

## Summary of issues raised in written feedback

Written feedback was received from 20 respondents during the consultation on fare structure options via email, letter and comment on the consultation brochure. The issues raised by respondents are summarised below.

### General

There was general support for the principle of fares being as cheap for as many people as possible. Respondents commented that Wellington already had some of the most expensive fares in New Zealand and Australia, and increasing fares in the current economic climate would significantly adversely impact the current level of patronage. Fares should be structured to encourage people to use public transport. Continual fare increments reduce patronage and increase congestion in Wellington CBD. Fares should only be increased in line with increasing costs and should be balanced against the need to encourage more people onto public transport.

Other respondents commented that a high minimum fare is not acceptable as this will be a barrier to people who do not own a car, are unable to drive or cannot use active modes to access the goods and services they need. A low one zone fare is essential to support those dependent on public transport.

Other comments included that subsidies should be increased so that fares can be cut for short trips to encourage people back to using public transport. Once the 'habit' of public transport is embedded then fares can be slowly raised again (but not too high) and the fares for slightly longer distance trips can be dropped to encourage this band of people onto public transport and so on. Public transport now has become too inconvenient for the price charged.

Another respondent commented that the current fare structure was confusing and expensive with a number of smart cards, paper 'clip the ticket', expensive daily and monthly passes options. This respondent commented that Wellington has the highest farebox recovery rate in the country which makes fares in Wellington too high, affecting patronage and reducing any growth in patronage. The programme of regular fare increases is further exacerbated by the 50 cents rounding which means all fares have a minimum step change. For zone one, the change between \$1.50 and \$2 is a 33% increase which is significant. The respondent considered that a 50% farebox recovery rate is relatively fair but this needs to be supported by other initiatives such as ticketing technology, and bus priority measures.

### Integrated fares and ticketing

Respondents considered integrated ticketing with no transfer penalties essential for the network. One respondent commented that there should be no major changes to fare structure until there is full ticketing and fare integration across all bus and train services. Any changes should be focused on making the structure less confusing.

Another respondent commented that GWRC's policy of supporting monthly discounts for rail users but not bus users is neither fair nor sustainable, especially since all public

transport costs increases are for improved rail services. The same fares must be applied to all modes.

Respondents commented that the single worst element of the Wellington fare structure is that transferring between services is penalised. The use of single trip tickets is a major disincentive to transfer between different modes and services. A respondent noted that the current consultation round does not address this issue and is hopeful this is because the decision has already been taken.

A respondent commented that electronic ticketing was secondary to providing a quality reliable service. Implementing Snapper on the trains would require a guard on each door to ensure people tagged off or put barriers at stations where people can tag off. This will require the stations and possibly the lines to be fenced. Other respondents commented that Snapper was dysfunctional, unreliable and enabled fare rises to be almost invisible to most users.

## Zones

3 respondents supported the combined approach of zonal plus point to point fare structure. However these respondents were split over the number of zones with one supporting the 5 district based zones and 2 supporting retention of the current 14 concentric zones. One respondent commented that the combined approach would be better for those who live just across a zone boundary

One respondent considered the issue of zones vs distance based fares at length. The implementation of distance based fares would need electronic ticketing and would incur large IT and administration costs. On balance the respondent supported a zonal system with fewer zones to make it easier to use the network. Each zone should be about the same size as zones 1 to 3 currently with a fare of around the 2 zone level for one zone travel. Whilst this means that shorter trips are penalised but shorter distance travellers will have more options to walk or cycle. The respondent considered that it is very important that large zones have a large overlap which would mean a number of stops within two zones and the fare charged would be whichever advantaged the particular passenger. Other respondents opposed large zones with flat fares as this disadvantaged passengers taking short journeys.

Wellington City Youth Council (WCYC) plus 3 other respondents supported retaining the current 14 zones and basing fares on a purely zonal system as it is simple and more easily understood. WCYC noted that a point to point system was likely to result in lower fares for some, many low income people, including youth, do not use stored value cards as they do not wish to pay the initial outlay to purchase the card. WCYC consider the existing zonal system means that each trip is more cost reflective and that few zones will mean higher cost for shorter trips.

Two respondents supported having just zonal fares with the 5 large district zones. One respondent commented that the zonal options were too limited. Of the options presented, their preference was for the smaller district based zones, however their view was that zones should be radiating out from Wellington City with some overlapping of boundaries with the zones set out as

- Wellington city to Johnsonville/ Newlands and Churton Park
- Johnsonville to Plimmerton and Ngauranga to Stokes Valley
- Mana to Paekakariki and Stokes to Maymorn
- Paekakariki to Waikanae and Maymorn to Featherston
- Waikanae to Otaki and Featherston to Carterton
- Carterton to Masterton

Another respondent proposed 4 concentric and overlapping zones covering

- Wellington city and northern suburbs
- Lower Hutt, Porirua to Pukerua Bay and Upper Hutt
- Kapiti to Waikanae and South Wairarapa to Greytown
- Everything further north to Levin and Masterton.

