

For Information

TE WAI TAKAMORI O TE AWA KAIRANGI (RIVERLINK) CONSTRUCTION: IMPACT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES- UPDATE

Te take mō te pūrongo Purpose

1. To advise the Transport Committee (Committee) on the public transport implications and mitigations planned for Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) programme construction disruptions.

Te aukati atu i te marea Exclusion of the public

2. Grounds for exclusion of the public under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) are:

Certain information contained in this report relates to Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) information contained in RiverLink delivery agreement documents, which are yet to be agreed. Release of this information would be likely to prejudice or disadvantage the ability of Greater Wellington to carry on negotiations without prejudice (section 7(2)(i)). Greater Wellington has not been able to identify a public interest favouring disclosure of this information in public proceedings of the meeting that would override the need to withhold the information.

3. This report will be released in full following the signing of the RiverLink delivery agreements.

Te tāhū kōrero Background

RiverLink

4. Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) is a partnership between Greater Wellington, Hutt City Council (HCC), NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA), Ngāti Toa Rangitira and Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika.
5. Part of RiverLink includes Melling Transport Improvements, which includes a new, grade-separated interchange and bridge over Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River; relocation of the Melling Station, and new/improved walking and cycling paths.

6. NZTA will be progressing the Melling Transport Improvements through the Delivery Alliance of AECOM and Fletcher Construction (Delivery Alliance).
7. The SH 2 Melling Transport Improvements will impact the availability of the Melling Line during the construction period.

Hutt Valley Disruption Stakeholder Group

8. A Hutt Valley Disruption Stakeholder Group has been established, including Greater Wellington (Metlink), Hutt City Council and NZTA Waka Kotahi representatives.
9. The purpose of the Group is to manage and co-ordinate disruptions to the wider transport network (including active modes) and travel demand across the Hutt Valley caused by amongst other things, RiverLink.

Melling Line – initial decision for full Line closure

10. On 24 August 2023, the Council received a report on the implications of the RiverLink project construction on public transport services for the Melling Line (Report 23.212 – RiverLink Construction – implications for Public Transport Services).
11. The report advised Council that in April 2023, Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi requested that Greater Wellington consider a temporary (up to 18 months) closure of the Melling Station and associated track between July 2024 and October 2025. For various reasons the RiverLink work impacting the Melling Line is yet to proceed.
12. At the 24 August 2023 meeting, Council agreed to:
 - 1 *Endorse the temporary closure of the Melling Line (for up to 18 months), subject to a public transport mitigation plan being agreed between Greater Wellington and Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi prior to the closure.*
 - 2 *Note that delivering RiverLink will cause significant traffic disruption, with the closure of the Melling Line having the potential to exacerbate traffic congestion, and that a well-designed mitigation plan with public transport and active modes can help to alleviate that congestion.*
 - 3 *Note that while the Melling Line is closed, Metlink will provide a range of travel options for Melling Line customers, informed by an understanding of customer travel preferences (in line with principles set out in paragraphs 36 to 39 of Report 23.212).*
 - 4 *Note that the public transport mitigation plan will include consideration of:*
 - a *Initiatives such as new and targeted bus services, free or discounted services, and additional Park and Ride.*
 - b *Measures to optimise use of the public transport network and active transport modes, in order to provide options for residents (particularly those in the western hills) to travel to the Wellington*

CBD, while avoiding the Melling Interchange as far as possible and not increasing vehicle kilometres travelled.

- c Measures to encourage public transport use in the Hutt Valley, in order to reduce traffic congestion and transport emissions, and assist motorists from Wairarapa and Upper Hutt who must travel through Melling to get to and from Wellington City.*
- 5 Note that the Greater Wellington Chief Executive will agree to the public transport mitigation plan on Greater Wellington's behalf, with the input of Councillors, the intent of which will be to maintain a similar or enhanced level of customer service to that currently being experienced, reduce traffic congestion and transport emissions, and allowing for flexibility to change the mitigation measures to achieve this.*

Melling Line – need to close Melling Station remains

- 13. Planning for the RiverLink work is ongoing.
- 14. Closure of the Melling Station is still required in order for Melling Transport Improvements construction works to be undertaken.

Melling Line – revised plan to keep Western Hutt Station operational

- 15. The August 2023 report identified, as an alternative to the full Line closure, using Western Hutt Station as a terminal station during Melling Transport Improvements construction. However, due to the following considerations it was not recommended by officers:
 - a Western Hutt Station has a smaller utilisation and relatively small catchment of customers, particularly as it has no Park and Ride facility.
 - b Ava Station, on the Hutt Valley Line, is relatively close to Western Hutt Station and provides a convenient alternative for people in the Melling and Alicetown area.
 - c If the Melling Line services continued to operate between Petone and Western Hutt only, infrastructure changes would need to be put in place to enable it, such as changes in rail signalling systems, relocation of stop blocks, termination of the overhead lines. These are significant rail network works.
 - d Establishing Western Hutt as the terminal station on the Melling Line does not effectively provide a useful service alternative for customers currently using Melling Station (given the location of Western Hutt station).
- 16. Following the Council decision to close the Melling Line during the RiverLink works, Metlink received feedback from affected businesses in the Western Hutt Station area regarding the impact that closing the Western Hutt Station would have on them.
- 17. As a result of the feedback, Metlink reconsidered the proposed approach and has worked with the Alliance and KiwiRail to find a way to address the infrastructure changes that were required in order to retain Melling Line services for part of the

line, and have Western Hutt Station as a terminal station for the Melling Line (refer paragraph 14(c) above for an outline of required infrastructure changes).

