Greater Wellington
Te Pane Matua Taiao

By email

8 October 2025

Hon Grant Robertson
Vice-Chancellor Otago University
vice-chancellor@otago.ac.nz

Tēnā Koe Hon Grant Robertson

On behalf of Greater Wellington Regional Council, I would like to extend our sincere thanks for your unwavering support as Finance Minister for regional rail in the Lower North Island and your pivotal role in those early days in supporting the funding of the new fleet of hybrid trains through Budget 2023.

Your commitment to connecting the towns and cities of the Lower North Island — and linking our communities to vital infrastructure such as hospitals and airports — has laid the foundation for a transformative investment in public transport. Thanks in no small part to your leadership, we have now signed an agreement for 18 five-car battery electric multiple unit trains, marking a major milestone in sustainable transport for Aotearoa New Zealand.

The contract, awarded to Alstom, will deliver the first fleet of battery-electric trains in the Southern Hemisphere. These trains will be named Tūhono — meaning to connect or unite — a name approved by mana whenua that reflects the spirit and purpose of this initiative.

The Tūhono fleet will bring faster, more frequent services to the Wairarapa, Kāpiti and Manawatū, doubling peak-time capacity and enhancing off-peak travel.

With new depots, stations, and track improvements also being funded, this programme will support regional growth, create jobs and improve the daily lives of thousands of commuters.

Your support has helped make this possible, and we are very grateful. We look forward to welcoming you aboard one of our Tūhono trains in the future.

Ngā mihi

Daran Ponter
Chair | Heamana