

Report 18.323
Date 6 August 2018
File CCAB-20-512

Committee Sustainable Transport
Author Deborah Hume, Programme Director, PTPP

Public Transport Transformation Programme - update

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with an update on the launch and subsequent operation of the new bus network, particularly in Wellington City.

2. Background

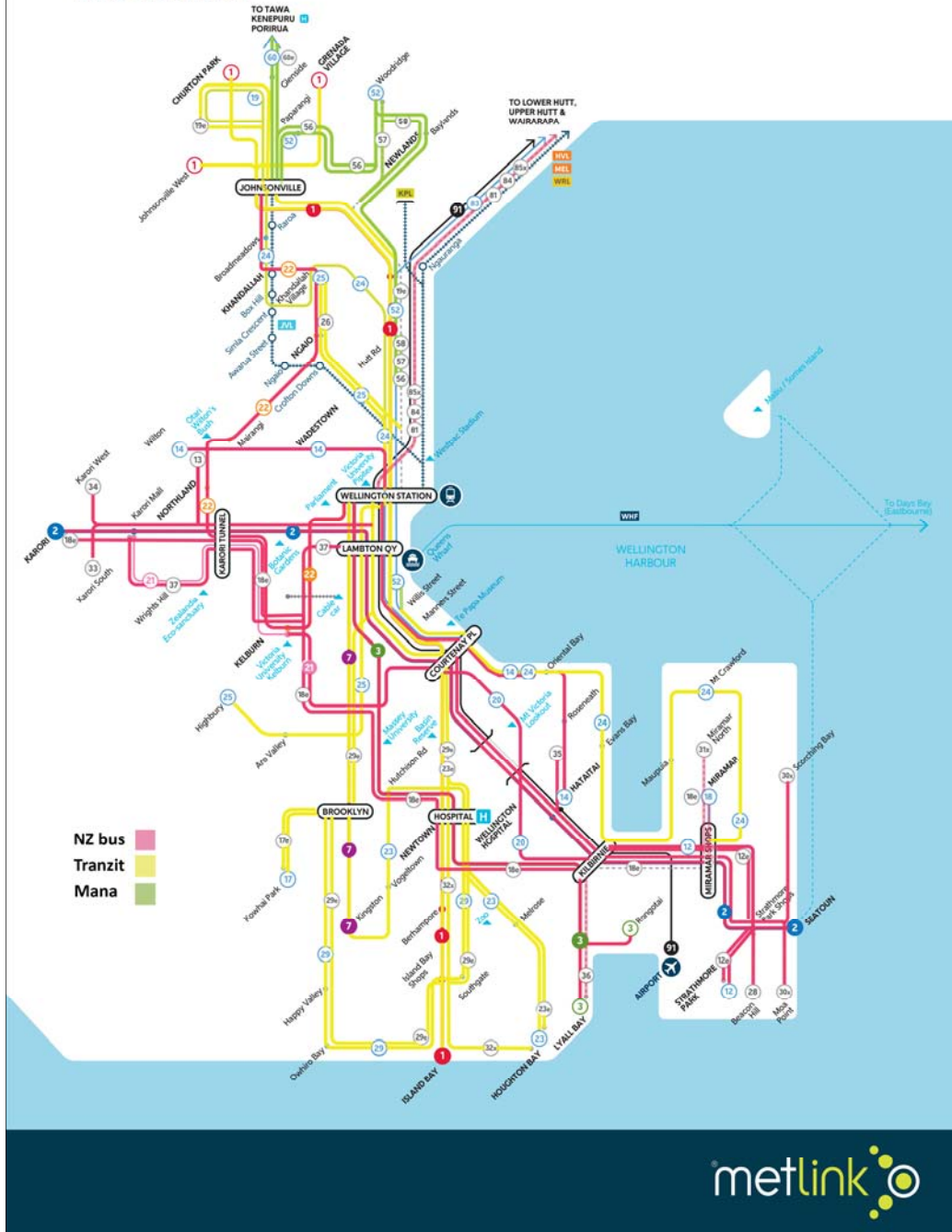
Starting 30 April in Wairarapa, then 17 June in the Hutt Valley and finally 15 July in Kapiti, Porirua and Wellington, the region saw the delivery of the most significant changes to the region's public transport in decades. The changes are the result of major design and consultation work undertaken since 2011, in order to reduce bus congestion in the central city, provide more capacity where needed and ensure more equitable access to bus services across Wellington. The changes will provide a platform to accommodate future growth in public transport beyond what the current system can readily accommodate.

