

28 April 2023

Samantha Gain
General Manager Metlink
Greater Wellington Regional Council
By email: samantha.gain@gwrc.govt.nz

Dear Samantha

Disruption to Wellington rail commuters

Following our discussions, I am writing to formally apologise for the short notice in advising Greater Wellington Regional Council of the need to impose speed restrictions on the Wellington Metro Network.

A Track Evaluation Car is required to assess the network

As you know, this situation is due to mechanical issues with our specialist Track Evaluation Car (TEC), which is required under our Safety Case to travel over and assess the Wellington network every four months. The car takes readings of track geometry and identifies irregularities at a greater level of detail than an in person assessment with hand-held devices. This informs our maintenance activities, so the network is performing as it is expected to. If these assessments cannot occur, then temporary speed restrictions must be in effect to maintain safe rail operations.

The TEC is required to be wheel lathed, which means it was not able to perform its duties. I have urgently prioritised its repair to occur today, so that the TEC can be relocated from Auckland to Wellington this weekend.

The best case scenario is that the TEC will then discharge its duties across the Wellington network next week. This will mean temporary speed restrictions will need to be in place from next Monday 1 May 2023 on the Kāpiti Line, which has a knock-on effect for the Upper Hutt/Wairarapa Line and wider metro network. The TEC is scheduled for similar work in Auckland from 8 May 2023, and this needs to occur to avoid a similar outcome happening there. The worst case scenario, if the TEC is unable to complete its assessments in Wellington next week, is that it won't be completed until 25 May 2023 at the latest. We are taking all steps to achieve the best case outcome, and if not possible, to get it to Wellington earlier.

Our mistake will impact commuters, and we accept responsibility for this

The speed restrictions will affect the train timetable, which means trains will run less frequently during this period. The fact is this delay in communicating the issue is unacceptable. I recognise the impact this has on your team and TransDev Wellington staff who have to urgently revise train timetables and staff resources over a compressed timeframe. I recognise the communications to commuters needs to occur which we will pursue jointly, and KiwiRail will take responsibility for the issue.

We should have communicated this sooner so it could be managed. I have instigated a review of our processes as this situation is not acceptable. The matter was escalated to leaders on Wednesday night,



and after work by our engineers on Thursday morning, we came to you as quickly as we could on Thursday afternoon.

KiwiRail will learn from this mistake

This issue should have been better managed. If leaders had been advised sooner, then the prioritisation of the repair and wheel lathing would have occurred.

I want to assure you that, since learning of the issue, we have taken all reasonable steps to expedite the matter and minimise the impact on Greater Wellington, TransDev, and most importantly to Wellington commuters. Further, we will be reviewing our internal processes to ensure this does not occur again.

We are also, as part of the Government's Rail Network Investment Programme, procuring new specialist plant. This will include a new TEC which will lift our service reliability, supported by process improvements as described above. The technical assessments through that market engagement has been positive, and we intend to contract an order later this year.

We know that the investment Greater Wellington and the Government is placing into the rail network is intended to benefit commuters, and we take our role seriously in achieving these outcomes. We want to support passenger growth, and we know disruptions do not help build confidence for the public.

Once again, please accept an apology on behalf of KiwiRail for this situation and my assurance that we are taking all steps to minimise the effect on Wellington commuters.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Siva Sivapakkiam".

Siva Sivapakkiam
Chief Operations Officer
KiwiRail