Each zone would have large overlaps of 4km for the inner two zones and 6km for the outer zones. This respondent noted that a disadvantage of larger zones is the large fare increase between zones.

Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) urged the Council to consider the impact of any changes to the fare structure on residents in Otaki and wished that any changes would mean any improvement in service for Otaki residents. KCDC was concerned that any change to fare structure (e.g. the larger district zones) may result in higher fares for shorter journeys would negatively impact on people wishing to travel between Otaki, Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Paekakariki. KCDC noted that the impacts of possible changes to the fare structure could not be assessed from the information provided in the consultation documentation.

## **Fare per kilometre travelled**

Four respondents wished the current system remain. One of these commented that the current system worked well and unless there was pressure to change, the status quo should not be altered.

Two respondents supported reducing the charge per kilometre with journey length and one respondent supported increasing the charge with distance. The respondent comments that current fares have very different benefit levels with one to three zone fare being comparable to car costs while fares for zones 8 and above are between one quarter and one third the cost of travel by car. The respondent considered that it was not fair that some commuters were heavily subsidised whilst others were not. They considered that all public transport services cost less than the equivalent car journey to encourage public transport usage.

## **Off peak fares**

Respondents supported introducing off peak fares to make bus and rail consistent. Other respondents commented that off peak fares should be introduced if beneficiaries' discounts were removed. Views on how much discount should be offered were mixed with support for 25, 20 to 35% and 50% discounts. One respondent commented that a

25% discount for off peak fares should attract additional passengers and '50% seemed over the top'. Another considered that a 50% discount was preferred unless it required significantly higher subsidies, otherwise 25% was supported. The respondent considered that peak travellers should not be subsidising off peak passengers.

KCDC commented that the 50% off peak discount was an attractive option for low income passengers but noted that this would have to be compensated by a rise in peak fares. They sought that consideration needed to be given to who will be affected by change to the fare structure and how any adverse impacts will be mitigated.

WCYC supported an off peak fare as any discount will have an impact on the travel habits of young people as they are a very price sensitive market.

One respondent supported the off peak fares being offered between 10am and 2.30pm and after 7pm during weekdays and all day during the weekends and public holidays plus raised the possibility of a discounted 'contra-peak' fare. They proposed that children should travel free if accompanied by an adult during off peak times to encourage more family trips.

Other respondents opposed any off peak fare discount, particularly if this impacted on peak travel fares. Any introduction should be accompanied by an increase in the service levels at the beginning and end of the off peak period so that people could change their travel habits.

## **Fare products**

Support for the stored value card with either periodicals or fare cap was fairly even. One respondent who proposed a 4 zone option noted that paper tickets still had a place and that there was potential for vending machines or ticket booths at major stations to purchase tickets. Smart cards would be used by the majority of passengers as the discounts offered through their use would recoup over time through the initial outlay costs of obtaining a card.

There was concern that removing a monthly pass with 40% discount and replacing it with a system for 9 trips plus the rest free (giving only a 10% discount) would stop people using public transport.

Three respondents supported using a time based ticketing with 2 hour trip for the single fare combined with larger zones. This could encourage a greater number of shorter trips as a passenger could make a number of short trips within the time period. These respondents considered the products should be time based tickets and passes with 2 hourly, daily, weekly and monthly passes or fare caps. Smart card usage would enable the daily and weekly tickets to be capped fares with the daily being 2 x 2 hourly tickets and the weekly at 5 or 4.5 x daily ticket price.

WCYC supported the concept of a fare cap and noted this would encourage the uptake of stored-value cards. The view that tickets should be time based was also supported by another respondent

One respondent preferred to pay with a stored value card and considered the monthly Go Wellington Concession Card should be reintroduced rather than the current time period fares under Snapper.

KCDC noted that electronic ticketing is the way of the future and commented that new technology needs to consider how people on low incomes will be able to access the technology. Any initial outlay may be a barrier to use and those without mobile phones etc may be disadvantaged if they do not possess the technology. Another respondent commented that the Snapper card should be extended throughout the region.

One respondent commented that SuperGold card users were likely to only require an occasional trip and that stored purse would better suit this type of travel rather than a periodical. The option should be available that smart cards can be 'topped up' with sufficient fare for only one trip.

Another respondent commented that the current monthly passes for trains to Pomare should be able to be used to for a journey to Melling without having to incur an additional \$2 charge.

## **Concessions:**

### **General**

KCDC raised a concern about how a general concession would impact on people with disabilities who already have a discount. KCDC urged for further work on the implications of this option and noted that whilst only a small number of people may be receiving this concession, any change to this may significantly impact on the access and mobility.

