

Report 03.563
Date 23 September 2003
File T/10/1/1

Committee Passenger Transport
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Costing of an all Bus Alternative to Urban Rail

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with a broad outline of the annual cost of replacing the current urban rail services (excluding the Johnsonville line) with a similar quality all bus service.

2. Background

At the 10 December 2002 Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee it was resolved that “officers be requested to update their earlier preliminary investigations on how the current Wellington rail based passenger transport services might be replaced, partially or wholly, with bus services and/or other alternatives”. The consultants Booz Allen and Hamilton were engaged to do this exercise using rail passenger data collected by the Council for the transport model recalibration. The consultants will make a presentation of their findings at the Committee meeting.

3. Comment

Attachment 1 is a copy of the consultant’s findings. The findings suggest that for an annual cost in the range of \$14.3m to \$26.0m it would be possible to provide bus services to replace the urban rail services (excluding Johnsonville). Much of this annual expenditure is needed to fund specific bus priority facilities costing an estimated \$71m. Without these facilities the service would not operate effectively. Even with these facilities it is estimated that no more than 75% of current rail users would use the all bus system, leaving 25% that would return to private car, either as drivers or passengers. This level of mode shift back to car would have severe peak hour congestion outcomes. These outcomes are not measured or valued in this study. These outcomes alone make the option of an all bus service problematic. It is clear that the urban rail system is a more cost effective transport option for Wellington than an all bus passenger transport system.

4. Communications

When consideration of this all bus option was raised last year there was some negative public feelings expressed. It is suggested that the findings of this study be communicated to the local media to overcome this earlier response.

5. Recommendation

That the report be received

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Attachment

1. Copy of consultant's findings