The introduction of a new nation-wide Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) legislated by central government provided the opportunity to make a suite of changes to public transport at the same time as implementing a new contracting regime (i.e. PTOM requires new performance based, bus partnering contracts).

Under PTOM, services are grouped into 'units' of routes (as set out in the 2014 Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan). Operators tender (and in certain circumstances, negotiate) to deliver all services within Bus Units, instead of individual routes. The Wellington regional bus network is made up of 16 Bus Units. In accordance with the transitional provisions of the Land Transport Management Act 2003, seven Bus Units were directly appointed to incumbent operators, with nine Bus Units available for tender. The map on the next page shows the new bus network in Wellington city and which companies operate in each area.

Wellington City Public Transport Network

Map updated June 2018



The changes included amendments to timetables, new bus services, new off-peak rail services, a complete revamp of the bus network in Wellington City, Snapper ticketing rolled out on all buses across the region, fare changes, brand new buses (including double-deckers), bike racks on buses, and changes to the operators who deliver bus services.

2.1 Review and adjustments

As with any major bus network change there will be a period of settling in as customers find their way around the new bus routes and adjust travel patterns to

take advantage of the new routes and timetables. As a result, despite all best estimates, it is possible that more people may be on some services than expected and less on others. Also where new routes, timetables and connections are introduced schedules may need to be adjusted based on actual operations of the new services. Review and adjustments of network performance is being carried out in the following stages:

(a) Short Term (0-3 Months)

Immediate short term reactive adjustments to capacity based on customer and bus company feedback to ensure all passengers are being carried. May involve adjustments to bus types used or addition of capacity through measures such as banker buses if demand exceeds expectations on specific services (i.e. extra buses on heavy us services). Work with bus operators to ensure connections between services are being adequately managed and issues addressed.

(b) Medium term (3-12 Months)

Monitor timetable adherence, patronage demand and customer feedback to identify and prioritise the fine-tuning of timetables and capacity in order to ensure services are operating reliably and capacity is optimised to demand. Review changes in demand after new services introduced to identify any services that are likely to need additional capacity from March 2019 above what has been planned for.

(c) Long Term (12 months plus)

Review of full year patronage data, customer satisfaction and customer feedback to identify any specific services that have performed poorly compared with the rest of the network. Analyse issues and options for addressing poorly performing services and address customer feedback issues raised. Undertake community consultation on any suggested network changes to address issues consider resource costs and trade-offs.

3. Comment

The Public Transport Transformation Programme (PTTP) has been supported by a dedicated team and has delivered 116 deliverables in over 20 work streams. Now the changes are in place, Metlink delivers about 3,600 bus services during each week day and about 22,000¹ a week across the region in partnership with four operators (Mana, NZ Bus, Tranzurban, Uzabus).

In addition to a new contracting system supported by the ability to reward good performance and disincentives for poor performance², PTTP has also delivered:

- New weekend and evening services in areas not previously covered
- Reduced duplication of services and less congestion along the Golden Mile
- New bus stops and improved information at transfer hubs
- Over 75 transitional AmBUSsadors and Bus Buddies to help people on their way

¹ This compares to about 20,000 services weekly prior to the change – representing 11% uplift in number of services now delivered.

² As is usual when introducing major changes to networks and systems, there is currently a short term holiday on penalties and rewards while causes of performance concerns are identified, attributed and remedied. The holiday can be prematurely ended should expected improvements not occur.

- 100% new fleet of buses for Tranzit, including 3 electric double deckers in service (with the remaining 7 entering service in coming weeks)
- Double decker buses on high use routes
- Removal of old buses (all Euro 2s and below); with the continued removal of older buses as new buses arrive
- Bike racks on the front of buses (with more added as more new buses arrive)
- Reduction in the number of fare products by over 65% (750 to 250)
- Fares increase across the network and introduction of concessions, e.g. tertiary concessions have 8,000 students signed-up
- Introduction of free bus transfers if using Snapper
- Snapper rolled out across all buses in the Region with over 8,500 card swaps

3.1 Performance

Implementation was achieved on schedule for all three delivery tranches. Technical changes were implemented successfully and on time, working to tough schedules given the overnight transitions from one contract to another.