Respondents noted that people with low incomes, children, tertiary students, senior and beneficiaries/ low income earners are the most affected by high transport costs. They have been the hardest hit in the present economic recession and represent a large proportion of public transport users. The respondents considered that discount fares should be given to all these groups, especially the seniors. Cheap and affordable public transport should be kept for all these groups. Alternative sources of funding for meeting public transport costs should be used rather than just increasing fares.

### **Youth discount/ tertiary students**

5 respondents supported extending the current discounts for primary and secondary school age children to all children in that age group and that the discount level be 50%. These respondents also opposed a discount for tertiary students.

2 respondents supported the introduction of an under 20 concession with a discount of 50%, one noted that many grandparents on superannuation raise grandchildren and are on limited budget so the higher discount level is needed for these families. Another respondent supported concessions for under 20's but considered the discount level should be between 20 and 35%.

One respondent raised the option of having different discounts for students for travel in the peak and off peak with a higher rate of discount in the off peak times (for example 25% and 40% discounts respectively).

Respondents considered the concessions for tertiary students should be introduced for full time students. A petition in support of a 50% discount for tertiary students commented that for many students, travel by car was cheaper than by public transport. They estimated that twice as many students would use public transport if this was implemented. They argue that any revenue lost would be immediately recouped through the increase in patronage. Students are one of Wellington's largest low income groups who are likely to support the city in the future. Lowering the fare for students is also likely to attract more students to the city. The feedback points to the 2010 Quality of Life survey that shows 44% of Wellingtonians aged 15 to 24 years think that public transport is unaffordable.

Victoria University submitted in support of a concession fare for all full time tertiary students. They noted that over 65% of students and 20% of staff travel to the university between 9am and 3pm so an off peak fare would also benefit students if the Council preferred this option. The university also noted that just over a quarter of their students are under 20 and most would live in student halls of residence which are within walking distance of the university so an concession fare for under 20 year olds would not benefit these students.

WCYC and one other respondent supported the extension of the youth concessions to all under 20's and tertiary students. They comment that this concession is unlikely to increase patronage primarily in the peak periods as many youth make extra use of public transport during the weekends. WCYC disagree that offering concessions to tertiary students would be administratively difficult as a similar concession is already offered on the cable car and tertiary institutions generally issue an ID card to full time students

One respondent suggested that the International Student Identity Card as an appropriate identity card for the Wellington public transport network. The card is available to all secondary and tertiary level students that are recognised by the Ministry of Education.

### **Super gold card**

10 respondents wrote in support of extending the SuperGold card discounts to travel in the afternoon peak period. One respondent asked that the discounts be extended to 4.30pm. The respondent considered that an extension would only be used occasionally and would not result in a huge increase in usage in the peak period.

Two respondents opposed any extension to the SuperGold card scheme. One commented that many SuperGold card users had more disposal income that those in work.

### **Beneficiaries and people with disabilities:**

There was a range of views expressed around concessions for beneficiaries and people with disabilities. One respondent questioned whether there could be discounts for

beneficiaries. Another considered the under 20 youth discount should only apply to those in study and beneficiaries. Another respondent considered that providing beneficiaries and people on low incomes with concession fares would be a good idea as high transport costs hit low income citizens the hardest and enabled greater participation in society.

One respondent supported retaining the existing limited concession fares. A respondent questioned the statements that a discount for people with disabilities and beneficiaries may be administratively difficult given the existence of other schemes such as the Community Services Card, WCC Passport to Leisure and Photographic student ID which could be used in conjunction with a stored value card. The respondent contended that the existing Go Wellington Beneficiaries Card appears to be working well and that if the Beneficiaries Card was removed then this should be replaced with the introduction of off peak fares.

One respondent considered current concessions should be phased out. This same respondent also supported the off peak fare at 50% discount. A further 2 respondents supported off peak discounts for all users to replace concessions for beneficiaries and people with disabilities.

## **Other issues raised**

KCDC commented in support of the decision by GWRC to purchase new Matangi trains. KCDC hoped that the Capital Connection rail service would complete the Metlink metro rail fleet. Another respondent commented that the E40 units were great for the Wellington Upper Hutt trip and were superior to the Maitangi trains in every way except for the 2 unit services.

One respondent commented that fare evasion is increasingly a problem on the rail network in particular. The system of conductors walking through trains and clipping tickets is dated. Ticket gates should be installed at all stations on the network with staff able to conduct random inspections and issue fines were required.

A respondent commented that not many people in wheelchairs use the buses making the investment in wheel-chair friendly busses unnecessary. Alternatives such as shuttles which are better designed for wheelchairs should be investigated.

One respondent commented that station announcements need to be clear, concise and professionally delivered. Monthly pass holders experience poor service when there are 'free days'. Staff cuts which impact on the level of service and/or levels of maintenance are poorly thought through.

Other respondents commented that until the services were reliable then people would not be attracted back to using public transport.