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Committee Strategy and Policy
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Regional Public Transport Plan Review

1. Purpose

The report presents draft policies and actions for approval for inclusion in the draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP) that is scheduled to be considered by Council on March 19 2014.

2. Background

The Council is required to have a RPTP by the Land Transport Management Act 2003. The existing RPTP was adopted 2011, but the legislation was subsequently amended and the RPTP must now be amended before the Council can procure any public transport services.

The RPTP must provide a statement of the public transport services that are integral to the public transport network, and the policies, procedures, information, and infrastructure that support those services.

The RPTP is primarily a policy document that sets out the approach to achieving the objectives for public transport set out in the Regional Land Transport Strategy (to be replaced by the Regional Land Transport Plan), the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, and the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Long Term Plan. High level objectives, targets and performance measures for public transport are set in these documents rather than in the RPTP.

3. Comment

3.1 Strategic Context

GWRC's Long-Term Plan 2012-22 defines the community outcomes that GWRC aims to achieve in the long-term to improve the Wellington Region's wellbeing. Public transport contributes towards achieving the following outcomes for the Wellington Region:

- A connected community - by providing a mass transit system that moves people efficiently and relieves congestion from our roads at peak times, and by providing an essential service for people for whom, whether by choice or circumstance, private vehicle travel is not an option
- A strong economy - by enhancing the efficient movement of people and goods within the region
- A healthy environment - by reducing vehicle emissions from private vehicles

The provision of public transport in Wellington also contributes to the Government objective of providing an effective, efficient, safe, secure, accessible and resilient transport system that supports the growth of our country's economy, in order to deliver greater prosperity, security and opportunities for all New Zealanders. The public transport network will have the following impacts on the overall transport system in the short to medium term:

- Decrease severe congestion (particularly in the morning and afternoon peak periods)
- Decrease journey times and improve journey time reliability
- Contribute to maintaining or reducing CO2 emissions from transport
- Provide transport choices, including during off peak periods
- Decrease death and serious injury resulting from car crashes.

The majority of these impacts result from the 36 million trips annually on public transport that would otherwise require private vehicle trips, and therefore maintaining and growing patronage and mode share is a fundamental objective for Wellington's public transport system, which requires services that are attractive to the public. For GWRC, this means providing a public transport network that:

- goes where people want to go, at the times they want to travel
- provides competitive journey times
- provides value for money
- is easy to understand and use
- is safe, comfortable, and reliable
- provides flexibility, allowing people to change their plans.

3.2 Draft Policies

The draft policies and actions set out in **Appendix 1** outline the approach to achieving a public transport network that matches this description. Most of the policies are based on the policies in the existing RPTP, although wording has been amended and actions have been updated to reflect current plans.

However, in some areas changes are proposed:

- The descriptions of the service hierarchy layers have been changed. The previous terminology was hard for the public to understand, and used

terminology such as ‘rapid transport’ in ways that were inconsistent with their commonly understood meaning (policy 1.1).

- A new high level safety policy has been included (policy 1.4)
- Increased priority has been placed on ongoing timetable reviews reflecting the availability of real time information, and the fact that the major service reviews have been completed and will be reflected in Units (ie reviews are more likely to focus on improving timetables than on changing routes) (policy 2.1)
- The fares and ticketing policies have been amended to reflect the 2013 fare structure review (policy 3)
- Increased priority has been placed on managing customer feedback to assist in improvement of the network (policy 4.1)
- A stronger brand across the public transport network has been proposed with the aim of providing a more consistent experience for customers, (policy 4.2)
- The marketing approach reflects a move away from general marketing to a more targeted approach (policy 4.4)
- The procurement approach and performance monitoring policies have been amended to reflect the objectives of the Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) and NZTA procurement rules (policies 7 and 8).

The intention is for policies to be succinct and at a high level in order to balance making a meaningful statement while still retaining operational flexibility. The implementation of the policies will largely occur through service contracts with public transport operators, asset management plans, and GWRC and local council work programmes.

The draft policies were discussed at a workshop with existing and potential operators in January and feedback has been incorporated, although on a number of topics there were a range of views expressed.

3.3 Farebox Recovery

Farebox recovery measures fare revenue as a proportion of direct operating costs. NZTA requires all councils to have a policy on farebox recovery that contributes to the objective of achieving a 50% farebox recovery target nationally by 2015-18.

The current farebox recovery targets were chosen with the object of at least maintaining the farebox recovery levels at that time, which were around 55%. The network wide target was set at 55-60%, and the mode specific targets are:

- 55-60% for rail and bus
- 89-90% for ferry, reflecting the fact that ferry services traditionally have a higher farebox recovery rate

- 100% for the cable car, which is a fully commercial service.

In future, there is uncertainty about whether exempt services such as the cable car and Airport Flyer will continue to be included in the farebox recovery calculation, which would result in a slight drop in the network wide farebox recovery rate.

However, based on forecast budgets including the assumption of continuing annual fare increases, the overall farebox recovery is projected to remain at approximately 55% overall for the 3 years from 2014/15, although the results for rail and bus are expected to be more variable based on the costs of specific projects.

The integrated fares and ticketing project will include a plan to transition to a simplified standard set of fare products which may involve a drop in farebox recovery for the period of the transition, but this is expected to be a temporary situation and therefore does not require a change in the target range.

4. Communication

The matters addressed in this report will be communicated to the public through the consultation on the draft RPTP. The major consultation issues are expected to be:

- The existing and future public transport network – including the implementation of the Wellington City Bus review
- The fare structure review, based on Council decisions in June 2013
- The objectives and projects outlined in the Regional Rail Plan, subject to Council decisions expected in February 2014
- The implementation of the Public Transport Spine including the future bus fleet configuration, subject to decisions from the Regional Transport Committee expected in March 2014.

Public consultation will occur with a submission period from 4 April to 9 May, followed by hearings in late May, with the expectation that the final RPTP will be adopted in June 2014.

5. The decision-making process and significance

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision-making process that will lead to the Council making a decision of high significance within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. The decision-making process is explicitly prescribed for by sections 124 and 125 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003, and involves the use of the special consultative procedure.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*

2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Approves the policies and actions set out in attachment 1 for inclusion in the draft Regional Public Transport Plan for public consultation.*

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