

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE AGENDA

TUESDAY 27 MAY 2014

AT 9.30AM

IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, 53 HEREFORD STREET

Committee: Councillor Phil Clearwater (Chairperson)
Councillors Jimmy Chen (Deputy Chairperson), Pauline Cotter, Vicki Buck, David East and Tim Scandrett

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- PART A - MATTERS REQUIRING A COUNCIL DECISION**
- PART B - REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**
- PART C - DELEGATED DECISIONS**

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1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members are reminded of the need to be vigilant to stand aside from decision making when a conflict arises between their role as a member and any private or other external interest they might have.

3. DEPUTATIONS BY APPOINTMENT

4. FORWARD WORKS COLLABORATION IN RELATION TO TRANSPORT

Presentation from Ryan Cooney, Christchurch Transport Operations Centre Manager, and Julian Carver, Canterbury Spatial Data Infrastructure Programme Manager.

5. NORTHERN CORRIDOR CONGESTION PROJECT

Presentation from Council staff.

6. CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY ON THE METRO BUS SERVICE REVIEW MAY 2014

		Contact	Contact Details
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Officer responsible:	Unit Manager, Transport and Research	Y	Richard Osborne DDI 941 8047
Author:	Emerson Yeoman, Policy Planner – Transport, Transport and Research Unit		

1. PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks the Environmental Committee's endorsement of the draft Christchurch City Council submission to Environment Canterbury on the Metro Bus Service Review May 2014 ('the Review', **Attachment 1**).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Environment Canterbury (ECan) is the lead agency for the provision of public passenger transport services. ECan is currently consulting on the final phase of their Metro Bus Services Review 2014 ('the Review') and have put out a document for public comment. It has also provided consultation information on the Metroinfo website (www.metroinfo.co.nz). Submissions close on Monday 16 June 2014.
- 2.2 ECan's broad approach with the Review is one of rationalising the number of bus routes. This is a shift from many routes operating at low frequencies to fewer routes operating at higher frequencies, with some journeys requiring passengers to make transfers from one service to another. The driver for this is to achieve economically viable services without increasing fares or rates.
- 2.3 In terms of delivering on the Council's objective of achieving higher public transport patronage (as set out in the Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan) the Council's Draft Submission supports, in principle, the general approach proposed in the Review. However the draft Submission states that in order to achieve bus patronage growth any cost savings achieved through the rationalisation of routes ought to be reinvested in higher frequency services. The draft Submission also highlights that transport provision needs to be made for any residents who are no longer able to conveniently access a bus route as a result of the route changes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Review proposes bus route changes to deliver the new network model adopted by ECan in the Regional Public Transport Plan 2012. The proposed changes will be implemented in December 2014. It is considered that the Review has implications for the Christchurch community in terms of the level of service for public transport that will be provided and for the Council in terms of delivering on the objectives of the Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan and the need to provide supporting infrastructure.
- 3.2 ECan is consulting with Community Boards on the proposed Review. Council staff have sought feedback from Community Boards for inclusion in the Council Submission, but this has not been received at the time of writing this report. Any Community Board feedback for the submission will be provided to the Environmental Committee (if available) and brought to the Submissions Panel for consideration.

6 Cont'd**4. COMMENT**

4.1 The Council's Draft Submission addresses three key general issues:

4.1.1 That the Council recognises and supports, in principle, the need for rationalisation of bus routes as this will lead to greater economic viability without increasing bus fares or rates, and that this can and should be done in a way that supports increased bus patronage.

4.1.2 That route rationalisation will only lead to increased patronage if higher frequency services are provided. The Review does not propose any increase in frequencies on core routes. Council staff consider that the frequencies proposed in the Review are unlikely to be high enough to support a significant increase in bus patronage. The draft Submission encourages ECan to consider introducing higher frequencies on core routes.

4.1.3 That route rationalisation, as proposed, is likely to mean a small number of bus users will no longer have adequate access to a bus route. While a fixed-route timetabled bus service may not be the best way to provide for the transport needs of these people, provision should be made in other ways. The draft Submission asks how ECan is proposing to provide for those residents who will be in this position as a result of the review, and encourages ECan to provide other public transport options for these residents (such as dial-on-demand shuttle services). The draft Submission also expresses the Council's willingness to work with ECan to identify and implement such measures.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The key driver for the rationalisation of routes proposed by ECan is the need to achieve economically viable services without the need for fare increases or rates increases.

