

By email

29 May 2025

Mayor Gary Caffell
Masterton District Council
garyc@mstn.govt.nz

Mayor Martin Connolly
South Wairarapa District Council
themayor@swdc.govt.nz

Tēnā kōrua Mayor Gary and Mayor Martin

Wairarapa Train Problems

Thank you for your letter of 27 May regarding the Wairarapa train service, outlining the key issues you see with the service and requesting an independent review of Greater Wellington's management of the Transdev contract.

Greater Wellington has been engaging intensively with Transdev over many months regarding the Wairarapa service, to resolve these well-known issues. Here are the simple realities:

1. Transdev allowed the number of train managers to drop below the level required to run the regular Wairarapa service. GWRC was not advised of this looming situation. Transdev have subsequently assured GWRC that they are training new train managers and have secured the services of one or more former train managers. Train managers on the Wairarapa line need training over and above that on other Metlink lines, so it is not a simple matter of swapping out train managers from other parts of the network. In the meantime, some services are bus replaced. This will cease when more train managers "come on board"

I have attached the most recent correspondence from Transdev on this matter.

2. Yes, many services do run late at the moment. The reasons for this are many and varied. I refer you to the two attached situation reports, which describe the reasons for delays of over 5 minutes, for the 23 and 26 May as:

23 May 2025

- *Speed restrictions and worksites*
- *Congestion on the Hutt Line*
- *Speed restrictions and worksites*
- *Speed restrictions and worksites*

26 May 2025

- *Speed restrictions and worksites*
- *Due to a previous Network Control error*
- *Due to previous carriage fault and delay to the 821am from WELL. Delayed further by speed restrictions and worksites. Only ran to Upper Hutt as there is planned block of line on the HVL*
- *Departed 38 minutes late due to a carriage fault which had to be taken to the yard to remove off the service, then delayed further by speed restrictions and worksites*

I receive nightly service reports on the Wairarapa line (examples attached), and they generally tell a similar story. The delays are largely due to speed restrictions, not unlike you would experience with road works. Having said this, I have asked Kiwirail to look at the necessity for so many speed restrictions, and management of worksites (letter attached) to minimise lost time for train services. While cold comfort for passengers, none of the delays for the 23 or 26 May related to the lack of train managers, other than the fact that some services were bus replaced.

Greater Wellington is currently engaged in contract negotiations with Transdev. I can assure you that these challenges are top of mind as we work to ensure provision of the best possible rail service for our community.

With all these matters in mind I do not believe that an independent review is warranted. I am unwilling to throw more ratepayer money into engaging an independent reviewer to understand issues that have now been bottomed out with Transdev.

I appreciate you raising your concerns with me.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Heamana | Chair

Copy: Greater Wellington Regional Councillors
Nigel Corry, Chief Executive, GWRC

Encl: Wairarapa Line Service Reports – 23 and 26 May 2025
Letter from GW Chair to Kiwirail – 20 May 2025
Letter from Transdev to GW Chair – 26 May 2025

26 May 2025

Daran Ponter

Chair, Greater Wellington Regional Council

daran.ponter@gw.govt.nz

Tēnā Koe Daran,

Thank you for your letter received 21 May regarding Wairarapa Line service delivery and staffing.

We appreciate the continued engagement from Greater Wellington and Metlink and welcome the opportunity to reaffirm our shared goal of restoring confidence in the network.

We note that many of the concerns outlined in your letter - including current staffing levels, recruitment timelines, and interim mitigations - have been addressed in our formal response dated 21 March. Our teams engage daily in situation report meetings with GWRC, providing weekly updates which [are published on the Metlink website](#). If there are further ways in which we can keep you informed, please let me know.

Here are the most recent updates :

- **Recruitment and training:** our new intake of Train Manager trainees is progressing well, with one expected to enter full service in June and a further two in September. Recent discussions regarding the return of a Wellington-based Train Manager to assist with Wairarapa services have concluded, with a week-on/week-off programme agreed.

- **Service recovery timeframe:** recruitment of further staff is in final stages, with training to begin in June. Combined with the above, this should support improved service stability from September onwards.
- **Additional mitigations:** as outlined in recent updates, we're actively managing unplanned absences through contingency rostering; implementing process improvements to prevent some issues impacting the Wairarapa Line recurring; and increasing communication to customers where disruptions do occur.

We are also working with your team on the terms of the contract extension and are hopeful that we can find ways to improve the experience of our customers while attending to the financial constraints that may have contributed to this issue.

We're happy to clarify any of the above if needed, but rest assured our focus is firmly on enacting the plan we've outlined and achieving the best possible outcome for passengers.

