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Committee Sustainable Transport Committee
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2014/15 Public Transport Passenger Satisfaction Survey

1. Purpose

To present to the Sustainable Transport Committee the results of the 2014/15 Public Transport Passenger Satisfaction Survey (the 2014/15 Survey).

2. Background

The New Zealand Transport Agency (the Transport Agency) requires annual surveying of public transport customers to determine the level of customer satisfaction.

The key questions and methodology are set by the Transport Agency to ensure results are comparable across regions and operators. This 2014/15 Survey is the second survey using the current methodology, following a review of the overall survey approach carried out by the Transport Agency in 2012.

As with last year's survey, further questions were added to the 2014/2015 Survey to better understand customer perception of the effectiveness of the provision of public transport information provided by Metlink and service operators. We review these questions annually.

Gravitas Research and Strategy Limited were commissioned to develop and conduct the survey in accordance with the Transport Agency's guidelines. Surveying took place between 21 April and 10 May, 2015. Gravitas staff members surveyed nearly 4500 public transport users on 209 trips on trains, buses, and harbour ferries, and presented the results to Public Transport on 27 July, 2015.

A copy of the Executive Summary of the 2014/15 Survey is attached (**Attachment 1**) to this report, along with a single page infographic summarising the highlights of the 2014/15 Survey (**Attachment 2**).

A copy of the full report is available on the Councillor portal. The full report plus the summary infographic will be made available online, in the Customer Services section of the Metlink website, following today's meeting.

3. Comment

3.1 General findings

Overall response from customers was very positive again this year, with 86 per cent of respondents saying they would **recommend Metlink services to a friend or colleague**, and 83 per cent saying they are **happy with our services in general**. Where results are broken down by operator, there are no overwhelming outliers, although each provider has its strengths and weaknesses.

The majority of Wellington public transport users are **satisfied with their trip overall**, with 89% giving a positive rating, including 14% who were extremely satisfied. While the result is positive, the share of passengers satisfied overall is down across all modes and operators (from 92 per cent). The most noticeable changes were for the **amounts of seats being available** and the **service running on time**. While the survey does provide sufficient detail to know exactly why respondents are less satisfied, it is worth noting that (for rail) the survey was conducted and at a time when rail patronage has increased significantly. The speed restrictions for rail on the Wairarapa and Hutt Valley line may have also been a factor.

A highlight of this year's survey results is the improvement to passenger perception of **provision of shelter from weather on the Wellington Harbour Ferry routes**. This has changed significantly and considerably from 38% in 2014 to 53% in 2015¹. While there is still plenty of room for improvement, this brings satisfaction with stops at the ferry much closer to satisfaction with stops for the trains and buses.

There are some areas of performance where the changes in response over the last year are not statistically significant. These areas can be considered stable from one year to the next, and include **overall satisfaction with Wellington's PT network** and **overall satisfaction with stop/station/wharf**. While figures for both broad categories are stable, when broken down they do contain areas for improvement.

3.2 Core drivers of satisfaction

Gravitas has identified items among the survey topics that are considered to be "core drivers of satisfaction". These are areas of influence where small improvements in service can have significant payoff in terms of customer

¹ Interestingly, staff members in both Infrastructure and Ferry Operations are unaware of any changes to structures at the ferry wharves. The 2015 survey was conducted 3 weeks earlier than the 2014 one, so improved weather is the most likely cause for this result.

satisfaction, and thus should be considered carefully in future public transport service and operations.

The core drivers of satisfaction closely reflect those of last year, and include the **provision of information about service delays and disruptions**, the **value for money of the fare**, the **provision of shelter from the weather at the stop/station/wharf**, **cleanliness**, and **how convenient it is to pay for public transport**.

Of these, it should be noted that **provision of information about service delays and disruptions** remains an area that needs further attention, but has improved since last year.

3.3 Responding to core drivers of satisfaction

Gravitas performed a gap analysis within each subcategory of the survey and identified not just the core drivers of satisfaction, but which core drivers are in most need of improvement. These areas of higher importance and lower performance are outlined below with notes on what steps the Council is taking, directly or indirectly, in response to these areas of concern.

