



Report 04.44
Date 3 February 2004
File T/10/01/037

Committee Passenger Transport
Author Karen Richardson Marketing and Communications Advisor

New Hutt Valley Bus Services - Post Campaign Evaluation

1. Purpose

To provide information about the success of the promotional campaign to support the launch of the new network of Hutt Valley bus services on 25 October 2003.

2. Background

New bus services were launched in the Hutt Valley and new bus fares were introduced in the Hutt Valley, Wainuiomata and Eastbourne on 25 October 2003. Prior to this there was a comprehensive promotional campaign to communicate these changes to the public.

2.1 Promotional campaign objectives

The objectives of the campaign were to:

- raise awareness and generate interest in the improvements to bus services
- increase patronage and encourage trial of the new services
- improve perceptions of users/potential bus users.

2.2 The promotional campaign

The campaign used a mixture of communication channels to ensure that the objectives were met. This included: radio and press advertising; posters; new webpages; direct mail; press releases and articles; promotional staff at key bus stops; staff and bus driver briefings; a pre-launch party for the public; new bus livery for high frequency bus routes; and free travel on launch day.

2.3 The new look developed for the campaign

In response to earlier market research findings that highlighted the poor image of Hutt Valley bus services, a new look was developed for the campaign. This included the use of distinctive colours - lime green and dark blue - and an arrow icon to visually link all elements of the bus network. The new look extended to the development of a new livery for buses operating the new high frequency bus routes.

2.4 Evaluating the campaign

Given the substantial investment in the new Hutt Valley services and the possible extension of the new look across the region, we needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. As a result, in December 2003 TNS (formally NFO) conducted qualitative and quantitative market research on our behalf.

In addition, we are also closely monitoring the patronage of Hutt Valley bus services (see 5).

3. Objectives of the Market Research

The objectives were to:

- understand whether people knew about, understood and were interested in the changes to the bus services in advance of the launch on 25 October
- understand how the new look and promotional campaign were perceived by bus users/potential bus users and whether this encouraged trial of the new services
- understand if perceptions matched initial experiences of using the new services.

4. Market Research Results

Overall the research results are very positive. A summary is provided below and there will be a presentation at the Committee meeting.

4.1 Quantitative research

Sixty percent of respondents spontaneously recalled the Hutt Valley bus promotion or information, of which 32% recalled changes to services, 30% recalled new timetables, 27% recalled more bus frequency and 24% recalled new routes.

Around half of respondents who recalled the promotion either read about it in the direct mail newsletter (50%) or the newspaper (46%). A few respondents also saw it either inside (12%) or on the side of a bus (10%).

When prompted, almost all (92%) were aware of recent changes to the bus services, with around half being interested (52%) and excited (40%) about the changes.

Of the various promotional methods, awareness of the newly painted lime green buses (80%) was highest, followed by the new pocketsize timetables (61%) and the A3 newsletter (48%).

Impressions of these changes were favourable, with two thirds of respondents aware of the changes holding a favourable impression of the newly painted buses (68%) and the pocketsize timetables (60%). Over half of respondents who were aware of the A3 newsletter found it useful (54%).

4.2 Qualitative research

Feedback about the campaign, the new look buses and the changes to the Hutt Valley bus services was very positive. Most participants were aware of the promotional campaign and found it both visually appealing and informative. The changes participants noticed about the bus services after the launch on 25 October typically fitted with the positive expectations created by the promotional campaign although a few gaps existed for a few participants.

The new look had a high level of visual appeal because of the bright, vibrant green, which looked fresh, modern and clean and the new arrow icon looked modern and suggested an efficient service. Most participants thought the icon represented a map of New Zealand and that the circle was around Wellington, which they felt was appropriate.

Overall the changes have had a positive impact on usage of bus services in the Hutt Valley. Some participants are now catching buses or going out more often because it is easier to travel around.

Some participants were also adopting more positive attitudes to bus services because of the convenience afforded by the new core routes, ie not having to switch buses at Queensgate.

5. Patronage

Initial indications are very positive. In December 2003 there was a 26% increase in bus patronage on the new services in the Hutt Valley compared with December 2002.

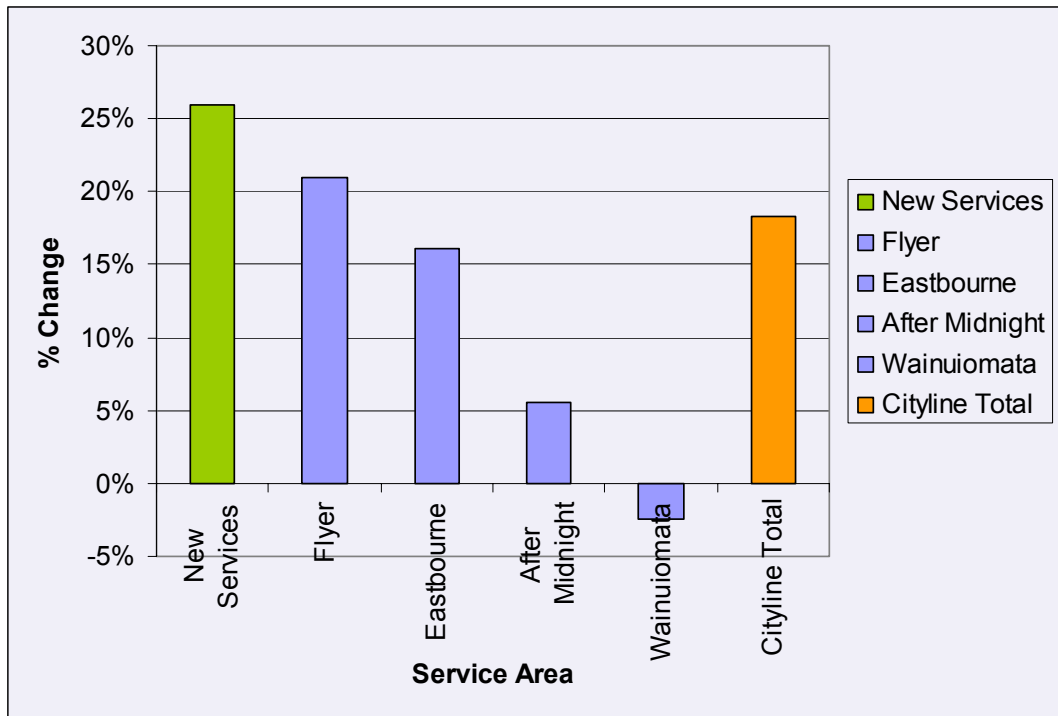


Figure 1: Cityline patronage change – December 2003 compared with December 2002

6. The next stage

Given the very positive feedback about the new look, patronage increases and the ongoing need for a system identifier, a Councillors' workshop will be organised shortly to agree how to proceed.

7. Communications

A press release will be produced to promote the growth in patronage and the success of the campaign.

8. Recommendation

That this report be received.

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Karen Richardson
Marketing and
Communications Advisor

Dave Watson
Divisional Manager Transport