

18 April 2023

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-886

[REDACTED]
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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2023-043

I refer to your request for information dated 7 March 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 7 March 2023. You have requested the following:

1. *"If there is a shortage of drivers such that transdev are not able to commit to the bus replacements ahead of time, then why is the maintenance just delayed the "few weeks" it is taking to get more drivers? It appears as if transdev is able to just get what it wants at the expense of the passengers. If they can't commit to the buses, then they need to help resolve the situation or delay. If the delay would be dangerous, then it just shows under maintenance in the past.*
2. *will the influx of new bus drivers over the next few weeks have any improvement to the bus replace train services planned as Daran believes?*
3. *do transdev use other metlink bus operators to fulfil the bus replace train services?*
4. *if transdev do use the other metlink bus operators, does that happen with a degradation of service on the bus network?*
5. *As there was disruption, I do not have confidence that the planning you describe actually took place with transdev. I would like to see evidence of that planning from transdev for this block of maintenance.*
 - *In addition, I would like to see the capacity numbers for all the trains that would have been scheduled to run, in number of passengers that the train has capacity for, and also in number of actual passengers for the same route and time for the 3 weeks prior.*

- *I would like to compare that to the busses that replaced those train services, in terms of number of busses for each service, the capacity of each bus that was used in the replacement, and the actual passenger count for the replacement.*
 - *If there was a lower capacity of the bus replacements for this day, then perhaps you can help me understand how that situation came to be given the planning you described that transdev carries out. I understand that this may take time to process the information and am happy to work with you to limit the information such that I am able to make the comparison and get confidence about whether transdev performed adequate planning or not.*
- 6.** *From what I gathered from your documentation online is that the bus replace trains should service the same stations as the train would have. Is this not correct? Perhaps you can point me to documentation that is provided to passengers regarding this.*
 - 7.** *How many people from the councillors, or the management team at metlink, regularly use these services. If they do not, why not?*
 - 8.** *Does transdev, the train provider, require the use of transurban, mana, or nz bus in order to fulfil their train services when replaced by bus? Why is that bus replacement not done by transdev? Why is transdev being used at all if they can't provide their service as contracted?*
 - 9.** *how many passengers can the trains being replaced usually hold (capacity)?*
 - 10.** *how many passengers usually used that trip?*
 - 11.** *what is the capacity of the single bus that was used to replace the train*
 - 12.** *if the bus capacity is lower (which it surely must be unless the train is from a childrens game...), then why was the bus replacement not planned for the full capacity of what was replaced?"*

Greater Wellington's response follows:

Background

The current state of our rail network does not reflect the service level we would ideally be providing and we are actively working alongside our operators to improve the situation. There are several ongoing challenges that we face, of which the most pressing is the workforce shortage. The driver shortage makes it difficult to operate the public transport network to a level that we would consider to be efficient and effective. Being able to deliver an effective, reliable service to our customers is at the heart of the work we do.

Below are our numbered responses to your questions:

1. Most buses replacing trains are planned in advance for maintenance or important trackwork to be undertaken by KiwiRail. In this instance, schedules and timetables will be posted on our Metlink website and in service alert notifications. Bus replacing trains timetables and calendars will also be posted at train stations. KiwiRail's regular maintenance and renewal programme aims to improve the reliability of the commuter network. In other instances, buses replacing trains are not planned. This could be due to unforeseen issues arising with the workforce or an emergency on the line that requires remedial work. When this happens, we do our best to inform everyone; however, we are not always able to notify our customers and update our website or stations accordingly, and we understand this can cause confusion and inconvenience.

On 6 March 2023, the day your train was replaced by bus at Ava Station, there was planned maintenance on Hutt Valley Line (HVL) which meant that both the Hutt Valley and Melling line were out of service from 9:00am – 3:00pm.

The planning process for bus replacements does take into account the route required and the usual patronage numbers on the affected route, depending on the day and time. For large projects the planning can be agreed up to six months or more in advance.

KiwiRail maintenance and improvement projects account for nearly all of the work undertaken on the rail network in Wellington, although some third party (non KiwiRail) work takes place occasionally. The majority of this work is planned. Access to the rail corridor for this work is agreed by KiwiRail or at cyclical joint planning meetings, depending on what type of work has been requested. The extent of this work and time required is agreed following [Permitted Access Guidelines](#).

2. Regarding how bus driver recruitment will positively affect our network, our operators have recruited, and started training, overseas drivers which will enhance our network and in turn give Transdev greater flexibility and certainty in coordinating buses replacing trains.

