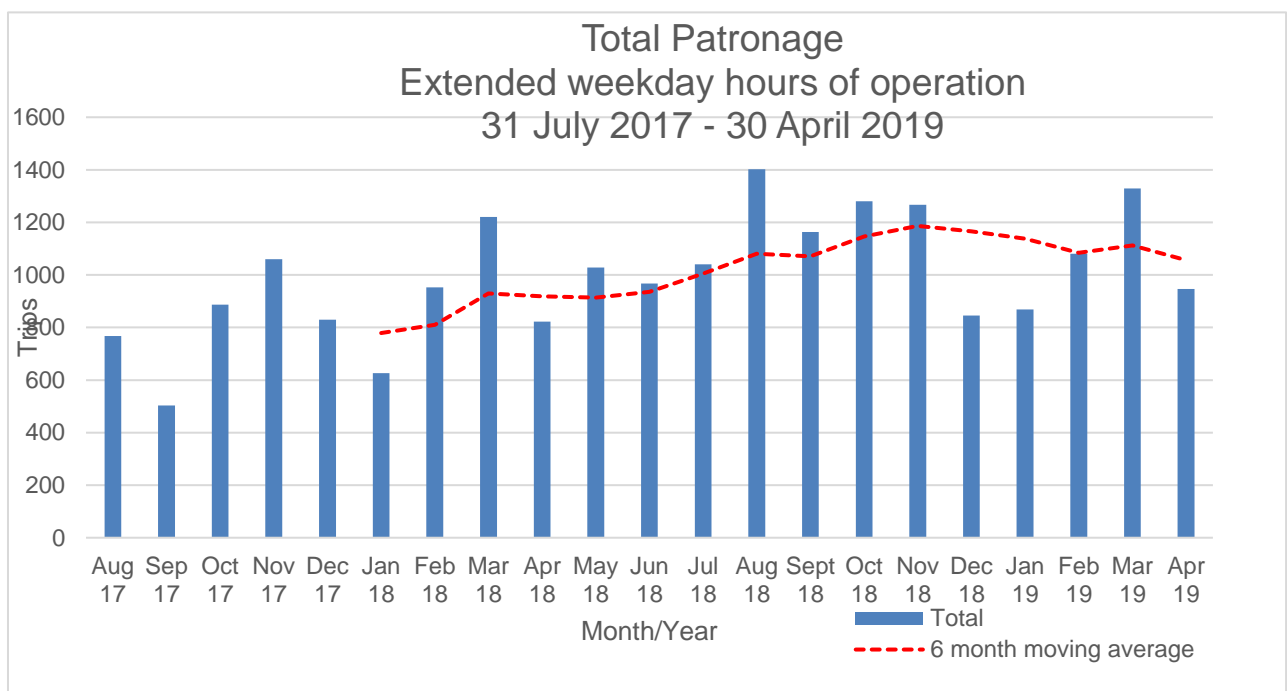


Figure 1: Total Patronage Extended Weekday Hours of Operation

- 7.4. Figure one shows that usage has increased since the service commenced.
- 7.5. In analysing the data, we can look across three high level areas to start to identify any trends that have emerged. These areas are:
 - a. Usage by route.
 - b. Usage by day of the week.
 - c. Usage by time of day.
- 7.6. Considering firstly usage by route, comparing the total number of trips taken since the changes were implemented, we can see that, with the exception of Routes 31 and 32 (Fernlea Heights), there are not any significant differences in usage between routes across the city.

