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Committee Economic Wellbeing Committee
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Wellington City bus review – proposed network consultation

1. Purpose

To outline the concepts that form the basis of the network proposal that we plan to take to public consultation in early 2012, provide a summary of the consultation process as outlined in the draft Consultation Plan, and seek approval for the Terms of Reference that have been updated to reflect further changes in the external environment, process and timetable.

2. The decision-making process and significance

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002.

2.1 Significance of the decision

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

3. Background

The Committee approved a revision to this review's Terms of Reference in February. Since that time, considerable work has been undertaken as part of the Option Design task, to develop a network proposal that improves services as much as possible within existing expenditure constraints. This has involved several workshops with stakeholders and councillors, and detailed analysis of multiple options, as noted in the July 2011 update to the Committee and updates in the Service Reviews section of the General Managers' reports.

A preferred option has now been identified with the assistance of our consultants, and is currently being refined with the operators, Wellington City Council, and feedback from targeted consultation.

4. Network concepts

4.1 Current Network

The current review-area network has grown incrementally with the city. The trolley bus network on the main corridors (e.g. Island Bay, Karori) forms the core of this network (reflecting the main parts of the tram network that it replaced) with the Johnsonville Railway Line, but many of the supporting bus routes that have been added over time are duplicative of both each other and the core network. This duplication is a poor use of resources that could otherwise be directed towards service improvements.

The Golden Mile section of the network currently operates well beyond its recommended design capacity at peak times. The result is unstable flow and queuing of buses, with resulting reliability impacts. The *Central Area Bus Operational Review*¹ recommended some changes in this area, but most are yet to be adopted.

4.2 Key principles of the proposed network

The network proposal that we plan to take to public consultation in early 2012 is built around three key best-practice principles:

- The reduction of unnecessary duplication, which, along with the matching of frequency to demand, frees resources that can be redirected to service improvements.
- A focus on a planned, consistent all-day network based on the top two tiers of a three-tier hierarchy that closely correlates with the layered service approach specified in the *Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- The use of frequency, simplicity and connections to create a network that provides improved coverage, service levels and legibility, and should position the network for patronage growth in the medium to long term.

4.3 Summary description of the proposed network

This review went back to first principles and as a result has identified a network of core routes that cover all of the key destinations in the review area (e.g. town centres, universities). These routes receive the highest service levels. A network of secondary routes has been designed to support the core by providing geographical and temporal coverage to all areas with sufficient population density to support a service. These layers form the basis of a legible all-day network that operates consistently throughout the day and the week, and is supported by peak-only routes that provide additional peak capacity where required and peak-only service to low-density areas.

¹ Review of Wellington CBD operations for Greater Wellington by Opus International Consultants in 2009.

Network simplification has some Golden Mile reliability benefits, reducing bus volumes at peak times by directing one core route via the Terrace and terminating some secondary routes at suburban interchange points. However, the review recommends that these benefits would be increased by moving some or all of the peak-only routes to an alternative CBD corridor. Options for this are being explored further with Wellington City Council.

4.4 Key benefits of the proposed network

Officers are still working through some detail, but the key benefits are:

- A stable, easy to use all-day network, supported by appropriate capacity at peak times.
- An increased network of core corridors that operate at guaranteed minimum 15 minute frequencies over long service spans, connecting most key destinations in the city. This network reaches more of the study-area population than at present, with 75% of the study-area population living within 800m of the core network, compared to 58% at present – an increase of 29%.
- Secondary routes that cover most of the study area with seven-day half-hourly service, much of it continuing into the evening. Many of the current routes run only during daylight hours on weekdays.
- Reduced pressure on the Golden Mile at peak times, with improved reliability benefits.
- A network that supports the Wellington City Council growth spine with high-service core corridors.

4.5 Potential impacts of the proposed network

If endorsed by the public, this network would involve some change:

- Most bus routes would change in some way, some significantly, which would make implementation complex and necessitate a change in passenger behaviour.
- Some passengers would need to transfer between services at suburban interchange points, requiring some infrastructure improvements at those locations and the removal of transfer penalties.
- Some areas would see a reduction in service levels, where current service levels exceed demand.

5. Next steps

It is proposed that the network proposal be confirmed for consultation and endorsed by the Chair of this Committee by mid-December. Consultation will start in late-January prior to the first Economic Wellbeing Committee meeting

of the year, but the Committee will be updated on the confirmed network proposal at that meeting in early February.

6. **Planned consultation process**

Targeted consultation on specific aspects of the proposal has been completed, and general public consultation is planned to commence on 30 January and run through to 4 March. Consultation with key stakeholders and stakeholder groups will be undertaken in parallel with this.

The results of the consultation process and the conclusions drawn from it on the acceptance of the proposal will be reported to the Committee in April. It is anticipated that public feedback will require some amendments to ensure public acceptability at this point.

The attached draft Consultation Plan (**Attachment 1**) summarises the proposed consultation process.

7. **Revised Terms of Reference**

The attached Terms of Reference (**Attachment 2**) update and replace those presented to the Economic Wellbeing Committee on 3 February 2011. The changes are:

- Changes to reflect the policies of the new *Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan*.
- Clarification of the scope in relation to the *Wellington Public Transport Spine Study* and *Wellington Fare Structure Review*, and bus services that cross the study area perimeter.
- Updates to the review process, particularly with regards to public consultation.
- Updates to the review timeline that reflect the time taken to complete the Option Design task.

8. **Communication**

Communication will be carried out in accordance with the draft Consultation Plan and revised Terms of Reference.

9. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Notes the Consultation Plan set out in **Attachment 1**.*
4. *Agrees to the revised Terms of Reference, as set out in **Attachment 2**.*

5. *Authorises the Chair of the Economic Wellbeing Committee to endorse the network proposal for consultation.*

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