

## **Submission from the Regional Transport Committee on the Proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2011 - 21**

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the Wellington Regional Transport Committee (RTC), which is responsible for developing and maintaining the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) and the Regional Land Transport Programme (RLTP).

The RTC thanks Greater Wellington for the opportunity to provide feedback on the first proposed PT Plan under the PTMA.

### **1. Framework for public transport in the RLTS**

The RLTS provides direction for public transport through its vision statement and objectives, which are supported by outcomes, targets and policies. The public transport aspiration in the RLTS vision statement is:

*Public transport will provide an excellent option for an increasing number of people, particularly at peak times along key commuter corridors. Public transport trip times and comfort will compete reliably and favourably with private cars for a majority of commuter trips. The public transport system will effectively connect people with key destinations. All public transport services will be fully accessible, including physical access, access to information and simple streamlined ticketing.*

This vision is supported by the following outcomes:

- 1.1 Increased peak period public transport mode share
- 1.2 Increased off-peak public transport use and community connectedness
- 1.3 Improved public transport accessibility for all, including the transport disadvantaged
- 1.4 Reduced public transport journey times compared to travel by private car
- 1.5 Increased public transport reliability
- 6.2 Improved integration between transport modes

The PT Plan identifies that (page 5):

*Greater Wellington wants to achieve an effective and efficient integrated public transport network that contributes to improved economic growth and productivity while also providing for the social needs of the community.*

The RTC supports this aspiration as it clearly contributes to the RLTS vision and outcomes.

Section 1 of the PT Plan (page 1) states the purpose of the PT Plan, as set out in the PTMA, is to:

1. specify how the regional council will give effect to the public transport service components of the RLTS, and
2. contribute to achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport system in an efficient and effective manner.

Table 12 (pages 51 - 53) identifies the public transport service components of the RLTS. The RTC agrees the references for those components in the RLTS 2010 – 40 are accurate.

Table 13 (page 54) identifies how the PT Plan will contribute to assisting economic development, assisting safety and personal security, improving access and mobility, protecting and promoting public health and ensuring environmental sustainability. These objectives are consistent with the objectives of the RLTS.

## **2. Public transport objectives**

Overall, the RTC supports the proposed public transport objectives and their accompanying policies and methods as set out in Part B (starting on page 10) as these are generally consistent with the direction for public transport signalled in the RLTS.

The RTC is pleased to see reliability, and its component themes, considered throughout the four 'policy areas'. The need for greater reliability of the public transport network is a consistent theme in public submissions considered by the RTC.

## **3. Funding and Affordability**

The RLTS also contains an objective for the RLTP to be affordable to the regional community and all its members, including low income groups.

The RTC supports the policies under the following PT Plan objectives as they contribute to the affordability of the RLTP:

- Objective 7: 'A fare schedule that attracts and retains customers and balances user contributions against public funding' (page 20)
- Objective 8: 'An integrated system of fares and ticketing that enables seamless travel between services and modes' (page 22)
- Objective 10: 'Deliver an integrated public transport network that provides value for money' (page 23)
- Objective 11: 'Effective and efficient allocation of public transport funding' (page 25).

The RTC acknowledges the funding sources identified in section 14 (starting on page 56) which the PT Plan takes into account. The RTC notes that the funding and expenditure projections in the PT Plan will be updated to align with the projections prepared as part of the Long Term Plan which will be adopted in June 2012.

In relation to section 14.1.2 (page 57), the RTC notes that the Wellington RLTP sets out regional priorities and a funding request for transport projects and activities in the region. This priority list is then considered by the NZ Transport Agency when developing the National Land Transport Programme. The RLTP must be consistent with the Government Policy Statement and the national-level Programme cannot contain projects absent in the relevant RLTP.

The RTC notes the constrained funding environment for public transport operations and planning in the latest Government Policy Statement engagement document and NZ Transport Agency's proposed changes to Funding Assistance Rates.

#### **4. Role of Public Transport**

The RTC supports the access and congestion relief role of public transport (Section 3.1.1, page 6) as well as public transport's role in providing social benefits and supporting the regional form, design and function aspirations of the region (Section 3.1.2, page 6). This is consistent with the role of public transport identified in chapter 9 of the RLTS and will contribute to the RLTS objectives and outcomes.

The RTC also notes the role of public transport in contributing to outcomes sought in the Wellington Regional Strategy and proposed Regional Policy Statement 2009.

