

Report 11.338
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Committee Economic Wellbeing Committee
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Wellington City bus review – July 2011 update

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on progress with the Wellington City bus review.

2. The decision making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

3. Background

The Committee approved the revised Terms of Reference for this review in February. Considerable progress has been made since that time, although the complex nature of the network and operator relationships within the study area has led to some delay.

MRCagney have been assisting Greater Wellington with the review over the last three months, providing expert advice and network assessment and analysis assistance. The consultants leading this work are based overseas, but have extensive experience in network redesign in Australia, Europe and North America, including experience dealing with trolley buses and their associated constraints.

4. Status

MRCagney ran a series of planning workshops with key stakeholders in mid-June, involving Greater Wellington, Wellington City Council, NZ Bus & Mana Coach Services representatives. The workshops were highly successful, resulting in a confluence of ideas around potential changes to the network. The draft changes are based on much of the work done to date, and involve simplifying the network to improve service levels through frequency improvements, particularly on core corridors, which we expect will increase patronage and revenue. This is a practical application of the layered service approach anticipated by the Proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan.

5. Next steps

We are now working through the detail of the proposal to ensure that all key aspects are tested thoroughly, and to ensure that it is operationally cost neutral, as required by the Terms of Reference. Route simplification will make the draft network more reliant on interchange than the current network, so some preliminary work is being undertaken to determine the costs associated with this, particularly related to interchange infrastructure. A number of potential changes to the trolley bus network are also being explored, as are their associated costs and benefits. The costs will be built into Greater Wellington and Wellington City Council planning processes.

Once the above assessments are complete, we plan to present the proposal to Greater Wellington councillors, Wellington City Council councillors, and possibly user representatives, for feedback. We expect to do this in late August or early September, prior to the September Economic Wellbeing Committee meeting. At the September meeting we plan to seek approval to take the proposal to public consultation in October. Consultation will need to be managed in coordination with any consultation associated with the Public Transport Spine Study.

We will use consultation feedback to finalise the form of the network, and seek the Committee's approval of this before commencing detailed timetable planning, most likely in December. We expect the subsequent design process will take several months. We will seek Committee approval of the finalised network once design is complete.

Implementation planning will commence in parallel with the detailed timetable planning process. As noted in the Terms of Reference, implementation itself will be highly dependent on the time required to make infrastructure and operator bus fleet changes. It will also be linked to the roll-out of new operator contracts in association with the new public transport operating model. This process might take several years, and would be dependent on the funding of infrastructure changes, but may be able to be accelerated if it is seen as a Council priority. Implementation is also likely to require changes to the way fares work, so is also linked to the upcoming fare structure review.

6. Communication

No communication is recommended at this time. Extensive communication would be recommended following Committee approval in September.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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