

Report **12.264**
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Committee Regional Transport Committee
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Let's Carpool Update

1. Purpose

The report is to update the Committee on activities relating to the carpooling service Greater Wellington established.

2. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report as this is a report for information only.

3. Background

The Wellington Region has a history of increasing demand for car travel. While car ownership levels and demand continue to increase, car occupancy is low and has remained stagnant over the past 10 years.

The Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy 2007–2016 identified ‘increased private vehicle occupancy’ as a land transport outcome. Under this strategy, the Regional Demand Management Plan identified a carpool programme for workplaces and commuters as a key travel demand management action and set a target of 3,000 registrants by 2013.

Let’s Carpool is Greater Wellington’s carpool programme that was launched region-wide in May 2009. It was established with the assistance of the New Zealand Transport Agency. The website was given a ‘govt.nz’ url at the time it was set up with a view to future regional collaborations in mind. The main aim of the initiative is to increase vehicle occupancy for trips to and from work in the Wellington region. A website was created, which enables commuters to look for other commuters to share rides with, to and from work; see www.letscarpool.govt.nz.

Let’s Carpool won the 2010 Trafanz Leadership Award for sustainable transport.



4. Results

There are currently 2222 people registered on Let's Carpool in the Wellington region. Of those, 1803 are active. There are 530 companies listed on the site and 24 organisations that have an internal administration system set up for them.

Results from the initial evaluation in 2010 indicated that Let's Carpool had positively assisted people to take up carpooling. The percentage of participants who indicated they carpoled to work as their main mode of transport increased from 12.4% to 27.9%. The results of this research have recently been published in the highly regarded *Transport Policy* journal.¹

A recent evaluation, undertaken in April 2012, indicated that Let's Carpool continues to be successful in encouraging the uptake of carpooling in the Wellington region. The percentage of participants who indicated they carpool to work as their main mode of transport had again increased significantly from 13.5% at the time of registration to 28.4%. There was also a significant decrease in the percentage of participants who drove alone to work from 35.7% to 28.6% (Figure 1).

The recent evaluation revealed that more people are finding matches and carpooling with others found on the website. In 2010, only 40% of those carpooling had found their match on the Let's Carpool website while in 2012, this had grown to 75%. This indicates that better match options, due to an increase in people registered on the site, are improving the service.

¹ Abrahamse, W.; Keall, M. (2011) Weaving a local web: Evaluating the effectiveness of Let's Carpool to encourage ridesharing to work. New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities: Otago University, Wellington.

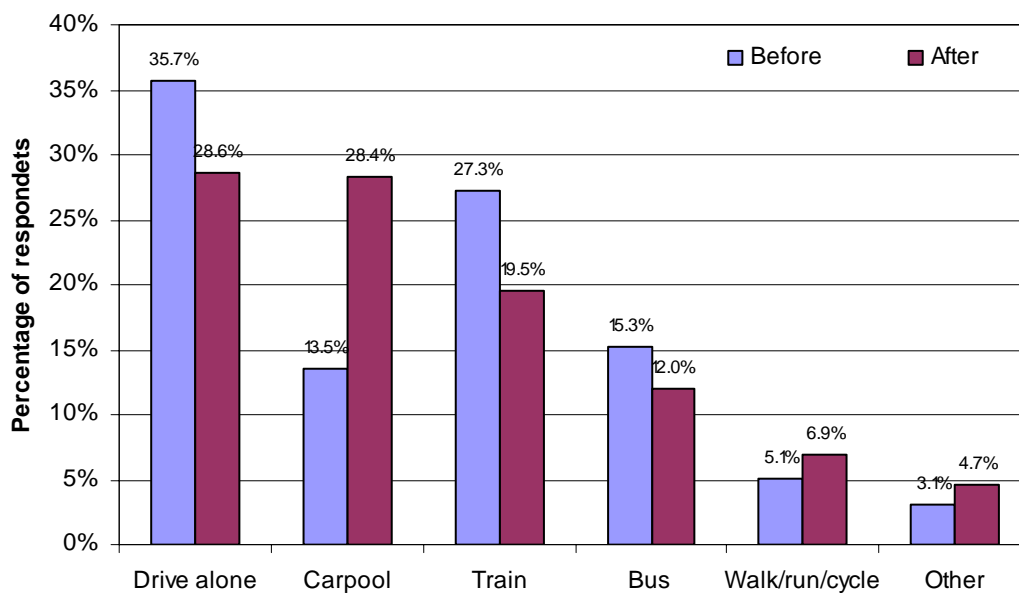


Figure 1. Main travel mode of travel to work before and after registering with Let's Carpool

5. Partnerships with other councils

A number of regions/cities have signed memorandums of understanding with Greater Wellington to join Let's Carpool.

