

15 November 2022

File Ref:OIAP-7-26379

Tēnā koe

### Request for information 2022-200

I refer to your request for information dated 31 October 2022, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 31 October 2022. You have requested the following:

*What percentage of bus services were cancelled on the 220 (Titahi Bay) bus route between October 1st 2021 and October 1st 2022?*

#### Greater Wellington's response follows:

As shown in the table below, 4.2% of services on the route 220 were cancelled between 1 October 2021 – 1 October 2022.

#### Route 220 Cancellations

Month	Scheduled Services	Cancelled Services	% of services cancelled
Oct-21	2,893	29	1.0
Nov-21	2,950	41	1.4
Dec-21	2,783	16	0.6
Jan-22	2,833	52	1.8
Feb-22	2,664	64	2.4
Mar-22	3,063	197	6.4
Apr-22	2,720	65	2.4
May-22	3,003	171	5.7
Jun-22	2,830	127	4.5
Jul-22	2,953	169	5.7
Aug-22	3,063	234	7.6
Sep-22	2,890	301	10.4
1 Oct-22	63	-	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,708</b>	<b>1,466</b>	<b>4.2</b>

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

### **Additional Information**

Unfortunately, we are currently short 120 bus drivers, which is resulting in bus cancellations. A total of 650 drivers are needed to operate the Wellington region network as designed.

#### What's causing the driver shortage?

Many international drivers returned home to be with their families and loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic and never returned.

Our borders closed, rightly protecting people from the worst of COVID-19 but limiting immigration to keep up with industry churn.

Many veteran drivers retired during this period – not wanting to risk their own health and families.

There are extra pressures of working across the pandemic that have caused driver to seek alternative employment in other industries.

Many of the remaining drivers are taking their skillset to other industries and more lucrative haulage or refuse truck contracts at \$55 and \$35 per hour respectively.

#### What are we doing to fix the problem?

Metlink contract bus operators to run our services, so we do not directly employ the bus drivers. However, we have stepped in to try and help by increasing wages to \$27/hr on average. We've been working with Central Government to usher in fair pay agreements, a set of standards that nationally recognise the workforce with pay rates that can be targeted to city, suburban and rural duties.

There are many skilled drivers overseas, unable to enter New Zealand because of our immigration settings. Greater Wellington has lobbied government on immigration, to further recognise public transport and to get a regular recruitment pipeline back in place without eroding existing pay and conditions. Go Bus, the new owners of NZ Bus, have an overseas recruitment campaign, with a promising 50 drivers from the Philippines showing interest.

From 16 October 2022, we have put in place planned temporary timetable adjustments, sacrificing frequency and comfort for reliability. This means there will be fewer services on some routes and

passengers will be more packed in than usual, but passengers will be able to plan their journeys with more certainty.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'sugar', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Samantha Gain  
Kaiwhakahaere Matua | General Manager Metlink