#### **5. Integration with other modes**

The RTC supports PT Plan Policy 1.7 'Encourage land developments that maximise integration with walking, cycling and public transport networks and which support the delivery of an effective and efficient public transport system' (page 13) as well as the policies under Objective 2: 'An integrated network of services that makes interchange between and within modes easy' (page 14) which sets the policy context for integrating walking, cycling and park and ride facilities with the public transport network.

#### **6. Transport Disadvantaged**

The RLTS recognises the need to provide for the transport disadvantaged. The RLTS includes a policy to 'ensure the provision for public transport services and concessions recognise the needs of the transport disadvantaged (8.1.n)' and it refers to the PT Plan for a working definition of transport disadvantaged.

As such, the RTC supports the attributes, groups, and provisions for the transport disadvantaged identified in section 13.3.2 (page 50). The RTC notes and supports Objective 4: 'Improved accessibility for communities and groups whose needs are not met by the regular public transport system' (page 17).

The RTC suggests a specific mention of the transport disadvantaged be made in section 4.2 'Our main activities' (page 8) as this would be consistent with the RLTS outcomes listed in section 3.2 (page 7) as well as the PT Plan Objective 4.

#### **7. Integrated public transport network framework**

Overall, the RTC endorses the integrated public transport network framework described in section 7 (page 29) and implemented through policy area 6.1 'Network and services' (starting on page 10). We also endorse the criteria used to classify the network service layers based on 'role and function' as described in Appendix 3 (starting on page 65).

The RTC believes that the layered service approach will contribute to the RLTS objectives, outcomes and targets and is consistent with the RLTS policies. This approach will help ensure an efficient and effective public transport network that is an attractive and viable alternative to travel by private car.

The layered approach also well aligns with other regions, particularly Auckland, and will help provide consistent planning and management of public transport at a national level.

The RTC supports the description of the 'role and function', 'operating characteristics' and 'infrastructure and right of way requirements' for each layer of the public transport network as set out Appendix 2 (starting on page 63) as well as in section 7.1 (page 29).

We note that the future network plan in section 7.1.2 (page 30), formed primarily by the Rapid Transit Network and Quality Transit Network as well as rural services to Otaki and Masterton, links key regional destinations in a way that is consistent with the RLTS, Regional Policy Statement and Wellington Regional Strategy.

The RTC notes that the Rapid Transit Network corresponds to the strategic public transport network as defined in the RLTS and proposed Regional Policy Statement as per section 7.1.2 (page 30).

The RTC believes the priority settings for the layered services approach (Table 7, page 35) reinforces the future network plan and contributes to the land use and transport integration aspirations of the RLTS in the long term as well as reduces severe congestion and greenhouse gas emissions from transport in the short to medium term.

## **8. PT Plan accessibility target**

The RTC notes the target for public transport accessibility in the PT Plan has been refined to reflect the role of public transport within the 'integrated public transport framework' as discussed in section 11.1.1 of the PT Plan (page 44). Specifically, the definition in the PT Plan of 'service throughout the day' (which is the wording of the RLTS target) consists of those services on the rapid transit network, quality transit network and local connector network.

The RTC supports this refined definition as it is logical given the service level guidelines provided in Table 5 (page 33) of section 7.2.1. However, the RTC believes that any accessibility target in the PT Plan needs be well aligned with the RLTS target. In particular, that it should not be less ambitious than what is set out in the RLTS.

The RTC acknowledges that the numerical reductions in the PT Plan accessibility target are proportionate and are the result of measurements based on this new definition. Therefore, the RTC believes these numbers do not constitute a reduction in the RLTS target for public transport accessibility.

The RTC notes that PT Plan policy 1.1 (page 10) ensures a baseline for current public transport service coverage and accessibility. This policy is consistent with the geographic breakdown of service levels provided throughout the region in Table 8 (page 38) and Figure 1 (page 3). This baseline is important for measuring the effects of service reviews and changing land use patterns on public transport accessibility throughout the region.

In monitoring public transport activities, the RTC emphasises the importance of measuring standard and targeted service levels (as described in Table 5) for public transport consistent with the monitoring measure 2 in Table 11 (page 44).

## **9. Service Reviews**

The RTC endorses and strongly supports the intention to schedule public transport service reviews alongside or closely following RLTS Corridor Plan reviews as per Table 9 (page 42), although this is not made explicit in the PT Plan.

This will enable feedback from consultation on the high level Corridor Plan reviews, as well as the Wellington Public Transport Spine Study, to inform the more detailed public transport service reviews in a timely manner.

## **10. Conclusion**

The RTC believes that the proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2011 – 2021 is well aligned with the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy 2010 – 2040 and meets the PTMA requirement to give effect to the public transport service components in the RLTS.