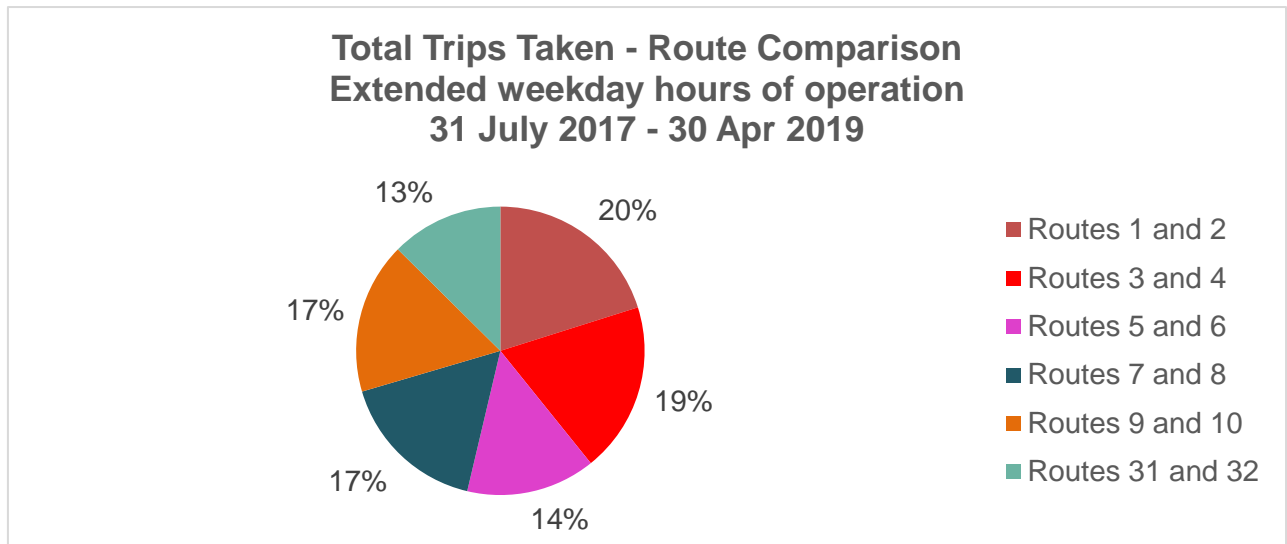


Figure 2: Extended Weekday Hours of Operation - Route Comparison

7.7. The table below provides the actual number of trips taken since commencement of the trial.

Route	Route #	Total trips
Awapuni/Rubgy	1 & 2	4,204
Highbury/Takaro	3 & 4	3,987
Milson/Cloverlea	5 & 6	3,025
Rhodes/Roslyn	7 & 8	3,497
Rangiora/Brightwater	9 & 10	3,547
Fernlea Heights	31 & 32	2,628
	Total	20,888

