



Report 15.55
Date 17 February 2015
File E/12/01/04

Committee Council

Notice of motion: Cr Paul Bruce

Councillor Bruce has given notice of his intention to move the following motion, pertaining to a 3 month trial of zero fare Saturday buses in Wellington city, at Council's meeting on 25 February 2015:

That the Council:

1. *Agrees that a one season trial of zero fare Saturday buses and free transfers for Wellington city be included in the Regional Council's draft 2015/16 Annual Plan.*

Background information

1. The last major public transport initiative in Wellington was Real Time Information (RTI) 2010/11. The Regional Land Transport Programme as proposed for the next three years, is 85% expenditure on roads, 12% Public Transport (PT), 3% walking and cycling. And none of the 12% PT expenditure in the programme is planned for completion in Wellington city within the next three years.
2. The proposition is a time-limited trial of buses in the City to investigate its feasibility and popularity.
3. The loss of fare revenue of Saturday ticket sales for the trial can be met from this year's 6 monthly \$1.9 million surplus from increased rail passenger revenue. The cost has not been accurately determined with two estimates available \$2 million (NZBUS through Wellington City Council transport officers), \$3 million (NZBUS through Greater Wellington Regional Council officers). Gold card revenue should be excluded, and the cost will vary depending on the three month period in which the trial takes places, and an estimate of new fare paying patronage generated during the week. Patronage will increase on buses when favourable fare packages and more reliable services are offered.
4. Free parking attracts more cars, which contributes to vehicle particulates and greenhouse emissions from diesel buses, giving an unsafe environment for pedestrians as cars search for parking spaces. Retail owners over-estimate the importance of car-bourn trade by 100% ([Sustrans](#)). A research study focusing on Tory Street precinct, showed that the greatest contribution to the local economy came from those who do not require on-street parking ([Jean](#)

[Beetham](#), 2013). Wellington City Council provides free carparking at weekends by way of a Downtown business levy. \$1.449 million is allocated in the [Wellington City Council Annual Plan for 2014/15](#) for free weekend parking and the Downtown Levy contribution is used to offset this revenue. Zero fare public transport will on the other hand, decrease congestion, parking fuss and support local retail.

5. The trial would come ahead of the planned integrated ticketing package planned for 2017/18 which should see integrated fare package including capped fares and no cost transfers. Although this one ticket approach is a good move, council needs to act now in the interests of the city.
6. Wellington is attracting talented migrants, innovative business and forward thinking investors, all who will impact on the transport network. There is a need to provide innovative transport options for the region in ways that add to the area's appeal and reduce congestion. The positive economic gains from having long term free buses on Saturday should also be reflected in improved local retail and hospitality sales.
7. Wellington's compact size means space is at a premium downtown. Private car traffic is the part of that network that takes up the most space and energy for the least return, while utilisation of existing public transport would enhance the village atmosphere that we all seek.

References (click for links):

[Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan](#)

[Regional Land Transport Strategy \(RLTS\) 2010-2040](#)

[Integrated Fares and Ticketing Programme Update 10 December 2014](#) (GWRC Report 14.630)

[Re-Cycling the Streets: Exploring the Allocation of Public Space for Transport](#)

<http://farefreenz.blogspot.co.nz/2012/10/chine-makes-bus-travel-free-to.html>

[Sustrans](#)

[Jean Beetham](#)

[Wellington City Council Annual Plan for 2014/15](#)

Wellington City Council economic rationale remains as in their [Long Term Plan 2009–19](#) (Economic Development p89 “...*We offer free parking at the weekends to encourage residents and visitors into the city to shop and access other services.....*”)