

Better buses for Palmy He pahi pai mō Te Papaioea



PALMERSTON NORTH BUS REVIEW | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is Horizons doing a review?

Over the past few years, our community has told us that Palmy's current bus routes are confusing, services are infrequent, and journey times are long and inconsistent. We want to improve this so we're reviewing Palmy and Ashhurst's bus networks.

The work we do today will help shape the bus network moving forward, and when the current contract ends in November 2023, we can start anew with a bus network that works for the city.

Horizons values our community's input so whether you're a bus user or not, we're keen to know your thoughts on our proposals.

Will we be told about the outcome of the consultation?

Yes. Once consultation is complete we'll collate and summarise all feedback received during the submission period. We'll share this feedback summary and our decision with you later this year.

Why is the current network not an option?

We want Palmy's bus network to be simple, connected, frequent and fast. The network also needs to be easy to use and convenient for everyone. Public feedback over the last few years has told us the current network does not meet these requirements.

Palmy has had the same network for over 25 years. Over this time we've trialled various improvements, some of which have been permanently added to the network. When we started this review we reflected on past improvements and the issues that you've raised with us.

We asked if we could build on the existing network to make it better, but we found that improving the existing network can only go so far. In the past we have tried improving the frequency and the hours of operations but these were unsuccessful.

Improvements to the current bus network will allow us to address some of the feedback we've received, but the improvements can only go so far. To truly address the issues raised, it's time to hit the refresh button and build a network that better meets the needs of the city.

Who has been involved in the review?

The review has involved regular workshops with two groups – the Palmerston North Public Transport Governance Group (Governance Group) and the Palmerston North Public Transport Working Group (Working Group).

The Governance Group is composed of elected members for both Horizons Regional Council and Palmerston North City Council, and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency staff. The Governance Group



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has provided direction and guidance on the project and has helped to make some of the key decision in the review.

Governance Group membership includes:

- Grant Smith - Mayor of PNCC
- Aleisha Rutherford - Deputy Mayor of PNCC
- Brent Barrett - Councillor for PNCC and sits on Horizons' Passenger Transport Committee
- Leonie Hapeta - Councillor for PNCC
- Rachel Keedwell - Horizons Chair (Palmerston North)
- Jono Naylor- Horizons Deputy Chair (Palmerston North)
- Fiona Gordon - Horizons Councillor (Palmerston North)
- Sam Fergusson- Horizons Councillor (Horowhenua) and Chairperson for Horizons' Passenger Transport Committee
- Staff from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

The Working Group is composed of staff from Horizons Regional Council and Palmerston North City Council, supported by various consultants. The Working Group has followed the guidance of the Governance Group to work out the finer details of the review.

What are design principles?

Design principles are the simple terms that describe what we want to achieve. The design principles developed by the governance group for the Palmy network are: "simple, frequent, connected, and fast".

Who created the network vision and goals?

The vision and objectives have been created through numerous workshops with the advisory group based on what they think public transport should be in the city. The vision and objectives developed by the governance group for the Palmy network are:

Vision:

An accessible public transport network that provides competitive travels choices for all users to key destinations.

Objectives:

- *Customer focused, delivering people to 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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How were the options designed?

As a part of our review we examined what other cities in New Zealand and internationally had done to improve public transport. Using a set of design principles and the experiences of other cities we workshopped network options with local representatives. Through multiple workshops with the Advisory Group, we narrowed down the network options until we felt we had some feasible proposals that meet our vision and goals to share with the community.

What is the difference between the two options?

One option includes bus routes closer to home, and a 30 minute frequency throughout the day from 6.30am until 8pm, Sunday-Wednesday, and 6.30am until 9pm Thursday- Saturday.

The other option has bus routes slightly further from home, however, it includes services every 15 minutes during peak hours Monday to Friday, and every 30 minutes the rest of the time. Buses run from 6.30am until 8pm, Sunday-Wednesday, and 6.30am until 9pm Thursday-Saturday.

What if I like elements of both?

The two options are not set in stone and there is the ability to tweak these options – it is possible for elements of one to be brought into the other. Your feedback will guide this. The important thing is for you to tell us what's more important – closer stops or greater frequency.

Why are there specific options for Summerhill?

While developing the options, an issue was identified with delivering public transport in the Summerhill area. We've identified ways in which this could be addressed, however, we would like to know your thoughts as each option has their own pros and cons.

Why can't Option 1 have the buses run more frequently?

It could, but this would substantially increase the cost as it requires more vehicles, more drivers and more vehicle kilometres. For this reason, the Advisory Group decided to split these into two separate options.

Why are the routes so far away in Option 2?