Transdev continues to focus on recruitment and training as well. We have had to reschedule and/or cancel several services due to shortage of both train staff and bus drivers so having more staff on the road and the rail will help us to deliver a stronger service to our customers.

3. Transdev is contracted to organise the bus replacements, as part of the contract to deliver rail services. Through Transdev processes, Metlink branded buses are used to provide some service continuity, but other bus operators are also used to ensure a service can continue when Metlink's four bus operators are unable to fulfil a bus-replaced service due to staffing or capacity issues. Transdev do not provide the bus services themselves.
4. We work on ensuring there is no degradation in the Metlink bus network during this time.
5. You have asked for the capacity numbers for all trains that were scheduled to run for the route that services Ava Station (as discussed in previous email correspondence) and for the three weeks prior to the day your train was replaced by bus, 6 March 2023.

Attachment 1 provides the data we hold, on capacity and passenger numbers for all trains that ran from the period up to, and three weeks prior to 6 March. This is the data we hold for every service that stops at Ava Station from 13 February to 6 March 2023.

Transdev is not contractually obligated to provide us with information on bus replacement service; however, we have sought this information from Transdev. They do not have specific information relating to bus replacement services on the day and dates you requested and we therefore refuse this request under section 17(g) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act), on the basis that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington Regional Council, or a department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Attachment 2 includes all the issues Transdev is aware of in relation to buses replacing trains on the morning of your journey. All buses used that day had between 40 – 50 seats, and standbys were also used due to high patronage levels.

Capacity required for each service during bus replacements is based on previous passenger counts, with standbys available as a contingency.

Information for passenger counts beyond 28 February will soon be publicly available on our website which you can access here: [Performance of our network » Metlink](#).

6. The contractual arrangement between Metlink (GWRC) and Transdev is that the operator provides bus replacements that would match the demand of the affected rail service based on analysis of patronage. During peak hours, if an unplanned bus replacement does occur, our operator works to provide enough buses to meet the demand, however, with the staff shortages at present, this is not always possible.

Yes, buses replacing trains should service the same stations as the train would have.

Most bus replacement stops are directly outside the station or in the carpark. Others may have to be combined with regular bus stops which may not have shelter or seats and may require a short walk from the station. Please see our website for more information: [Buses replacing trains » Metlink](#)

7. We do not record how people in our workplace choose to travel. This request is refused under section 17(g) of the Act as the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington Regional Council, another local authority, department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.
8. Transdev operates the rail service. In accordance with the rail partnering contract, Transdev contracts bus replacing train services to bus operators. As mentioned previously, there are times when bus replacements are unplanned, for example, during peak hours if there is an emergency on the line that requires remedial work. Transdev is required to work with our four bus operators (Tranzurban, NZ Bus, Mana, and Uzabus) as the first port of call for arranging a bus replacement.

In the instance of not being able to fulfil a bus replacement with a Metlink bus operator due to unavailability, Transdev then turn to other operators to deliver the service.

By way of comment, we note that when our bus operators have their full contingency of drivers restored, nearly all bus-replaced services would be fulfilled by one of our bus operators, and this ensures the consistency of commuter experience in having a Metlink-branded bus delivering that replacement. Unfortunately, in the current operating environment with driver shortages, our bus operators do not have enough drivers to provision all bus-replaced services – their first priority is delivering the regularly scheduled Metlink services so that a degradation of service on the bus network does not occur.

9. Attachment 1 sets out the capacity of each service. Each two-car unit can hold up to 250 people, but as planned bus replacements are scheduled for off-peak services we would not have 250 people trying to catch a train during these times. Passenger numbers for most off-peak services are much lower than 100 and we would provide enough capacity on buses to

cover the expected patronage levels. However, due to illness affecting staffing, some peak services have been replaced this year.

10. *“how many passengers usually used that trip?”*

11. *“what is the capacity of the single bus that was used to replace the train”*

12. *“if the bus capacity is lower (which it surely must be unless the train is from a childrens game...), then why was the bus replacement not planned for the full capacity of what was replaced?”*

We have provided the information received in relation to these three questions in response to question number five.

As stated above, this information has been sought from Transdev. As they do not have specifics relating to bus replacement data on the day and dates you requested, we refuse this request under section 17(g) of the Act, on the basis that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington Regional Council, or a department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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 Act 1987.

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



Samantha Gain

Kaiwhakahaere Matua Waka-ā-atea | General Manager Metlink