It should be noted that, with the exception of **cleanliness of stop/station/wharf**, these issues were highlighted as needing improvement in the 2014 survey as well.

3.3.1 Information about service delays and disruptions

Improving information about service delays and disruptions continues to be a priority for Council. The Public Transport Group is working on several initiatives aimed at improving information about services, delays and disruptions, including:

- Systems upgrades and working with operators to increase the accuracy of real time information
- Soon after completion of the 2014/15 Survey, the Council released a real time app and widget, providing customers with up to the minute information about public transport, as well as signalling service disruptions and delays
- A new Metlink website is in the final development phase and is expected to be released in October. This will give customers the opportunity to create an account, customise information and receive updates about delays and disruptions that are relevant to their specific route/s
- Continued improvement and uptake of new online channels such as twitter.

Upcoming Public Transport Operating Model changes will also see new operator contracts with a shift to a central Metlink website for transport updates, and operators and Council staff will work together to ensure customers are promptly informed of disruptions.

3.3.2 Providing shelter from the weather (particularly at ferry wharves)

In line with the Regional Public Transport Plan, the Council has spent considerable effort improving the quality of public transport infrastructure including shelters. This work is on-going and tied in with the revision of public transport asset management plans, as well as improving policies and processes to allocate spending and prioritise shelter renewals and improvements. Our aim is to close all asset gaps (in terms of quality) at shelters by the year 2030.

3.3.3 Value for money for the fare

According to the Survey 2014/15, perceptions of value for money have improved slightly from the previous year. The focus on on-going improvements in service provision and infrastructure will hopefully help improve customer perception overtime. Proposed improvements via the Integrated Fares and Ticketing project will be important, particularly in achieving the goal in the Regional Public Transport Plan to have a “simple, easy-to-use system that provides better value for money for customers”.

3.3.4 How convenient it is to pay for public transport

As noted in the previous section, Integrated Fares and Ticketing project aims to improve the convenience of paying for fares and ensuring this convenience is replicated across modes. This is reflected in the Regional Public Transport Plan which encourages “a fares and ticketing system that attracts and retains customers”.

3.3.5 Cleanliness of the stop/station/wharf

Contracts with external partners for the cleanliness of stops/stations/wharves are already in place and cleaners are regularly audited. The feedback that staff and contractors receive is positive. With tough penalties for non-conformance, contracts are generally followed and met with satisfaction. The Rail Operations team will next negotiate a contract for cleaning and maintenance of train stations and will continue to audit the work of the cleaning contractors monthly. Graffiti and vandalism will continue to be addressed as soon as they are discovered.

3.3.6 Travel time (relative to trip distance)

The potential for improving travel time is greatest in Wellington City bus network, which competes with cars, freight and cycling for space in the road reservation.

The proposed bus network improvements in Wellington City, including rationalising bus stop spacing and new frequencies, are aimed at improving travel time. Bus Rapid Transit will also seek to improve travel times, primarily through intersection improvements and increased bus priority. The Council is working together with Wellington City Council and the NZ Transport Agency on these projects.

4. Communication

The 2014/15 Survey is expected to be of interest to the general public, public transport user groups and operators.

A media release has been prepared and circulated with the publication of this report, along with a single page infographic summarising the highlights of the 2014/15 Survey.

The full report and infographic will be made available online in the Customer Services section of the Metlink website, following today's meeting.

A letter to operators, providing a link to, and informing them of, the completed 2014/15 Survey, will be sent following this meeting.

5. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

5.1 Engagement

Engagement on these matters is not necessary.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the contents of the report.*
- 3. Notes that the final 2014/15 Survey and infographic will be publicly available on the Council's website.*

Report approved by:

Paul Kos
Acting General Manager
Public Transport

Attachment 1: Executive Summary of 2014/15 Transport Passenger Satisfaction Survey

Attachment 2: Summary infographic of key results