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**Committee** Passenger Transport  
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## Research Based Public Transport Marketing

### 1. Purpose

To provide an update on the development of a research based public transport marketing strategy.

### 2. Background

I was recruited on a contract basis and have now, as part of the restructuring of the Division, been permanently appointed as the Marketing and Communications Advisor for Greater Wellington Transport to work towards achieving an increase in public transport patronage. This objective is supported by:

- Councillors who agreed in June 2002 that they would fund a research based marketing strategy for public transport in order to:
  - understand the barriers to people using public transport;
  - identify the segments that offer the greatest growth potential;
  - improve the marketing of public transport and co-operate on marketing issues with transport operators and other Regional Councils.
- The RLTS that aims to increase public transport patronage. Thirty million passenger trips were made in 2001-2, which is an approximate growth of 4% on the previous year. However, this growth can mainly be attributed to additional services being added to the network. The aim is achieve a further 10% growth over the next three years.
- GWRC's goal of creating a sustainable region. Increasing the usage of public transport will contribute to creating a sustainable region by reducing the number of cars on the roads and thereby reducing congestion, environmental damage and pollution levels.

### **3. Update**

To achieve our objective of increasing public transport patronage by 10% over the next three years, we are pursuing the following strategies:

#### **3.1 To undertake market research to achieve the following:**

- To thoroughly understand the profiles, needs and perceptions of users, potential and non-users;
- To understand the individual's decision making process and barriers to them using public transport;
- To identify the market segments that offer the greatest growth potential.

The research results will be available in April. We will then use the research to guide our marketing strategy and develop promotional campaigns.

Four stages of research have been agreed:

- (a) Desk research analysis – looking at other public transport research to inform the second stage of our research. This has been completed.
- (b) Foundation qualitative research – to understand the market dynamics and identify the segments that exist. This has been completed.
- (c) Quantitative Research – to measure the size of segments, profile them demographically and identify their communication needs. The fieldwork for this research is currently being conducted. A report will be produced in April.
- (d) Qualitative Research – to test communication messages, material and promotions and incentives. This will follow stage (c) and will take place in the second half of the year.

#### **3.2 To improve public transport services across the region**

The research results will give us a much clearer picture of what will encourage people to use public transport or use it more frequently and, therefore, which areas we will need to improve. However, we already know that frequency, reliability, and taking people where they want to go are very important in determining the usage of public transport and these factors are already being addressed by the bus reviews. For example the Hutt Valley bus review addresses service design issues.

##### **3.2.1 Service design**

This involves undertaking bus service reviews to understand what the end users want from their bus service and what improvements could be made.

We will be implementing improvements to the Hutt Valley bus service, as a result of the review in 2002, in two phases in May and then also October 2003. A communications plan is in place to advise the public of the changes. This

includes revising the formats of the timetables and bus stop strips for the Hutt Valley so that they are more customer friendly, developing a leaflet to advise people of the changes, as well as press and promotional activities. The promotional activity will be focused on the full launch of improvements in October.

A review of the services in Porirua will be starting shortly. We will undertake a two stage public consultation process, firstly to request feedback from the public about what they would like from their bus service and then to present them with suggestions, based on their feedback, and request further comments. We will be working very closely with Mana Coach Services throughout the process. A communication plan is in place for advising the public about the review process.

A review in the Wairarapa is planned for later this year, with reviews of Wellington City and Kapiti coast to follow in the next three years.

### 3.2.2 Fares review

We already know from the research we have conducted so far that the public find the fare structure confusing and fragmented between modes and operators. As a result, we are conducting further research in order to understand the following:

- How existing users feel about the current fares structure, concessionary fares and multi-use tickets;
- What users feel would be appropriate fares and tickets;
- Their reaction to a proposal to simplify the fare structure and see whether this meets their needs.

The results will be available late March/April. Following analysis of the results and consultation with the operators, a decision will be made about how best to proceed.

### 3.3 To improve the image and perception of public transport

From existing research we know that the public transport network is currently fragmented between operators and modes and in the Hutt Valley the image is seen as dowdy, dated, fragmented and very different to people's expectations.

The research, available in April, will provide us with a much clearer understanding of people's perceptions of public transport across the region and the improvements we will therefore need to make to.

### 3.4 To more effectively manage the relationship with the operators and liaise with other Regional Council staff

#### 3.4.1 We held an Operators' Workshop on 28th January to explain to the operators about our objectives and activities for 2003-4, our research programme and areas that we might review following the research. The objective was to involve the operators in the planning process so that we can all work together

towards the same goal of achieving patronage growth. We have subsequently had a further workshop to present the qualitative research results and anticipate further workshops during 2003.

- 3.4.2 I have had on-going contact with the transport marketing staff of Auckland Regional Council and Environment Canterbury to share information and learn from each other's experiences.

#### **4. Communications**

Implementation of the marketing strategy will lead to a broad range of communication activities.

#### **5. Recommendation**

*That this report be received.*

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