The most recent transition of Wellington City units has, as expected, been the most challenging and problematic. This transition was aggravated by some systemic challenges, including:

- Driver shortages and drivers getting used to new routes
- The extent of the route changes and associated customer reaction — both to the changes generally and in situations where service levels were considered to be reduced
- Operational challenges associated with the changes

These factors have caused frustrations and disruption to Metlink customers, which is regrettable. An operational team remains in place dedicated to quickly resolving residual issues and the results of this work are beginning to show with generally improving performance. This section presents up-to-date data to support understanding of the performance of the network and the work underway to improve that performance.

a) Bus service punctuality across the Region

Punctuality is one of the biggest drivers of customer satisfaction. Previously, punctuality was self-reported separately by each operator. Changes to technology and contracts mean that now Metlink has access to its own information on punctuality. Graph 1 shows average bus service punctuality since 2 July, with the metric based on departure time, timed stops and arrival at destination time.

Work is now underway to understand how punctuality can be improved through a combination of fine tuning bus operations and confirming that the timetable is achievable now that it is able to be tested in live operating conditions.

Graph 1: Average daily bus service punctuality since 2 July 2018

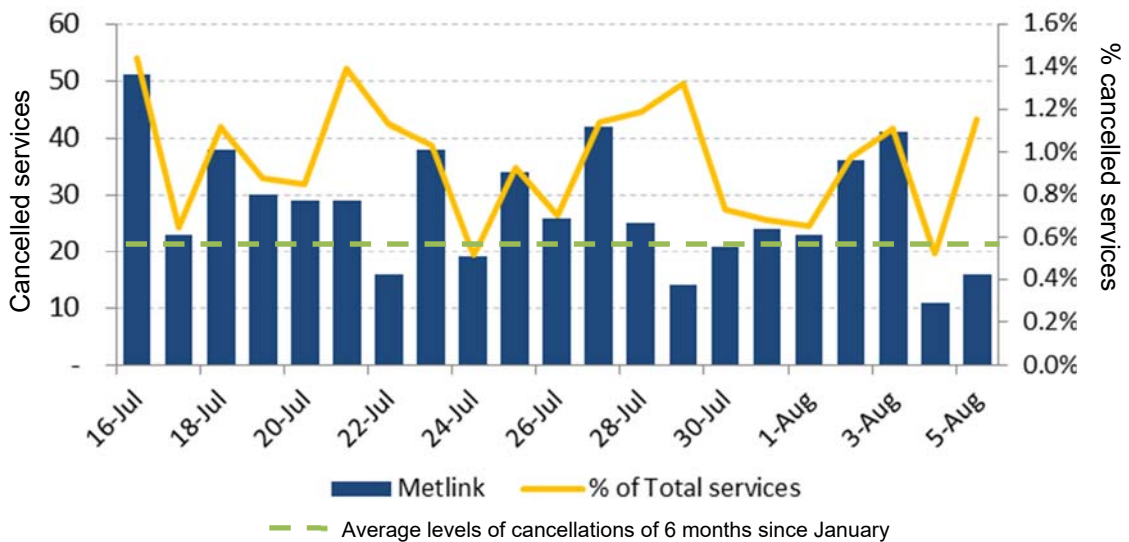


b) Cancelled services across the Region

Cancelling services negatively impacts on customer satisfaction and Metlink aims for no cancelled services.

Currently the number of daily cancelled services is similar to cancellation rates over the previous six months (refer graph 2). Cancellations have been 10 – 45 per day in previous months (average of 21/day between January and June 2018), as indicated by green dashed line in graph below.