7.8 Figure 3 below shows the total numbers of trips per time per day.

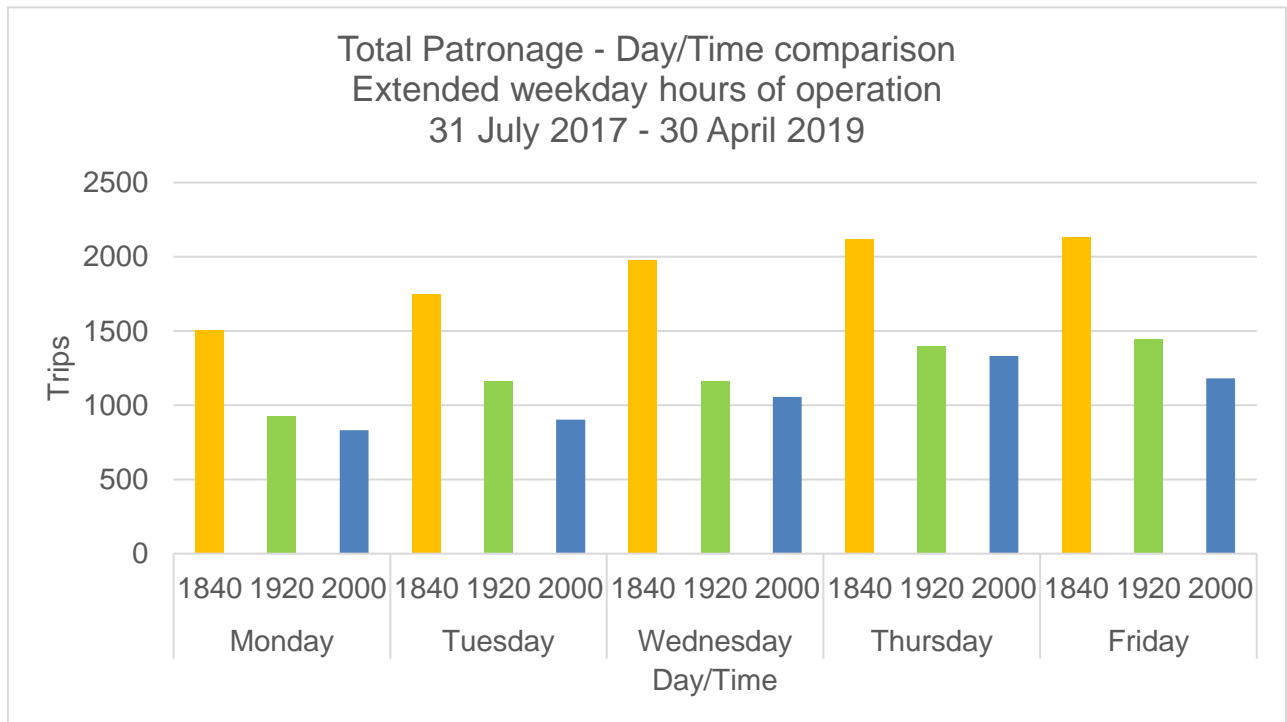


Figure 3: Total patronage across all services per time per day.

- 7.9 The data in figure 3 shows that the 6.40pm service is consistently more utilised than the 7.20pm and 8.00pm services. It also shows that patronage increases later into the week.
- 7.10 Figure 4 below shows the total patronage for each week day. As discussed above the data shows increased usage later in the week.

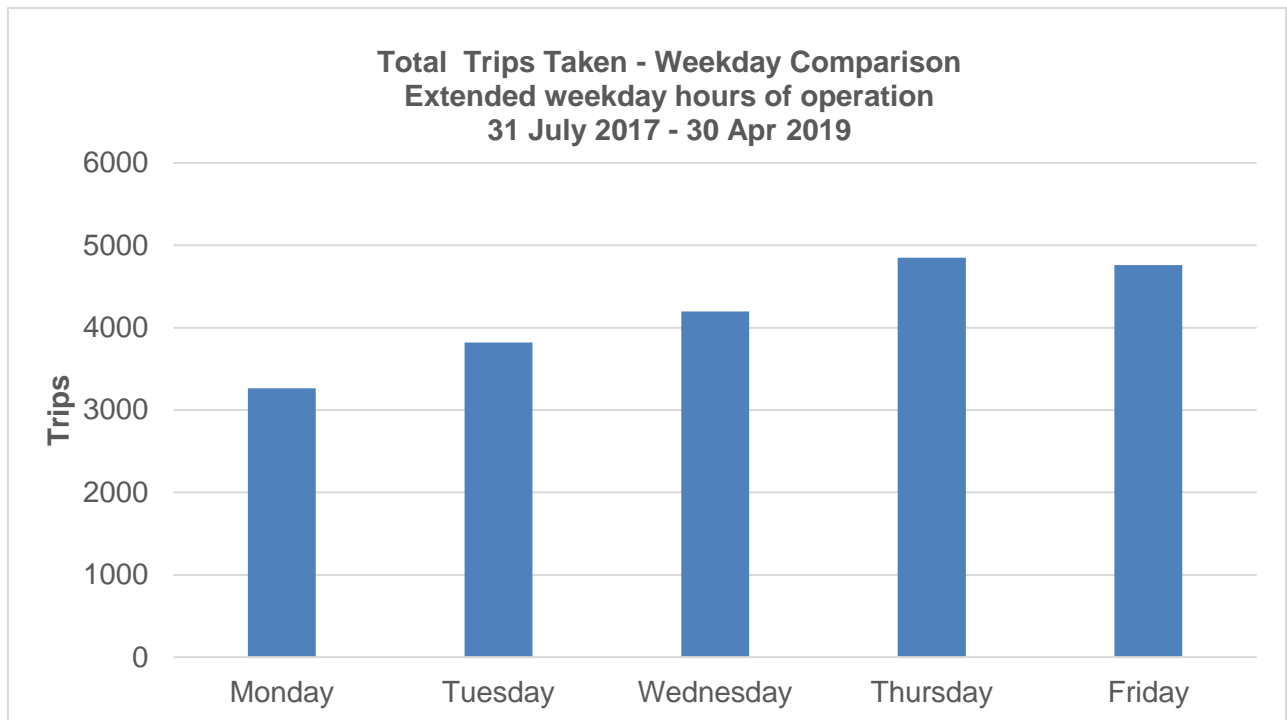


Figure 4: Extended Weekday Hours of Operation – Weekday Comparison

- 7.11 Figure 5 shows total patronage per service time. From this it is clear to see that usage drops later into the evening.