5.2 The Council is responsible for providing infrastructure to support the bus routes, such as bus stops, seats, bus shelters, bus priority measures and interchange facilities. Fewer bus routes, as proposed in the review, will reduce the need for infrastructure investment in some areas, but the Council will need to provide new infrastructure to support the new routes.

5.3 The Review proposes a higher focus on core bus routes as well as greater need for some transfers. This is likely to mean a higher level of service for infrastructure is required in these areas. The Submission encourages ECan to deliver higher frequency bus services on core routes as this will mean greater value for money from any infrastructure investment made by the Council.

6. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Committee recommends that the Submissions Panel endorse the Christchurch City Council Submission to Environment Canterbury on the Metro Bus Service Review May 2014 for approval by the submissions hearings panel.

Metro Bus Service Review, May 2014

1.0 Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Environment Canterbury's Metro Bus Service Review May 2014 ('the Review'). Christchurch City Council (the Council) sees this review as a key component in the delivery of Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan (CTSP) and is keen to work closely with Environment Canterbury (ECan) to help deliver and develop an effective and efficient public transport system.

2.0 Submission summary

ECan's broad approach with the Review is to shift from many routes operating at low frequencies to fewer routes operating at higher frequencies. In terms of achieving economically viable services without increasing fares or rates, as well as higher public transport patronage, the Council supports this approach. However the Council would like to see any savings achieved through this approach reinvested in higher frequency services, and that provision is made for those residents who are no longer able to easily access a bus route. Council would like to work collaboratively with ECan to identify and implement measures to ensure all residents are supported with appropriate transport options.

3.0 General Comments

3.1 The key theme of the Review is one of service rationalisation. Overall, the amount of reduced coverage is greater than the amount of new service introduced, and therefore there appears to be a net decrease in coverage/accessibility levels. The Council recognises the need for this rationalisation of services and supports this in principle, subject to the following two qualifiers:

1. That any savings achieved through the rationalisation of services will only contribute to an overall network improvement if those savings are appropriately reinvested elsewhere on the network in the form of higher levels of service on remaining routes. The Council believes this reinvestment should take the form of increased service frequencies. The current proposals outline a significant loss of coverage in some areas but with no evident corresponding increase in frequency on remaining routes. This gives the impression the reduction in coverage will lead to a cost saving but, without increased frequency, may not achieve the goal of patronage growth.

2. The transport needs of those residents who can no longer access a bus route should be provided for in other ways.

3.2 Wherever possible the Council would support ECan looking for ways to improve the viability of a route rather than discontinuing it.

3.3 The Council recognises and supports that the proposed changes also mean some areas have become more accessible to and by public transport.

4.0 Specific Comments – Accessibility

4.1 Policy 1.1a of the Regional Public Transport Plan 2012 (RPTP) states:

“Provide a network of scheduled services in the Christchurch urban area consistent with Policies 1.2-1.6, so that most households are within reasonable walking distance of a bus route (generally within 500 metres).”

The RPTP also lists the following measures of accessibility that ECan will monitor:

- Proportion of households within 500 metres of a bus route.
- Proportion of households accessible to 2 or more key activity centres by public transport within 30 minutes travel time.

ECan’s Draft Annual Plan 2014/15 also included a target that 95% of households will be within 500m of a bus route.

The effect that the changes proposed in the Review will have on Policy 1.1a, and these measures of accessibility, has not been explained. The Council would encourage ECan to provide information on how the proposals fit in relation to these policies and targets in order to enable full and proper assessment of the impact of the changes.

The Council also considers it may be appropriate to review these targets to ensure they reflect current aspirations and priorities for public transport. The Council is keen to work with ECan on such a review of both organisations’ targets for public transport coverage.

4.2 The rationalisation of services will mean some residents have to travel further to access a bus route. ECan acknowledges this under the ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ page on the Metro Info website which states:

“... in this review we have put more emphasis on frequent services. However, to be able to do this, we have to propose cutting some services. Our hope is that people will walk a little bit further to get a 15 minute frequency bus instead of catching a bus which may go past their house, but which only comes every hour.”

This will be possible for some users and may be justified if there is an adequate level of service on that bus route when they reach it. However, it will also leave some residents without reasonable access to a bus service. Council questions how the transport needs of these members of the community will be provided for in areas where the bus service is proposed to be reduced or removed, and encourages ECan to provide for these residents with options other than a fixed-route fixed-timetable bus service. This may include more flexible ‘dial-on-demand’ shuttle services, and/or greater promotion of the Total Mobility Scheme. The Council is keen to work collaboratively with ECan to identify and implement such measures to ensure all residents are supported with appropriate transport options.