Graph 2: Daily cancelled bus services since 16 July 2018 and percentage of total timetabled bus services



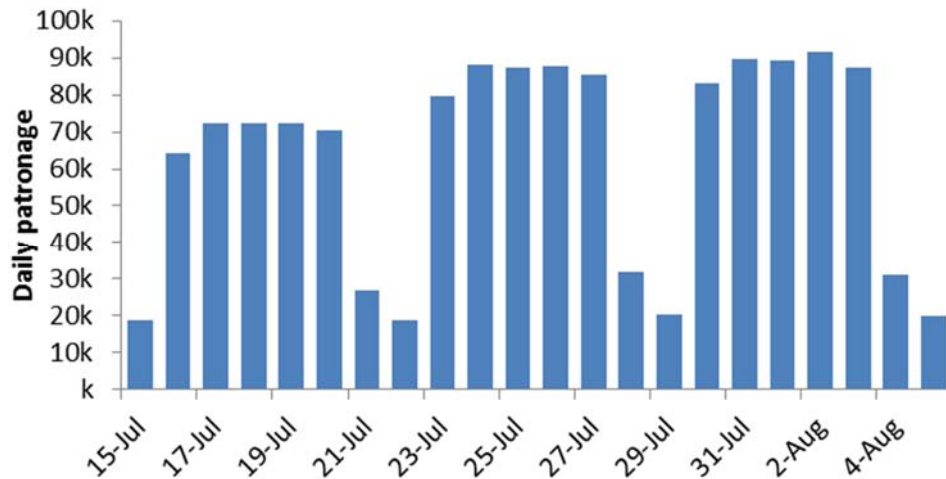
Total cancellations in the last week are about 0.8% of timetabled bus services, a rate that has decreased from a high of about 1.4%.

Metlink is actively working with operators to significantly decrease cancellation rates and expect the number to be lower in coming months; for example, operators are working on improved yard organisation, back-up fleet and staff.

c) Patronage

Metlink’s ability to measure patronage itself has been greatly increased by the introduction of new contracts and systems. Graph 3 shows daily patronage over the period of introducing changes to Kapiti, Porirua and Wellington city. From the graph it is possible to see differences between weekday and weekend patronage, and discern a small week-on-week growth. Further monitoring of patronage is required before conclusions of sustained growth can be confidently made.

Graph 3: Daily patronage across the Metlink bus network

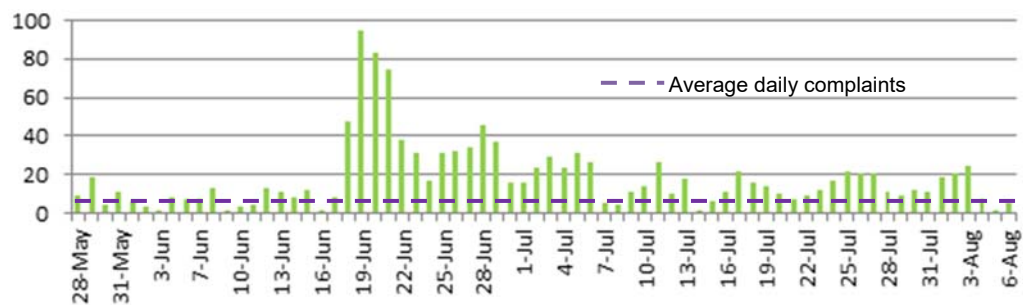


d) Customer enquiries and feedback

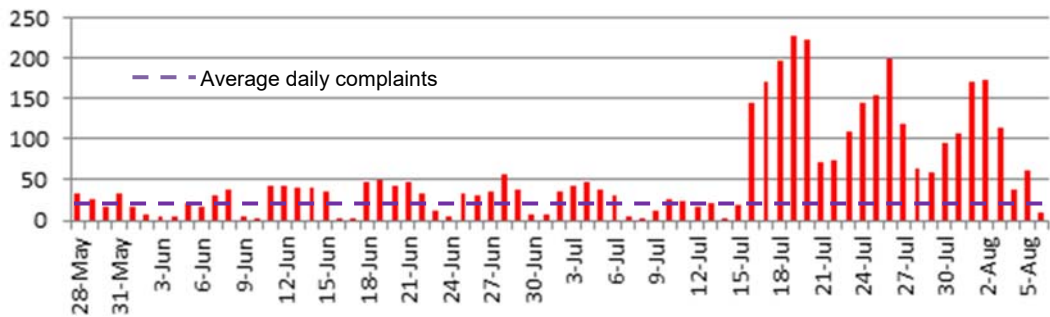
Wairarapa did not experience much change in its daily call volume of one or two calls to the Metlink Contact Centre as a result of the changes made there on 30 April; similarly Kapiti and Porirua call volumes are low and so have been added into the graphs on changes since 15 July. However, as predicted, Hutt Valley and Wellington both experienced a spike in complaints that has now reduced closer to BAU levels (for Hutt Valley, graph 4) and trending down in Wellington (graph 5).

