

Report No.

21-55

Information Only - No Decision Required

GENERAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT UPDATE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on general matters relating to passenger transport services in the region. It does not cover patronage or trip data, this is addressed in the Public Transport Services Report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 21-55.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no financial impact as a result of this report.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. None required.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There are no significant business risks as a result of this report.

6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. As the report deals entirely with administrative matters, there is no climate change impact associated with this report

7. PALMERSTON NORTH SERVICE REVIEW (UPDATE)

- 7.1. On 1 April 2021, the **Palmerston North Bus Review Governance Group (Governance Group)** meet to discuss progress on the Palmerston North network review. Items covered were community engagement, strategic direction, high level options, and the project timeline moving forward.
- 7.2. The Governance Group re-confirmed its support and agreement of a network vision and set of objectives which have been developed over previous Governance Group meetings.
- 7.3. The agreed vision is as follows “*An accessible public transport network that provides competitive travel choices for all users to key destinations.*”
- 7.4. The agreed objectives are as follows;
 - *Customer focused, delivering people where they want to go.*
 - *Accessible and easy to use*
 - *Reliable*
 - *High level of service frequency*
 - *Competitive mode of travel*
 - *Cost effective and affordable*

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- 7.5. A set of draft network goals outlining of what we want the network to achieve moving forward was presented to the Governance Group. The goals as presented were support by the Governance Group;
- *Connect people to key destinations*
 - *Increase patronage*
 - *Increase the proportion of trips made by public transport during peak times*
 - *Help to reduce emissions in the city*
 - *Support sustainable growth*
- 7.6. A set of design principles have being used by officers to develop the options. These design principles are central to the design of the network options and for public messaging. The Governance Group gave its support to the design principles being used as they are consistent with the goals and objectives for the future bus network. The agreed design principles are:
- *Simple*
 - *Connected*
 - *Frequent*
 - *Fast*
- 7.7. Two high levels network options were presented to the Governance Group. These options represented two different approaches for achieving a connected network with the same resources. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. One approach would provide more coverage but has less frequency than the other option. While the other option has more frequency and less coverage meaning some people would have further to walk to a bus stop but would have a bus running more often. The Governance Group agreed both options should be further developed, including assessment of different frequencies and spans of operations, and developing sub-options that look at different ways for operating in and through the city centre. The refined options and sub-options will be presented to the next Governance Group meeting at the end of May.
- 7.8. The updated project timeline is provided below, with a Governance Group meeting proposed in the lead up to public engagement. Public engagement is planned to occur in late July through to August, due to school holidays.



8. FEILDING IMPROVEMENTS (UPDATE)

- 8.1. In May 2020 the Committee approved the implementation of a package of improvements to the Feilding around town / Feilding to Palmerston North service (Feilding service). The improvements include provision of a Feilding only service which travels exclusively around the Feilding township separately to the commuter service and provision of additional Saturday services on the commuter between Palmerston North and Feilding. This package of improvements was recommended by the Feilding Advisory Group

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following its work on options development and community consultation. The improvements were scheduled to be implemented prior to 30 June 2021.

- 8.2. Following receipt of further information from the bus operator providing more accurate costings, it was apparent that the high-level budgeted amount approved in the 2020-21 Annual Plan was not sufficient to implement the service improvements as planned. The majority of the additional cost relates to the need for an additional vehicle and ticketing equipment. A key community requirement is to ensure the new around town service runs at times which enables students to get to and from school, and for people working in Feilding town centre to be able to travel to and from work via public transport. These are typically the busiest times on a bus network, which means the bus operators existing bus fleet is already fully utilised. This then creates the need for an additional bus to be added to the bus fleet. To ensure sufficient capacity is provided at these busy times, and to provide good accessibility such as kneeling functionality, and wheelchair ramps and spaces, a standard urban bus is recommended to be used
- 8.3. Meetings with the Advisory Group were held on 15 February and 8 March. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the revised costs, present options for implementation and seek agreement on the next steps.
- 8.4. The Advisory Group determined that the full suite of improvements should be implemented and additional funding be requested through the Horizons Long Term Plan to fund the improvements. In the event the additional funding sought is approved by Council, the new service would be implemented in early 2022, aligning with the start of the school year. This six month lead in, will allow additional ticketing units to be purchased, infrastructure to be installed and timetable redevelopment to occur.

9. WHANGANUI SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- 9.1. Since bus service changes and a new bus operating contract were introduced in Whanganui in 2019, there has been a growing desire from the community to have more frequent bus services in the city, particularly between Aramoho and Castlecliff.
- 9.2. Horizons and Whanganui District Council have included additional funding in their respective draft 2021-2031 Long Term Plans to further enhance the Whanganui bus services. To make the bus network become a more attractive alternative to private vehicles enhancements such as increased frequency are proposed. Subject to approval of funding via the Long Term Plan processes and from Waka Kotahi at a 51% FAR, implementation of the enhancements are expected to occur in year 2 of the new Long Term Plan. Planning of the enhancements will occur in the next financial year, with support and guidance sought from the Whanganui Public Transport Advisory Group during this phase.

