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Dear Celia

## Public Transport- Network Congestion

The Draft Wellington Urban Growth Plan 2014-2043 makes a commitment to the provision of “*Real Transport Choices*” for Wellington. On behalf of Greater Wellington Regional Council I welcome the commitments made within this plan to “*Encourage more public transport use*” with actions including “*Help deliver a rapid transit spine through the city*” and “*Work with GWRC to improve the quality of the public transport experience*” (p48). How can we achieve these commitments and grasp opportunities when they arise?

We have identified that a key aspect of the public transport experience and making public transport a real transport choice is to support the provision of rapid and reliable bus services in Wellington City for the 27,000 people each day travelling to and from the Wellington CBD by public transport. Thus I request that the implementation of more bus priority measures across the city, particularly on the key bus corridors, becomes a high priority for Wellington City Council. A combined working group of GWRC and WCC officers should be established with the specific task of addressing the issues on the key corridors identified later in this letter and implementing bus priority measures, with this group providing both of us with regular updates on progress and challenges.

Recent analysis of real our time bus tracking data indicates significant levels of delay and travel time variability on key bus corridors in Wellington City. At peak times the worst performing key bus corridors are:

- Victoria Street (Dixon St to Webb St section) – 8.0 km/h average bus speed (pm peak) – affecting approximately 28 buses and 700 people
- Willis Street (Webb St to Dixon St section) – 8.2km/h average bus speed (am peak) – affecting approximately 24 buses and 800 people
- Taranaki Street (Courtenay Place to John St section) - 12.3km/h average bus speed (pm peak) – affecting approximately 25 buses and 500 people

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- Constable Street (Coromandel St to Riddiford St section)– 12.7km average bus speed (am peak) – affecting approximately 36 buses and 800 people
- Kent Terrace and Adelaide Road (Courtenay Place to John St) – 15.3km/h (pm peak) – affecting approximately 54 buses and 1500 people

By way of comparison a typical walking speed is around 5km/h. We also understand that Auckland Transport consider 22km/h as an acceptable operating speed for urban bus routes with the expectation that where bus services are not meeting this target interventions should be considered to improve travel times and reliability.

Currently just two bus corridors in Wellington City meet this 22km/h hour target, these being Thorndon Quay and Glenmore Street with peak direct buses speeds ranging between 22 to 34 km/h. Key to these corridors being more reliable is that both have bus priority lanes and better bus stops spacing. These corridors also have the advantage of having fewer sets of traffic signals and neither of them cross State Highway 1.

Issues generated by a lack of bus priority are not just around the time a journey takes but the variability of how long the journey takes impacting on the ability to provide services that customers can rely on to arrive at a scheduled time and get them to their destination at the time published. For example on Strathmore to Khandallah service monitoring of buses has revealed that travel times can vary by as much as 25 minutes for the same trip on different days due to varying levels of congestion.

This level of variability can result in bus users having to take an earlier bus to ensure they will be at their destination on time, greatly impacting on the attractiveness of the bus as a reliable convenient transport option. Is having to take a bus half an hour earlier than you need to be sure you will be at your destination on time a *quality public transport experience*? How does this *encourage more public transport use*?

Greater Wellington is reviewing bus timetables based on real time bus tracking however just adding extra time to existing bus timetables to accommodate late running and variability simply adds significant cost the operation of the service without delivering any real improvement to the service.

Improving speed and reliability of public transport can have a very significant impact on the underlying cost of providing a bus service making it more cost effective to provide more frequent service, and reduce pressure for fare and transport rate increases.

Issues of congestion and variable travel times are not contained to the peaks but can be experienced throughout the day with specific delays for buses being experienced on weekends as well as during the week. We have recently become aware of timetable issues for buses travelling through Newtown on Saturdays which are likely to be a related to the Saturday market in that location which is affecting the reliability of bus services well beyond Newtown as buses serving Newtown travel onto other suburbs.



I would like to note a lost opportunity which has recently come to my attention. Wellington City Council has funded a re-development project in Victoria Street - the 'Victoria Street Transformation Project'. This section of road was earlier identified as one of our most congested public transport corridors yet no input was actively sought from GWRC officers on how to design this corridor and the public transport bus stop areas to better suit public transport now as well as into the future.

We now have excellent data from our real time bus tracking and are able to readily identify areas in the public transport network where, with the help of Wellington City Council, we can together make changes which will benefit not only public transport users but our wider community.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

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