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Committee Sustainable Transport Committee
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Bike Racks on Buses

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the progress of the bike racks on buses project.

2. Background

Bike racks on buses was identified in the Long Term Plan 2012-22 as a project the Council wished to progress. The initial phase of the project was identified as commencing in the 2015/16 financial year with the roll out across the whole of the bus fleet planned to occur in the 2017/18 year. The main benefits were identified as encouraging integration of active modes with public transport, encouraging reduced use of the private car and reduced vehicle emissions.

An initial amount of \$30,000 was identified to develop a trial for the bike racks to commence in the 2015/16 year. Two bike racks were purchased from a leading international supplier. These are the same racks which are currently used by Environment Canterbury and the New Plymouth Regional Council. It was subsequently decided to recommend that some of the funding be re-budgeted to the 2016/17 financial year as some preparatory work needed to be undertaken first.

The draft Vehicle Quality Standards currently being prepared for inclusion in the new Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) contracts will require all buses to be fitted with brackets to enable the attachment of a front-mounted Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) approved bike rack. The approved rack must be able to hold a minimum of two bikes. The mounting bracket will need to meet VTNZ requirements for a Certificate of Fitness.

A project team was established to commence this work and comprises staff from both the Public Transport Group and the Sustainable Transport department. This team has undertaken visits to New Plymouth and

Christchurch to discuss the experience of implementing bike racks on buses in both locations and has identified a number of issues which need to be explored prior to any trial commencing in Wellington. These include: insurance, weight and maintenance, driver and headlight visibility, responsibility for warranty of equipment, design and manufacture of mounting brackets, and impediments to bus manoeuvrability. It was decided that a test was required prior to a trial in order to clarify these issues.

3. Comment

The overall approach for considering bike racks on buses comprises the following phases:

Investigation Phase (completed)

This included a review of policy and bike rack operations locally and internationally. It also included visits to New Plymouth and Christchurch to discuss policy, operational and implementation issues experienced in both locations. Bus operators were engaged to participate in the test and to trial phases on the installation of the racks on buses and certified brackets.

Test Phase (this will not be live to users)

This will involve testing equipment installation, on-road testing in the road environment (including operation at bus stops, terminals, hills, tight turns etc) with Mana Coach Services, along their main bus routes but also in Wellington CBD and surrounds. This will ensure there are no operational or safety issues arising from the use of the racks. Any policy requirements will be investigated to support how and when the racks can be used.

The test phase is proposed to run during May and June 2016.

Trial Phase (this will be public and live for users)

This will involve determination of the trial length and scope, measures for use of the racks and overall success of the trial, how issues can be reported, addressing any pedestrian safety issues, what will be required to ensure good user engagement, and any requirements for bus driver training.

The trial will then be established and will need to include opportunities for cyclists to practice using the racks, data gathering and communication of the scope and reason for the trial to the public and cyclists.

The trial phase is proposed to operate for 6 months from October 2016 until March 2017 on one suitable bus route only.

Implementation Phase

This will be determined based on findings from trial.

4. Findings from investigation phase

During the investigation period the experiences of Environment Canterbury and New Plymouth Regional Council revealed different experiences reflecting the nature of a busy urban environment in Christchurch versus the smaller city environment of New Plymouth.

New Plymouth Regional Council has eleven buses with bike racks on them. It did not undertake any prior testing but commenced a 6 month trial with two racks. There was initial scepticism from the bus drivers but this was resolved as the uptake of the bike racks proved successful. The Council requires its bus operator Tranzit to record the use of the racks through the bus ticketing machines and the company bears the cost of repairs as part of its contract with the Council. The Council has been surprised by how well the racks have been used and how the drivers have adjusted to them. Bikes can be put on buses at any time if the buses are at a bus stop. The racks have contributed to growing the use of public transport in the region. There have been no pedestrian safety issues and only one incident with a cyclist.

In Christchurch a 6-month trial was undertaken with six racks on buses. These were put on longer routes which were deemed to be cycle-unfriendly. The trial was considered to be successful and there is now 100% coverage of the urban network with bike racks on buses. The core purpose for the bike racks was for sustainability reasons. By working with the cycle advocacy group Spokes, the Council was able to ensure wide awareness of the racks and good uptake. Since January this year there have been over 17,000 bike trips on buses. Cyclists can put bikes on racks at any stop and at the bus exchange there is an additional door at each bus stop for cyclists to put bikes on the racks.

There have been no changes to timetables as a result of cyclists putting bikes on racks and the time is considered equivalent to loading five passengers on a bus. School children are not allowed to use the racks for two reasons: they are often too small to lift the bikes and use the rack clamp, and there are potential risks about leaving a child behind with a bike if there are already two bikes on the racks.

As in New Plymouth, there was some initial resistance from the bus drivers but this soon disappeared as the cyclists were seen to be using the racks as intended and were not reliant on the drivers to assist.

There were no reported driver visibility issues and drivers gained familiarity with driving with racks on during driver training and while on the road. Bikes left on racks accidentally are considered lost property by the bus companies and requests for bikes to be returned are dealt with through the usual lost property channels. Both councils decided that drivers were not required to assist cyclists load the bikes onto the racks.

In Christchurch the bus companies use a mounting bracket which enables racks to be removed and placed on another bus if needed. This looks like the most flexible option to discuss with the bus companies once the PTOM contracts are awarded. Some buses may need different mounting brackets and the contracts will specify that the bus companies will be responsible for attaching the

appropriate bracket for each bus to ensure it passes the required VTNZ Certificate of Fitness requirements. Staff are in discussion with Mana Coach Services about investigating best methods of attachment for the mounting bracket.

The issue of weight on the racks has been assessed in regard to the considerable growth in uptake of electric bikes in Wellington. The racks can hold a maximum load of 50kg. Electric bikes can weigh up to 25kg including the battery. Even if two bikes were on the racks at the same time this is unlikely to create an overloading issue. The problem is more likely to sit with the cyclist lifting the bike onto the rack, particularly the rack closest to the bus. Whilst Christchurch and New Plymouth councils had not noticed any increase in the number of electric bicycles in their areas, this may not be the case in Wellington.

5. Issues to be resolved during test and trial phases

While there were no changes to timetables in Christchurch, there could be potential delays to buses from loading and unloading bikes at peak times along the Golden Mile which could be exacerbated by the high volume of buses and passengers. There may be insufficient space at some busy bus stops where multiple buses are queued at the same time (i.e. Willis Street). It may be necessary to require cyclists to only upload bikes on racks when the bus is at the front of the bus stop queue, which could result in delays. The project team will work closely with Wellington City Council and the bus operator to ensure all measures are taken to reduce this risk.

Issues of pedestrian safety were negligible in New Plymouth and Christchurch but in Wellington, along the Golden Mile in particular, there is a high concentration of pedestrians and the potential for risks to pedestrian safety could be significant. This will be assessed during the test and trial phases.

The need for good communications prior to and during the trial phase will be vital. As will the need to engage with cycling advocates to ensure there is wide understanding of the nature and extent of the trial.

Issues relating to driving along steep routes, manoeuvrability into and out of termini and around bus stops and tight corners, will also be examined.

6. Communication

Further communication on this will be provided following results of the test.

7. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report as this is an update to the Committee.

7.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is unnecessary at this stage and will be determined during the development of the trial.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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