10. LOWER NORTH ISLAND PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT

- 10.1. **Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC)**, in collaboration with **Horizons Regional Council (Horizons)**, are exploring the procurement of a low/zero carbon long distance commuter fleet.
- 10.2. This is envisaged as the future of mobility across the Greater Wellington and Horizons regions where it will connect Wellington to the Wairarapa and the Manawatu with modern and reliable trains. These trains will replace the aging locomotive-hauled Wairarapa and Capital Connection carriages which are nearing the end of their service lives, and enable improved service capacity and frequency on both lines during both the peak and off-peak.
- 10.3. Led by GWRC this is a collaborative project involving Horizons, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, KiwiRail and Transdev.
- 10.4. Phase One of the project, development of the **Detailed Business Case (DBC)**, is underway, and has progressed through the Market Sounding Exercise (completed in April).

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The Market Sounding Exercise has increased the profile of the project in the Rolling Stock Industry, which is encouraging for the procurement process as internationally this is considered a small scale project.

- 10.5. Following input from the Market Sounding Exercise the rolling stock specifications for the DBC are nearing completion, and the secondary energy mode analysis has started.
- 10.6. Patronage demand forecasts for a range of service options are currently being modelled.
- 10.7. The first draft of the DBC Strategic Case (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) is being reviewed by GWRC. The draft Strategic Case will be shared with Horizons in May for its review. The remaining eight chapters of the DBC are being progressed with completion of the DBC expected in early August 2021.
- 10.8. It is expected the DBC will be presented to PTC at the August meeting. The process on how the DBC will formally be endorsed by GWRC and Horizons is being developed, and will also be presented at the August PTC meeting.
- 10.9. The following table provides details and expected timings for the further phases of the project, with the first new train being in service in 2027, subject to obtaining government funding and award of supply contract.

PHASE	PHASE DESCRIPTION	TASK START	TASK COMPLETION
2	Prepare and Undertake EOI Process & Prepare RFT	July 2021	April 2022
	Obtain Funding	May 2022	May 2022
3	Release the RFT and evaluate Tenders for	May 2022	December 2022
4	Negotiate and award the supply Contract(s)	December 2022	March 2023
	First In Service Train		2027

11. NORTH ISLAND REGIONAL PASSENGER RAIL “CONNECTOR” SERVICES

- 11.1. An online workshop was held on 24 March 2021. Mayors and Chairs from district, city and regional councils along the North Island Main Truck Line were in attendance as well as representatives from KiwiRail, Ministry of Transport, and Waka Kotahi.
- 11.2. It was agreed at the meeting that Councils in Central North Island (between Palmerston North and Hamilton) would form a working group to refine the high-level feasibility study and commence the development of a high-level business case. The high-level business case is to include consideration of alternative travel modes options such as bus and planes. PTC members will continue to be updated on the progress of this project, and opportunities for them to provide input will be sought.
- 11.3. GWRC and Horizons will focus on completion of the Detailed Business Case for new rolling stock for services between Palmerston North and Wellington. While Waikato Regional Council’s focus will be on consolidation of the recently introduced Te Huia passenger rail service between Hamilton and Auckland.
- 11.4. To highlight to communities and government the significance of this project it was also agreed that the soon to be adopted Horizons, Waikato, GWRC and Auckland draft **Regional Land Transport Plans (RLTP)** should include consistent text on the “Connector” service project. This text has been drafted and been included in Horizons draft RLTP.

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12. REGIONAL LAND TRANSPORT PLAN DEVELOPMENT (UPDATE)

- 12.1. Development of the Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-31 has been an inclusive process with political representatives across the region feeding into the Plan through the Regional Transport Committee and technical officers being involved via the Regional Advisory Group. Through the development process, feedback from the Passenger Transport Committee was relayed via PTC representatives on the **Regional Transport Committee (RTC)** and changes were made to the strategic objectives, policies and investment priorities as a result of this feedback.
- 12.2. The Plan has features objectives and investment priorities aimed towards enabling mode-shift and improving availability of mode choice. If we are successful with this, we should see improvement in environmental outcomes such as reductions in carbon emissions, which aligns with Government's vision in this space.
- 12.3. Development of the Plan is nearing completion, with hearings held on 9 April and deliberations completed on 12 April. Public consultation on the draft Plan was carried out between 9 February and 17 March. A total of 56 submissions were received.
- 12.4. Through submissions, there was strong support for measures to be in place to reduce carbon emissions from transport and to increase availability and uptake of alternative transport modes. The hearing panel have considered the matters raised in submissions and decided on a suite of changes to be made to the draft Plan.
- 12.5. The next step is for the recommended changes from the hearing panel to be drafted into the Plan, with this and the recommendations from deliberations being put to the RTC for consideration at their 1 June 2021 meeting.
- 12.6. Following consideration by the RTC, the Plan will be made final and presented to Regional Council for adoption at its 22 June 2021 meeting.
- 12.7. The final Plan will then be submitted to Waka Kotahi, NZ Transport Agency by 30 June 2021 (to meet legislative requirements).

13. SIGNIFICANCE

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

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ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.