This cycle of feedback and complaints is common when there are changes in public transport systems as operators work to bed down their operations and commuters become familiar with the new network.

Graph 4: Daily complaints about Hutt Valley services compared with annual average

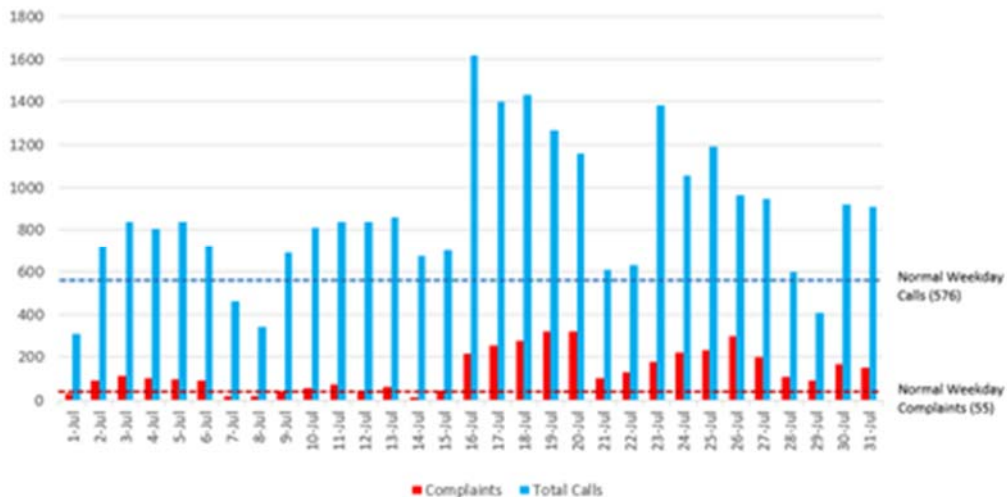


Graph 5: Daily complaints about Wellington, Kapiti and Porirua services compared with annual average



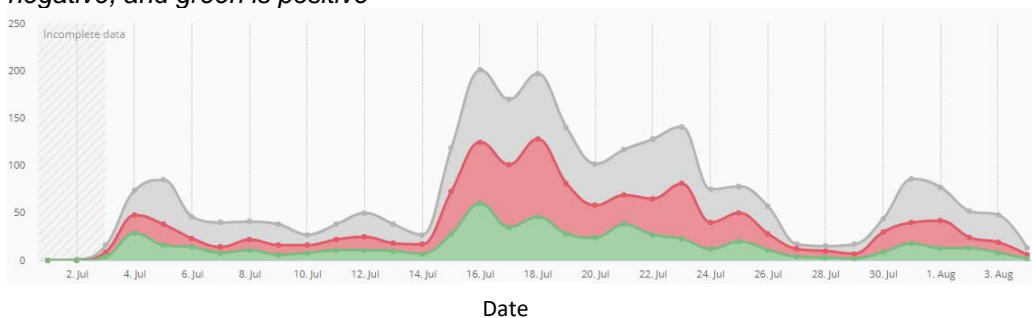
About half of the complaints are about operational performance (e.g. the bus was too full, the bus drove past me at the stop). The rest of the top topics are about service design and staff. Graph 6 shows that changes to the network on 15 July generated a large number of queries (blue bars), but they have been decreasing as people get more used to the new network. Active management is occurring in areas where there are common trends in complaints, and we know that improvements in operational performance will result in decreased complaints.

Graph 6: Daily calls in July 2018 to the Contact Centre, and the proportion that are complaints compared to usual levels



Graph 7 shows Metlink’s Facebook inbound messages – where negative messages are in red, positive in green and neutral in grey. The data shows that messages assessed as negative greatly increased around the introduction of the new network, and have since dropped to their lowest level since the start of July.