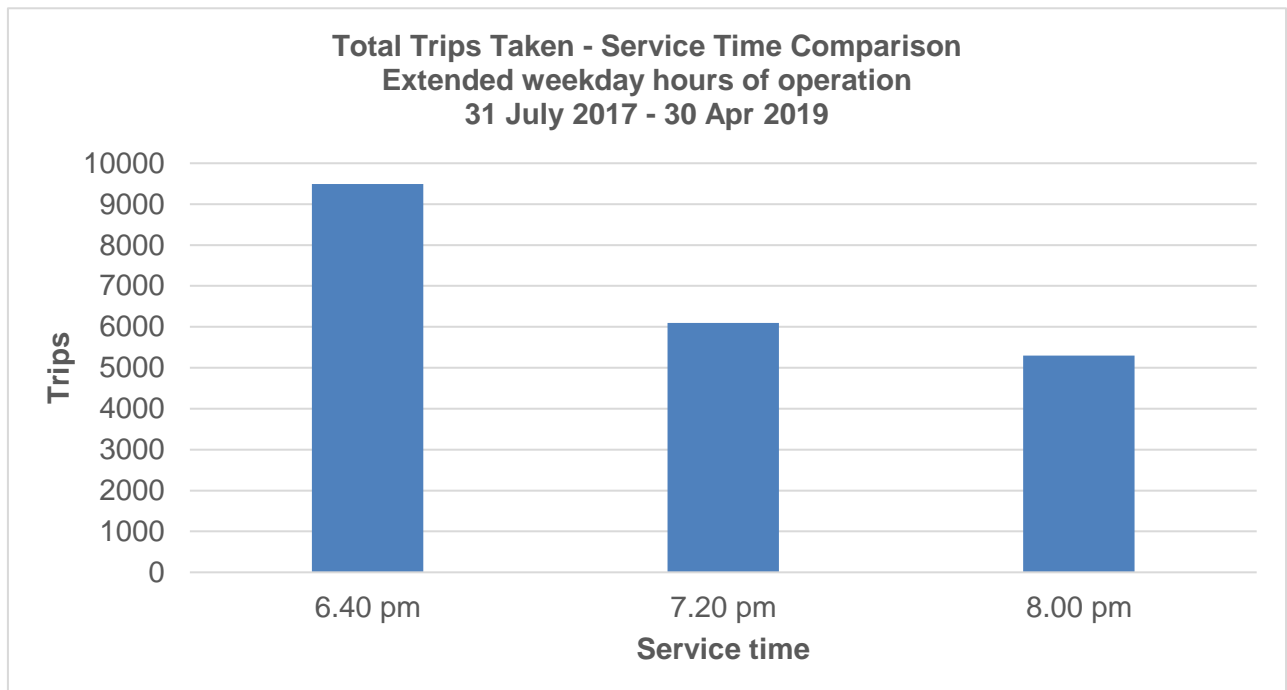


Figure 5: Extended Weekday Hours of Operation – Service Time Comparison

- 7.12 Having considered total patronage carried across all services, day of the week and service time, it is necessary to also look at the average patronage carried per service. Figure 6

shows the average number of persons carried per service time for each day of the week, per route. This is to provide detail around how well utilised the services are.

