

21 December 2021

Cody C

By email: fyi-request-17793-33673b5e@requests.fyi.org.nz

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Dear Cody

**Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (“LGOIMA”):
Request for Information**

I refer to your information request dated 2/12/21 requesting information on bus driver shortage determination, decisions, and move to Saturday timetable. Your request has been referred to me to reply. Answers to your individual questions are below.

A) How the determination was made that the cause was a driver shortage

We were informed by our Operator that they were facing a shortage of drivers, and this was negatively impacting on service delivery. There is currently a national shortage of drivers for buses and trucks. We validated this shortage in discussions with them. In viewing their rostered staff available versus what was required to deliver the service it was evident that the trips that were being missed were a result of driver unavailability.

B) Steps taken to recruit and retain drivers

As we are not the employer of drivers this question is best directed to the Operator – Go Bus Transport Limited. Environment Canterbury has recently provided backdated funding to support Operators to pay at least the living wage. Environment Canterbury have also supported recruitment efforts of drivers via advertisement on some of the buses on our network, on our website and within the bus interchange.

C) Information on how the decision was made, e.g. meeting minutes, votes on the matter

The decision to change to a Saturday timetable is an operational decision and was not made via Council. There are therefore no council minutes or voting records. The decision was made after:

- evaluating the impact on our customers from unplanned service disruptions
- consulting with the Operator to understand how many drivers they were short in being able to consistently deliver to our timetable
- understanding what their challenges were recruiting drivers, and if this was likely to be solved in the very near future
- considering what the impact to their existing driver workforce would be to continue as we were versus what the impact to their driver workforce would be if we altered our timetables

- weighing up the likely increase to the number of missed trips and therefore increased impact on our customer versus the certainty that using the Saturday timetable would afford

Our Operator confirmed that they had enough drivers to drive a Saturday timetable with additional weekday express services. Without making this change it was evident that customers would continue to experience a large number of cancelled trips causing uncertainty and frustration.

D) Information on all other steps taken before deciding to move to the Saturday schedule (if any)

We have explored a range of other timetable options, however the Saturday timetable presented as the most efficient, quick and reliable option to meet the maximum number of customers. We are exploring other service delivery options using other providers, and driver supply from other regions, however the driver shortage is a national issue. Many other regions are also experiencing limited driver availability.

E) How long is the situation expected to continue?

We do not have a definitive time period on how long this will continue. We are currently working internally, with our Operators and with other stakeholders to identify potential solutions to the driver shortage and will continue to monitor and where necessary refine timetables in the intervening period until the full restoration of services.

You will be aware that if you are not satisfied with this response you are able to refer this matter to the Office of the Ombudsman under s27 (3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please be advised that we now put LGOIMA responses that are in the public interest onto our website. No personal details of the requester are given, but we do summarise the essence of the request alongside the response.

Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact Catherine Schache in the first instance (catherine.schache@ecan.govt.nz)

Yours sincerely,



Katherine Harbrow
Director Operations