Graph 7: Profile of Metlink Facebook incoming messages – grey is neutral, red is negative, and green is positive



3.2 Known issues and solutions underway

Since 15 July the focus has been on actively identifying issues and implementing solutions as quickly as possible.

Customers expect buses to run to the timetable and transport them to their destination as expected. Factors that negatively impact customer experience include poor punctuality and cancellations; these factors in turn are caused by factors such as delays in dispatching the bus from the depot, driver navigation, poor matching of bus size to route requirements and bus bunching (i.e. where two buses on the same route arrive very close together). Each of these operational factors has been discussed with operators and mitigations in play.

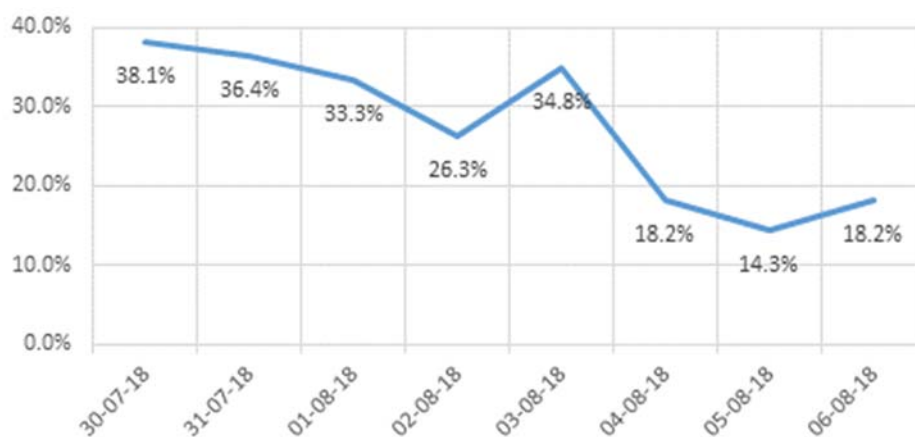
For example, driver navigation has proven a challenge for both new and experienced drivers. As a result, operators are working on route refresher training and where requested, some drivers have been supported by Bus Buddies who had the role of assisting drivers with navigation on the new network.

a) Routes 2, 3 and 36

Customer feedback and Metlink’s own information has identified that services on routes 2, 3 and 36 are sometimes overcapacity, run late and cancelled. This performance makes it particularly difficult for customers trying to transfer services as the Hutchinson terminus or board at stops closer to the centre of town in the morning peak (e.g. Southern Karori, Hataitai, Mt Cook).

The greatest cause of issues on routes 2, 3 and 36 has been identified as occurring as a result of the operator not running buses as large as those contracted for those times on those routes. Metlink is working actively with the operator to remedy the issue as fast as possible through improved fleet allocation and operational practices in the yard. There remain more large vehicles to join the fleet in about six months, and at that time fleet capacity will exceed current needs. Until the fleet is fully right sized, Metlink will require the operator to prioritise their largest buses on these routes and/or use additional buses where needed – both solutions are accompanied with operational challenges (e.g. bus stacking yards, staff allocation). Graph 8 shows improvements in matching large vehicles to route 2 which is a route that requires high capacity vehicles.

Graph 8: Percentage of route 2 trips run buses that are too small (0600 – 1000)



b) Routes 1 and 7

Customer feedback and Metlink's own information have identified that services on routes 1 and 7 sometimes run late or are cancelled. On 28 July the operator made changes to staff and route allocations that resulted in an uplift in punctuality of the services. Work continues on improving performance on these routes.

c) Other routes

Metlink is monitoring performance of other routes in order to assess whether there are capacity issues in other areas.

d) School buses

Customer feedback and Metlink's own information has identified that there have been some concerns about school children not being receiving a dedicated service and needing to use public bus services in the new network. Since implementing changes, visits are underway with various schools to understand issues they have been experienced and to aid working with bus operators to improve performance.

Undocumented service diversions

In some cases Metlink has discovered undocumented service diversions (i.e. driving routes that were not formally part of the school service). Some services that fall into this category are St Patrick's and St Catherine afternoon service R775 to Owhiro bay, Bishop Viard Route 220 school ground extension.