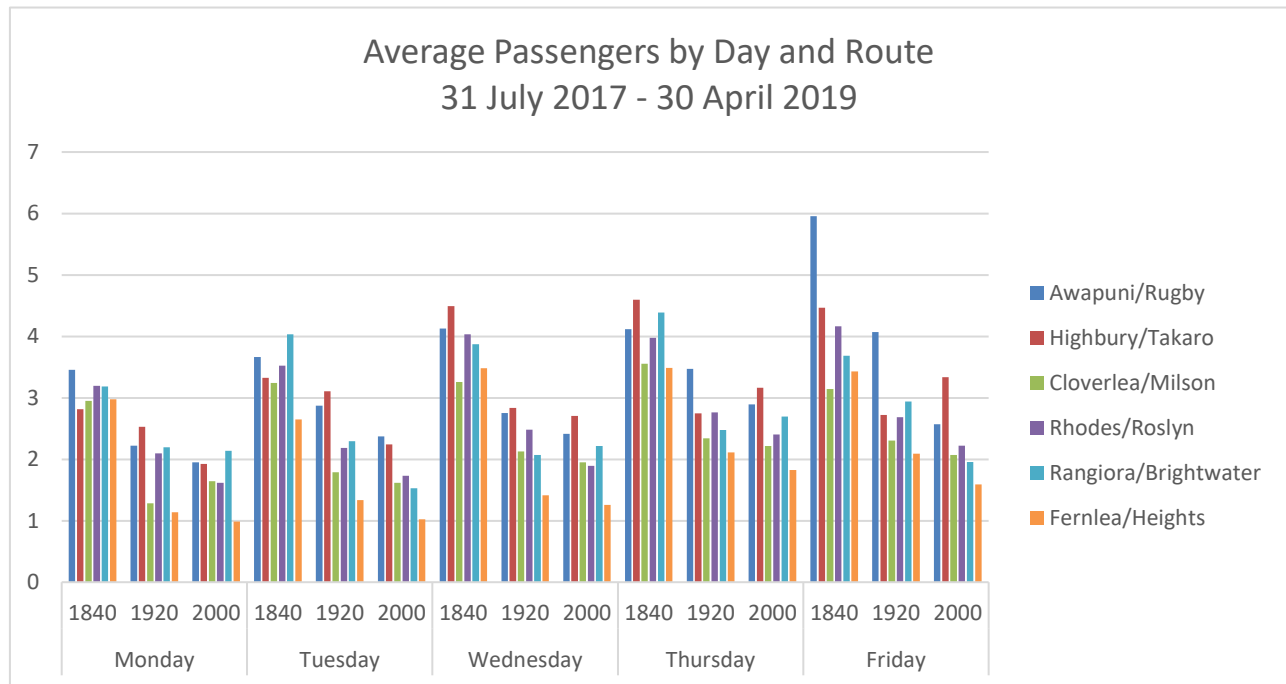


Figure 6: Average passengers carried per service time across all services during each day

7.13 The graph shows that on average, each bus trip carries between 1 and 6 passengers with the distribution mostly being between 1 and 4 passengers. This pattern is consistent across all urban routes.

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Having analysed the information collected to date, officers believe there is sufficient data in which to make a decision on the future of the extended hour services. The key considerations that have helped form the recommendations in this report are:

- a. Patronage has increased by since the trial commenced, however it is still very low with an average of 1-6 persons being transported per service trip (ie. per bus).
- b. Farebox recovery is approximately 3%.
- c. A total of 20,888 persons have been carried on the services since their commencement.
- d. The cost of the service to Horizons since its inception has been \$133,545 approximately (\$76,000 per annum).
- e. The cost to Horizons per passenger is \$6.39 which is very high compared with other urban services.
- f. The service has been promoted consistently over the past 21 months.

8.2 Officers are of the view that due to the relative ease for most residents to use a private vehicle to get into and out of the CBD, specifically the short travel times, lack of congestion, free parking at the times the services operate, the demand for a late night service does not exist. Officers therefore believe the investment of approximately \$75,000.00 per annum of ratepayer funding could be better utilised in other areas to improve the public transport system. Alternatively it could be a straight saving to the ratepayer.

- 8.3 Officers do believe there is merit in retaining the 6.40pm services from Monday to Friday as these are the most utilised. Doing so would result in a per annum savings of approximately \$52,000.00 to Horizons.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 In summary having reviewed the service performance over the past 21 months, officers consider there are two viable options moving forward being:
- a. discontinue all extended weekday hours of operation following one months' notice to the public transport provider and public (saving of \$76,000.00 to Horizons);
 - b. continue only the 6.40 pm service on all urban routes following one months' notice to the public transport provider and public (saving of \$52,000.00 to Horizons).

10. NEXT STEPS

- 10.1. Should either of the recommended changes be adopted, officers will notify the bus operator in writing and give a minimum of one month's notice. Printed timetables, the GoHorizons! Bus app and the Google Transit website feed will all be updated and changes communicated to the public.
- 10.2. The amended timetable will be in place by Monday 5 August 2019.

11. SIGNIFICANCE

- 11.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

Phil Hindrup
TRANSPORT SERVICES MANAGER

Ged Shirley
**GROUP MANAGER REGIONAL SERVICES
& INFORMATION**

ANNEXES

There are no attachments to this report.