5.1 Palmerston North City Council

In 2011, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between PNCC and Greater Wellington, to merge the Manawatu/Wanganui region into the Let's Carpool database and extend the service to residents in that area. This has been especially useful for large organisations such as Massey University which can now utilise the system across all of its lower North Island campuses. It has also been beneficial for those living just out of the Wellington region, carpooling either into the Wellington City CBD or to the Waikanae train station.

5.2 Canterbury

In June 2011, Greater Wellington signed another Memorandum of Understanding with Environment Canterbury and extended the Let's Carpool service to that region as part of their post-earthquake recovery process. Once the region had been successfully incorporated into Let's Carpool, the project was handed over to the Christchurch City Council to administer. Due to the other transport priorities, Let's Carpool did not get promoted by the council and no administrator has yet been appointed.

5.3 Auckland Transport

Auckland Transport has been utilising RidePro (the same software used for Let's Carpool) since 2008 but has not launched a region-wide campaign to

promote its 'Rideshare' website. A renewed interest in encouraging carpooling as a travel demand management tool led to discussions about merging with the Let's Carpool service and running a large-scale marketing campaign. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed between Auckland Transport and Greater Wellington to confirm this partnership.

5.4 Hamilton City Council

Since 2010, Hamilton City Council has been interested in providing a carpooling scheme in its area. The software license fee has prohibited it from participating in a carpooling system.

6. Let's Carpool goes national

Due to the increasing number of regions interested in offering their residents a carpooling service, Auckland Transport and Greater Wellington have investigated the potential for further regional collaboration. The two organisations have since established a partnership to transform Let's Carpool into a national website that can be utilised by any region in New Zealand interested in promoting carpooling.

The Let's Carpool website is currently being upgraded to accommodate this transformation. The purpose of the re-design is to refresh the look and feel of the website, focussing on the regional pages and improving the user-friendliness of the site.

One of the main benefits of nationalising the programme is the creation of a single national brand, establishing Let's Carpool as the market leader in commuter carpooling. This will increase both its public profile and its opportunity for media exposure, both of which help to attract a critical mass of people to the site. A national website supported by local government also provides a legitimate and trustworthy carpooling option for NZTA to support at a national level.

Collaboration on branding and marketing will lead to cost-efficiencies as resources can be shared across regions and the already existing service will make it easier and cheaper for new regions to join. Users will face less confusion with other carpooling websites on offer, they will be able to use the service if their commute crosses regional boundaries and they will not need to re-register if they move cities within New Zealand.

The license fee arrangements with the software providers is also being renegotiated. Rather than each region paying an individual license fee, which has been too expensive for some regions, a capped national fee will be split between all participating regions. This will reduce the overall cost to the country and significantly reduce costs for smaller regions joining the scheme.

Hamilton City Council, Nelson City Council and Taranaki Regional Council have joined the national scheme since the national license fee has been established. Further regions are expected to join once the national site is up and running.

The new website will be launched at the end of June with a national campaign supported by a press release from NZTA. Auckland Transport will be undertaking a large scale marketing push in their region, with spill-over effects for other participating regions expected. The Wellington region will be doing local promotion of the site through newspaper advertising, communication with large employers, roadside banners and radio advertising if budget allows.

With a limited budget for advertising in the Wellington region, creative approaches have been adopted to market the website to new users. GW recently collaborated with a local Wellington band to film a carpooling music video that is expected to be screened on national television and will provide a new angle for a press release to accompany the national campaign.

Below is a screenshot of the new website which is still under development.



7. Conclusion

Let's Carpool has been running successfully since 2009 with registration numbers in the Wellington region on track to meet the 2013 targets set out in the Regional Land Transport Strategy 2007-2016.

The service has been effective in increasing carpooling in the region and reducing the number of people driving into the Wellington City CBD alone during peak hours. The continued growth in registration numbers results in an ongoing improvement to the matching service.

As local government interest in carpooling grows around the country, a national approach has been developed, leveraging off the success of Let's Carpool. A partnership with Auckland Transport has helped transform Let's

Carpool into a New Zealand-wide service which has seen the Auckland, Nelson, Manawatu/Wanganui, Taranaki and Waikato regions joining up.

8. Communication

Communications will be made on an on-going basis.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee

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

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