5.0 Specific Comments - Frequency

5.1 Research indicates that increasing off-peak frequency offers very good value for money and increases patronage, and that frequencies of 10 minutes or less are

optimal for providing an attractive well patronised service¹. In light of this research the Council's view is that 15 minute service does not constitute a 'high frequency service' as the head-way between buses at a 15 minute frequency is unlikely to be sufficiently close to achieve a 'forget the timetable' and 'turn up and go' type of service for customers. In order to achieve patronage growth and ensure good levels of service for customers, especially those who may now have to walk further to access a route, the Council's view is that frequencies should be increased on the core routes (those called 'High Frequency Routes' in the consultation documents). There are only five High Frequency Routes and therefore it is not unrealistic for their frequencies to be increased to 5 -10 minutes (for example 5 minutes at peak times and 10 minutes at non-peak times) or have a standard 10 minute frequency at all times, as has proved successful on the Orbiter line.

- 5.2 With greater reliance on transfers, the connecting routes play a considerably more important role in the network. Frequency of between 15 and 60 minutes is considerable range in the levels of service on connecting routes. While a 15 - 20 minute frequency for a connector route would be acceptable, 60 minutes in most cases would not. We would suggest that the frequency be improved from 60 minutes (even at off-peak times) wherever possible.
- 5.3 The Council recognises that increasing frequency is an increased cost. However, it also an important aspect of increasing bus patronage. As the proposed changes mean a cost saving, the Council advocates reinvesting those savings into these increased frequencies to achieve both ECan's and Council's strategic objectives for increasing the use of public transport as set out in the Regional Public Transport Plan and the Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan.

6.0 Specific comments - Infrastructure

- 6.1 Service frequency is also closely tied to infrastructure investment. As the infrastructure provider for public transport, the Council needs to ensure good value for money regarding any infrastructure investment to support the proposed bus routes. Higher frequencies on the core routes where Council's infrastructure investment is likely to be highest will provide greater justification for such investment, particularly where that investment includes bus priority measures. Council is currently working through the best approach to infrastructure investment with ECan and NZTA, in the Public Transport Infrastructure Investment Business Case process. The Council would like to acknowledge ECan's collaboration and support in this process and would encourage ECan to consider the need for higher service frequencies to further support this infrastructure work.
- 6.2 As the collaborative Public Transport Infrastructure Investment Business Case process is currently underway, the Council would encourage ECan to consider revisiting the timeframes for implementing the new routes in light of any prioritised infrastructure programme that is agreed. This will help ensure the service roll-out and infrastructure programme are aligned.

¹ NZTA Research Report 396. Mees, P.; Stone, J., Imran, M. and Nielson, G. (2010) Public transport network planning: a guide to best practice in New Zealand cities.

7.0 Specific comments – Airport routes

- 7.1 Christchurch International Airport serves a central role in Christchurch's economy. The Council encourages ECan to reconsider the services proposed for Christchurch International Airport. The Review proposes that every second bus on the Number 3 (Airport – Sumner) service will connect to the airport. This will mean the airport is served by a 20 – 30 minute service. Likewise the Number 29 (Airport – City along Memorial Avenue) service operates at a similar low frequency.

The alternating airport connection provided by the Number 3 route may create confusion for those users unaware that only every second bus connects to the airport. This may be the case for visitors to the city. This could cause delays if people hail a bus only to find the bus they have signalled does not go to the airport. Additionally, the Number 3 route may not provide a sufficiently fast, direct route to the airport as it takes a meandering path through Avonhead. For this reason we would expect most airport users may be more inclined to use the Number 29 airport service along Memorial Avenue. There may also be issues of duplication as a result of providing these two airport services at similarly moderate to low frequencies.

For these reasons the Council would encourage ECan to consider a more frequent and more easily legible airport service. Specifically we would support at least one, clearly branded service which serves the airport at the same high frequency across the day and operates on the fastest, most direct route possible.

8.0 Conclusion

Council would again like to thank ECan for the opportunity to give feedback on the Metro Bus Service Review 2014. Council wishes to be heard in support of its submission. Should any issues need clarifying Council staff would be happy to discuss the content of this Submission further.

Yours faithfully

<enter name/signature>

**Chair, Submissions Panel
Christchurch City Council**