Resolution: Working closely with operators to add previous diversions back into the route as appropriate.

Capacity

Some dedicated school buses have been found to have insufficient capacity, e.g. Aotea College, school buses from Karori and Island Bay.

Resolution: Review patronage on each service and work with operators to add extra capacity by term 4. An interim solution has been put in place for Aotea College to add capacity in the short term until a long term solution is developed

Timetable update requirement

In some cases, the school time has changed and they have an early finish during the week (e.g. Kapiti College Thursday late start).

Resolution: Review the services and work with operators to work out when they changes can be made.

Changed nature of service

Metlink's communications and engagement team will work with schools to help customers better understand:

- Transfers – some students may need to transfer (especially in Wellington)
- More standing room – greater focus on an accessible fleet (low-floor vehicles with fewer seats) means that in some cases customers need to get used to fewer seats, even though the capacity of the bus is the same

- Shared school bus with other school students – to make best use of buses, Metlink has merged some school bus routes, which is new to some schools and students may need time to adjust.

Some schools have very specific requests (e.g. Newlands College and Newlands Intermediate) and Metlink are meeting with them to discuss options. In the case of Tawa College and Tawa Intermediate where there were changes for out of zone student travel, some adjustments were made for morning trips and a new school route 460 has been added for the afternoon trips.

e) Impacts on revenue collection

Some buses have experienced issues that impact on revenue collection – while this is unsatisfactory in the medium term, the possibility was planned for and bus operators were pre-advised that providing transport was the first priority, and customers should not be refused travel as a result of any system issues. In addition, Snapper has been very timely in providing refunds where necessary. The overall revenue collected is in line with expectations.

Management and operators have been systematically working through issues resolution, including implementing the following interventions to drive improvements in Metlink’s ability to collect revenue:

- Driver refresher training and new operational practises
- Repositioning the location of some on-bus equipment to eliminate signal interference
- Identification and remedying information and code disparities between operators, Snapper and Metlink

f) Real Time Information (RTI) issues

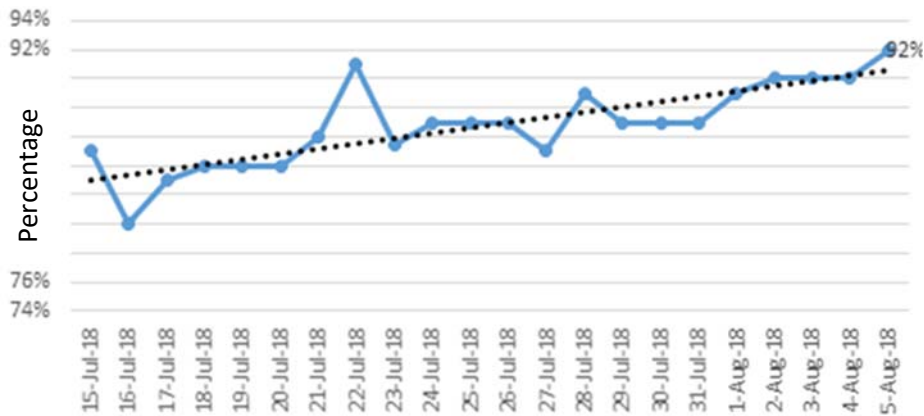
Customer feedback and Metlink’s own information has identified that RTI is experiencing issues that negatively impact the customer experience. For example, services showing on the screen but “dropping off” before they arrive; or some services do not show on the screen at all.

An important element of a well-functioning RTI system is the ability to track the bus fleet. Tracking rates in the year prior to Programme go-live have improved from 70% to 90%. Improvements in tracking rates of the new fleet on the new network are shown in graph 9.

Resolution of current RTI issues are being actively pursued and monitored on a daily basis, including:

- Driver refresher training in how to correctly log-in and out of systems
- Bus by bus diagnostic on correct wiring and aerial configuration
- On-the-ground data collection of RTI performance at key locations

Graph 9: Improvements in percentage of buses being tracked



Some issues with service design are expected to reveal themselves as customer habits become more firm and bus operations reach equilibrium. Issues are being logged as they arise with a view to inform a review of service design in coming months.