Nāku noa, nā



Tonia Haskell
Managing Director,
Transdev Wellington



Peter Lensink
Chief Operating Officer,
Transdev Australia & New Zealand

Wairarapa Line sitrep

Date completed: 23 May

Service levels

Service date: 22 May

PM Dep Wgtn	Arrive Mast	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
1245	14.36	+11mins	Speed restrictions and worksites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kiwirail reviewing number of worksites - Train control reviewing process for allowing trains through worksites - Kiwirail reviewing position of all worksites to reduce amount of lost time at each site 	80
1625	18.17	+4mins			450
1730	19.21	+6mins			200
1818	-	-	Bus replaced	As planned	25

PM Dep Mast	Arrive Wgtn	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
1538	-	-	Bus replaced	As planned	25

Service date: 23 May

AM Dep Mast	Arrive Wgtn	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
0547	7.40	+10mins	Congestion on the Hutt Line	Improving priorities to ensure smoother running for late trains	310
0620	8.10	+0min			365
0649	8.34	+3mins			260
1039	12.29	+19mins	Speed restrictions and worksite		85

AM Dep Wgtn	Arrive Mast	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
0821	10.23	+22mins	Speed restrictions and Worksites		50

WRL train manager staffing levels

A minimum of 6 Train Managers are needed each weekday to deliver a full train service. If Transdev have five Train Managers on duty that means the 3:38pm and 6:18pm train services are replaced by buses.

We want to provide a consistent service for customers. We have agreed to bus replace the 3:38pm and 6:18pm on weekdays until Transdev can give confidence in their ability to provide this staffing level on a consistent basis. This will give customers confidence in our ability to offer the full train service on a consistent basis.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat	Sun
19-25 May	6	6	6	6	6	2	2
26 May – 1 June	5	5	5	5	5	2	2

Key	Full staff complement plus cover to operate peak services	Can operate peak services/ no cover	Not enough staff to operate all peak services
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Communications

Customer communication summary:

- Metlink webpage with FAQ's outlining issues
- Updates posted to WRL Community Facebook Page
- In person meetings with Metlink Senior Managers and WRL community interest groups

Risks:

- Lack of on-time information for service alerts
- Unplanned staffing issues

Mitigations:

- Close relationship with Transdev
- Contingency built in to staffing roster
- Daily contact with Transdev
- Weekly formal meeting on this issue

Upcoming Buses Replace Trains (BRT)

Further detailed information can be found on the Metlink website; <https://www.metlink.org.nz/news-and-updates/buses-replacing-trains/wairarapa-line>

Glossary

Worksites: Areas on the network where Kiwirail staff are working adjacent to the rail line. As a safety precaution trains must stop before the site. Once confirmation of the clear track has been given trains can continue their journey. This can take a few minutes.

Speed Restrictions: Train drivers are instructed to reduce speed on some parts of the track or the whole track if there is maintenance needed on the track. This is to ensure passengers and train crew safety.

Current Speed restrictions on Wairarapa Line:

- Inbound (to Wellington Station): 7 mins
- Outbound (from Wellington Station): 9 mins

Congestion: When the Wairarapa train joins the Hutt Valley Line, it shares rail track with metro services that make more stops. If a Hutt Valley Line train is delayed, the Wairarapa service may be held up behind it. Agreed priority rules help manage this, and these rules are regularly reviewed.

Rusty Rails: “Rusty rail” conditions occur when new rail is installed - the new rail might have a rusty layer on the top (because it hasn’t been used before) which can affect the electrical connectivity between the rails. Drivers are instructed to reduce speed over these areas until the track conditions are up to standard.

Wairarapa Line sitrep

Date completed: 26 May

Service levels

Service date: 23 May

PM Dep Wgtn	Arrive Mast	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
1246	1440	+15mins	Speed restrictions and worksites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kiwirail reviewing number of worksites - Train control reviewing process for allowing trains through worksites - Kiwirail reviewing position of all worksites to reduce amount of lost time at each site 	80
1625	1814	+1mins			450
1730	1919	+4mins			200
1818	-	-	Bus replaced	As planned	25

PM Dep Mast	Arrive Wgtn	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
1538	-	-	Bus replaced	As planned	25

Service date: 26 May

AM Dep Mast	Arrive Wgtn	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
0546	733	+3mins			310
0630	813	+3min	Departed 10 minutes late due to a Network Control error	TDW working through issue with the NCM	365
0658	846	+15mins	Departed 11 minutes late due to a previous Network Control error	TDW working through issue with the NCM	260
1116	1228 arrive UPPE	+52mins	Departed 46 mins late due to previous carriage fault and delay to the 821am from WELL. Delayed further by speed restrictions and worksites. Only ran to Upper Hutt as there is planned BOL on the HVL		85

AM Dep Wgtn	Arrive Mast	Variance to Timetable	Reason	Action taken	Approx. patronage
0859	1057	+56mins	Departed 38 minutes late due to a carriage fault which had to be taken to the yard to remove off the service, then delayed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kiwirail reviewing number of worksites - Train control reviewing process for allowing trains through worksites 	50

			further by speed restrictions and worksites	- Kiwirail reviewing position of all worksites to reduce amount of lost time at each site	
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