Studies of public transport networks in NZ and internationally have identified that passengers are generally willing to walk further to access public transport services with a higher frequency. Option 2 builds on these findings and has been designed to operate at an increased frequency to support faster travel into and across town.



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Why can't we have one bus on Ruapehu Drive and one bus on Summerhill Drive?

The Aokautere growth area is expanding with new houses being built in the area. Eventually, as the area continues to develop, it will likely require a second service to accommodate the growth. Until then, a second service would be an expensive undertaking for limited additional coverage, and the current urban design doesn't support an efficient service.

If Ashhurst is included in this review, why aren't the routes that the Ashhurst bus follows being reviewed?

The existing route around Ashhurst was considered as part of the review but we're satisfied that the existing route provides good coverage of the Ashhurst area. However we are aware that growth is occurring in Ashhurst and the route may need to change in the future. What we do want to focus on, is improving the existing level of service (how often the bus runs) for Ashhurst and make it more appealing to potential passengers.

What about services to Massey?

Both networks propose simplifying existing Massey University services so they complement the urban network rather than operate separately. A direct service will run between Massey and the city every 15 minutes at peak times and every 30 minutes at all other times. Further direct services from other parts of the City will run to and from Massey at key times only. These will provide direct connection at the busier part of the day. At other times passengers will be able to use the urban service to travel. There will be a single, all year round timetable, with additional buses boosting capacity for Massey at busy times of the year.

How are buses funded?

Buses are funded by a combinations of passenger fares, rates, third parties (such as advertising), and subsidies from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.

How are the costs for the two options worked out?

Costs for operating a public transport network are broken down into how many kilometres the buses travel, how many driver hours there are, and an annual cost for each bus. Both options will cost approximately the same to implement.

I don't use the bus so why should I contribute through my rates?

Although you may not use the service currently, public transport is available to all residents of Palmerston North and Ashhurst, and it benefits everyone, regardless of whether they use it or not. The most obvious benefit is provision of access to social, health and employment for those with limited transport options. It is also widely accepted that use of public transport results in improved environmental outcomes, reduced road congestion and improved safety from the reduction of



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private vehicles on the roading network. We want to have a public transport network that appeals to the city, so this is your chance to have your say. If you're not currently a bus user, take the opportunity to let us know what you would like to see improved for you to become a passenger.

Why are the options so much more expensive than the current network?

Horizons is proposing a significant increase to the level of service currently provided. As a result, the two options are going to cost more. If we chose to improve the current network, we could end up spending the same amount of money without making any significant improvements.

Why do we even have buses?

Buses offer people an alternative mode of travel to a private car. They allow a large number of people to move towards a common destination and play an important role in reducing congestion and carbon emissions. When considering the costs associated with owning a vehicle, riding the bus is often much cheaper than traveling by car.

The buses are always empty, why don't we just get smaller buses?

The buses used across the network were selected as an appropriate bus size to meet the city's peak time demand (7-9am and 3-6pm) when we have our highest usage. This does mean that during our quiet times the buses can appear to be empty. Using smaller vehicles during this period would require us to have two different fleets to meet demand, which would mean higher operating costs. On the other hand, introducing smaller buses across the whole fleet would limit the capacity of services and could limit potential growth associated with increased investment.

Why can't we get electric or hydrogen buses?

Electric and hydrogen buses are a significant investment and require a lot of work to be adopted into any fleet. This is something we would like to aim for in the future, but is currently outside of the scope for this review.

Why can't we have buses every five or 10 minutes?

We can, but it would be very expensive. The more frequently buses operate, the greater the associated cost for the service is.

Why do we have buses going around The Square?

The Square and CBD is a key destination for many passengers. We have stops at different points around the CBD allowing passengers more convenient stop locations. Using The Square also provides a direct route into and out of Main Street Terminal (MST). Rerouting buses to the ring road (Pitt St, Walding St, Grey St, Princess St, Fergusson St) will add extra kilometres, increasing travel times and the cost of services.



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Why can't we have real-time information on our buses?

In the latest Long-term Plan, we received additional funding to get real-time tracking on our services. This will still take a little bit of time to set up as we will need to find a provider and develop the digital infrastructure to support it.

Although we still have a wait for this technology, we're excited about the benefits it will add to our network and for our passengers.

What Happens Next?

Once the feedback period has closed and that information is collated, we'll use your feedback to help shape a final design to be presented to the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will then make a recommendation to Horizons' Passenger Transport Committee (PTC). From the PTC it will be put forward to the full Horizons Regional Council for final approval.

Once the approval has been given, we can start to get into the finer details of the network proposal and prepare it for tendering to the market.



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