3.3 Upcoming deliverables

While the majority of PTPP deliverables are complete, there are some that remain to be delivered as a result of slippage or existing plans that held up some work beyond the 15 July timeframe. In addition to completing the PTOM procurement of Ferry services, there are two main areas of work required to close out the Programme:

Fleet

- 80 new buses to be delivered across all operators
- Delivery of the remaining 7 electric double decker buses and commissioning of the Reef Street rapid charge facility
- Completion of negotiations to allow battery retrofitted trolley buses to enter service
- Trial of on-board announcements and displays

Infrastructure

- Completion of all bus hubs as designed
- Operators complete all depots
- Complete all business systems and resolve remaining technical issues

In May 2017 Councillors chose four packages of enhancements that are included in the Long Term Plan (LTP) for delivery in next few years. Council was supportive of taking a consistent and equitable approach to the network when considering future service enhancement. This approach:

- Addresses the kind of disparities that existed in the previous network
- Provides certainty for customers no matter where they travel in the city
- Is easy to communicate the service levels to customers.

In particular, the following four packages will be delivered through the LTP in the current financial year:

- P1. Monday to Saturday service 7am - 11pm
Benefits 21,935 households in over 20 suburbs

- P3. Core routes till midnight Monday to Saturday
Benefits 35,704 households in over 19 suburbs
- P6. Weekday buses arrive before 7am in city
Benefits 2,304 households in over 7 suburbs
- P9. More regular buses till 8pm - Monday to Saturday
Core services every 15 mins, Local every 30 minutes until 8pm
Benefits 25,036 households over 35 suburbs

3.4 Other factors related to transition

a) Union negotiations

Tranzit have confirmed that they have agreed on a meeting date to commence the bargaining process with Tramways Union this month.

4. Communication

Questions and answers related to the content of this paper will be published on the Metlink website.

5. Consideration of climate change

The matters addressed in this report have been considered by officers in accordance with the process set out in the GWRC Climate Change Consideration Guide. The matters addressed in this paper report on the implementation of previous Council decisions. Officers note that the new public transport network is designed to increase public transport capacity which will contribute to an overall reduction in gross regional greenhouse gas emissions.

6. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

6.1 Engagement

This report provides observations on the implementation of the new network. Engagement on the matters considered in this report is unnecessary.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes that the progressive roll out of major changes to Wellington's public transport network reached its final milestone on 15 July when the following changes were introduced:***
 - a. *Snapper ticketing system on all bus services in the region*
 - b. *Free transfers between buses, tertiary student discounts, off-peak discounts, monthly rail plus passes and a general 3% fare increase*
 - c. *New bus routes and services*
 - d. *Additional off-peak rail services*
 - e. *260 new buses including double deckers and electric double deckers*
 - f. *New temporary bus hubs in Wellington City*

3. **Notes** that the following will be implemented over the coming months:
 - a. An additional 80 new buses including a further 7 double deck electric buses
 - b. Completion of the bus hubs in Wellington City
 - c. A trial of on-board next stop bus announcements
 - d. Completion of all supporting business systems
 - e. Introduction of additional shoulder-peak services
4. **Notes** that services in Kapiti and Porirua have performed well.
5. **Notes** that some people have had a negative customer experience with using the bus network, but that there has been a general trend of improvement in service delivery since 15 July
6. **Notes** that further improvements are needed in specific areas including:
 - a. Ensuring the correct sized buses are deployed to provide the design capacity (e.g. routes 2, 3 and 36)
 - b. Timed transfers work as planned
 - c. Real time information tracking and predictions are reliable
 - d. Services run to timetable
7. **Notes** that initial problems with timekeeping and bus bunching on routes 1 and 7 have reduced significantly following changes introduced by the operator
8. **Notes** that officers are reviewing post-commencement performance and making changes to address issues that are identified.
9. **Requests** that officers continue to monitor the delivery of services and report back to the October meeting of the Committee including the following:
 - a. Overall on-time performance across the network and the performance of timed connections
 - b. Any identified capacity issues and solutions
 - c. Any persistent problems with school services including capacity, route and timing issues.

Report prepared by:

Deborah Hume
Programme Director, PTPP

Report approved by:

Wayne Hastie
General Manager, Public
Transport

Report approved by:

Greg Campbell
Chief Executive