

the architectural centre inc. PO Box 24178 Wellington

Re: Proposed Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2011-2021

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington. Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission on this plan.

Overall we agree with the stated aims to increase public use of public transport, to design public transport systems to integrate with other modes of transport, and to especially encourage pedestrian and cyclists, to support the wider health and social aims which an excellent and responsible transport system can achieve. We strongly support the acknowledgement that mode changes are important to get right (pp. 14, 15), and the intention to provide for the carriage of cycles on public transport (p. 18). The work that has been done by the WRC in relation to folding bicycles subsidies has been a useful part of a longer term plan to make the public transport network cycle friendly, however, we recognise that most people already have a bicycle that is not a folding bike. Arrangements must be made for the carriage of a number of cycles at peak times on peak services, and not limit it to 2 per carriage / train. The Hutt Road in particular is a highly dangerous and extremely unpleasant route for cyclists, and carriage of multiple numbers of bikes must be permitted. We support also the aims for land use to be an important consideration in the planning of transport routes and services, and we strongly support aims to achieve "[p]ublic transport trips times and comfort ... [which can] compete reliably and favourably with private cars" (p. 5).

We support the proposed network hierarchy or layered service approach (pp. 12-13, 29-33, 36, 63-67) where there is a route hierarchy from rapid transit through quality transit network to the local connector network and targetted services. We support the aim to link the transit hierarchy to a system of public transport priorities (p. 17). Prioritising key transport routes with rapid and frequent transport into which lower level services feed into makes sense - but only if a transfer ticket system or a fully integrated ticketing system is available to enable mobility of users across the levels of the transit hierarchy (p. 21, 22). Without a transfer system those Wellingtonians living in the lower level feeder routes will be disadvantaged in constrast to those who live on the rapid transit network. We believe that public transport needs to support equity, rather than build disadvantage into its systems. We also support the stated aim to ensure that timetables "take account of connections with other services" (pp. 15, 16). We also support the references to the WRC advocating for urban form (p. 11), and good urban design (p. 15, 19) and support the reference to the Urban Design Protocol (p. 19). This could be strengthened by explicit statements about how this good urban design will be achieved.

We are deeply disappointed that **no new funding will be targeted at overall public transport coverage** (p. 10) and suggest that this is revisited and adjusted forthwith. An adequate public transport system is crucial to the growth of the city and of the region. We acknowledge there are additional strategies which may make public transport more attractive to more people (e.g. transfer, better bus shelters, increased frequency) but many of these initiatives will require initial funding, and possibly longer term subsidisation. One issue which the plan does not address is **how Wellington's public transport system compares with other cities** in terms of both funding and attractiveness to the public. This information as an appendix would assist submitters in understanding what is reasonable for Wellington to achieve.

There are several points which we consider the plan could better address. These are as follows:

Wet weather contingencies. When it is wet, traffic often moves slower due to additional motor car useage, often disrupting bus timetables, and causing delays. When it is wet (and cold) is the very time when the public appreciates an efficient and reliable bus service. Planning for increased frequency over winter months, and improving the design of bus shelters to better accommodate people in the wind and rain will assist in making bus travel palatable in inclement weather. Currently the placement and design of bus shelters appears to be driven by best exposure for advertising rather than the best protection for people, with negative impacts especially for the eldery, or those susceptible to illnesses, or those who simply don't enjoy getting wet while waiting for a late bus. We encourage that these issues be addressed in the intended retrofitting of bus shelters and the installation of new shelters (p. 9, 19).

Integrated Ticketing

We strongly support integrated ticketing (e.g. p. 7, 8, 14, 15, 40) across bus, train, ferry, and future light rail systems. Ticketing systems (especially the use of transfers where a single fare is valid for a time period (e.g. 90 minutes) rather than tied to a single trip (e.g. p. 21, 22)) can ameliorate deficiencies in bus routing (e.g. from Island Bay to the airport), or make public transport viable for those in low service areas. The Snapper card (or similar) needs to be intelligent (e.g. understand when someone qualifies for off-peak travel discounts), and accommodate transfers, and mode changes (e.g. buses to trains). Surely this is a matter of programming now that infrastructure has been implemented.

We also support a flat fare system (i.e. one fare for all trip lengths) rather then the advocated zone based system (p. 22). Members of our committee have seen flat fares working successfully across the world in cities as diverse as Canberra, Edmonton, New York, and Istanbul. This flat fare system will also meet the aims for a simplified system. New Zealand appears to have uncritically adopted an English fare system which appears to be a minority system internationally. We strongly encourage wider investigation about how and why flat fares work in so many places internationally.

Congestion Charging

There is reference to congestion (e.g. p. 8) and we wonder why congestion charging as a way to encourage public transport use has not been considered. We understand that congestion charging has been extremely successful in other cities (e.g. London) and consider that the WRC and WCC should seriously consider this as an option.

Park and Rides

We support the aim to increase Park and Ride facilities (e.g. p. 8), and encourage these to provide appropriate facilities for cycles (p. 14) as well as motor vehicles. Cycle lockers, rather than simple cycle stands (p. 15), as are provided at some railway stations (e.g. Otaki), will better ensure that secure provision is made for day-long cycle parking, and so make them attractive to cyclists. It would be very useful to have such facilities at key points of modal change, such as, for example, the Wellington airport. We think such cycle park and rides should be a high priority initiative for the WRC.

Bus Stop Safety

In addition to ensuring bus shelters provide shelter in inclement weather to support the health and safety of bus users, and broader issues of safety (p. 19), the design of bus stop context is also a key part of ensuring public safety. Design aspects, such as the placement of pedestrian crossings etc., will ensure that a safe environment is provided by the WRC for bus users.

Value for Money

The plan refers to providing a public transport system which is "long term value for money" (p. 23). It fails though to discuss the notion of value for money in a way that is

meaningful for public transport users. These people are conscious of the value for money in the short term, and in comparision to the much cheaper cost of running a private car (especially for off-peak when car parking costs are likely to be insignficant). Acknowledgement of this in strategy is needed. Perhaps rather than a zone-based fare, single fares which differ for peak-time versus off-peak time, and sunny versus wet days could be more innovative and successful ways of rethinking how public transport might become more attractive. The Snapper card could also be programmed to provide discounts for frequent travellers.

Light Rail

While there is reference to rapid transit, the plan is silent on the form this will take. We are strongly supportive of moves towards a high-quality, high-frequency, rapid transit system, such as light rail, and we believe that the WRC needs to work with the WCC to identify and designate routes on the District Plan to ensure that approach corridors are available for the decision-makers of the future.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that public transport is awkwardly within the realm of many groups (p. 76), and appreciate that its different needs are spread, requiring the constant reference to advocating rather than achieving. We question whether this is a sensible approach to such an important part of our transport infrastructure, and suggest some effort be made to integrate the fragmented decision-makers as well as integrating the ticketting and route connections.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this proposed plan. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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