18. It is understood that the Alliance will 100% fund the rail network infrastructure works required at Western Hutt Station. A memorandum of understanding is being developed, which confirms the funding arrangements. The rail network infrastructure works will be undertaken by KiwiRail during the 2025 Christmas block of line.
19. Metlink now plans to retain Melling Line services between Wellington and Western Hutt Station, during the Riverlink construction.

Customer profile of Melling Line users

20. Analysis of population (using Statistics New Zealand 2023 census data) in the area shows that the Melling Line primarily services the peak travellers of Western Hills suburb residents. These commuters have a strong preference for the private vehicle access to rail services. Only a small proportion of residents in the catchment do not have access to a private vehicle.
21. The table below provides an overview of census data:

	Belmont	Belmont Park	Tirohanga
Trend	Most likely to access Melling Station by Park & Ride. A low deprivation community.		
Population	3,026	345	1,386
Deprivation score	1/10	1/10	1/10
Commuters (15+)	1,379	143	624
PT Dependent (no private vehicle access)	2%	3%	2%
Commute via private vehicle	43%	43%	41%
Commute via train	7%	7%	8%
Commute via bus	1%	1%	0%

Melling Station use

22. Most recent boarding data shows average weekday boardings for February 2025 were 371.
23. In March 2023 on site observations were undertaken in the morning to further understand customers' use of the station:
 - a over 90% of passengers come from the Western Hills
 - b the majority of boardings occurred in the peak period (prior to 9am).

24. Approximately 65% of passengers used the Park and Ride facilities; with the Melling Station carpark (187 parks) reaching capacity between 8.00am-8.15am; and the Block Road carpark (46 parks) reaching approximately 80% capacity.
- a Of the remainder of passengers approximately:
 - i 17% passengers each morning arrive by bus (Route 145)
 - ii 9% passengers arrive each morning by 'kiss and ride' (dropped off)
 - iii 8% passengers arrive each morning by walking
 - iv 1% passengers arrive by bicycle.

Western Hutt Station use

25. Boarding data shows average weekday boardings for February 2025 were 107.
26. Morning site observations in March 2023 showed the majority of boardings occurred in the peak period (before 9am). In the absence of Park and Ride facilities, passengers arrive by 'kiss and ride', bus, walking and cycling.

Timing of Melling Station closure

27. The Melling Station is scheduled to temporarily close from December 2025/ January 2026.
28. The Melling Station will be closed for approximately 36 months; the Station is scheduled to reopen in late-2028/2029 (the opening of the station is subject to the City Link Bridge opening and these timings will be aligned).
29. The Melling Station was originally due to re-open in 2027. However, construction constraints mean that if it were to open in 2027, there will be limited amenity at the station, which severely limits the accessibility for commuters to use the Melling Station, including:
- a under half of the current number of Park and Ride car parks available at Melling (only 64); with
 - b no direct vehicle access from Western Hills suburbs to the Station; and
 - c no direct pedestrian access from Hutt City CBD, as City Link bridge would not be open.
30. Note that, as with all projects of this size, timelines are liable to change. The timeframes set out above are indicative only.

Public Transport Mitigation Planning

31. Metlink has undertaken mitigation planning for the new proposed partial closure of the Melling Line (terminating at Western Hutt), during the Melling Transport Improvements construction period.

Principles used to develop the partial Line closure mitigation plan

32. The following principles, which were set out in Report 23.212 – RiverLink Construction – implications for Public Transport Services, have been used to develop a mitigation plan:

33. Ensuring public transport remains a viable option during the disruption, especially for customers who cannot, or choose not to use, a private vehicle.
 - a Ensuring that the response reflects the known behaviours and preferences of current customers, including minimising transfers and overall journey time, and maintaining level of convenience their current rail journey provides.
 - b Ensuring the change in service is easy to understand and consistently applied over the period of the disruption.
 - c Ensuring the change in service can be consistently delivered by our operators.

Mitigation plan - considerations

34. As agreed by Council on 24 August 2023, the mitigation plan has included consideration of:
 - a Initiatives such as new and targeted bus services, free or discounted services, and additional Park and Ride
 - b Measures to optimise use of the public transport network and active transport modes, in order to provide options for residents (particularly those in the western hills) to travel to the Wellington CBD, while avoiding the Melling Interchange as far as possible and not increasing vehicle kilometres travelled.
 - c Measures to encourage public transport use in the Hutt Valley, in order to reduce traffic congestion and transport emissions, and assist motorists from Wairarapa and Upper Hutt who must travel through Melling to get to and from Wellington City.

Impact of keeping Western Hutt Station open

35. Keeping the Western Hutt Station open reduces the impact of full line closure.

Mitigation plans to respond to closure of Melling Station (partial closure of Line)

36. Based on the 2023 observations of how customers arrive at Melling Station (see paragraph 23 above), Metlink has put specific focus on two key areas for mitigation planning:
 - a Park and Ride facilities
 - b Bus services

Mitigation plan for customers who use Park and Ride to access Melling Station

37. NZTA have agreed to provide an additional Park and Ride facility at Petone Station for the duration of the Melling Transport Improvements works.
38. There will be no cost to Greater Wellington for the new Park and Ride facility at Petone Station.
39. Capacity and location of this new Park and Ride facility is in the process of being agreed.
40. Councillors will be updated when capacity and location have been determined.

Mitigation plan for customers who use bus services to access Melling Station

41. The following measures will be implemented at the earliest of the time the Melling Station closes or access to the Station from the Western Hills is closed.

Routes 145 and 149

42. Route 145, which currently connects Belmont to Lower Hutt via Melling Station, is planned to be re-routed to travel from Belmont to Lower Hutt via Kennedy-Good Bridge and Waterloo Station (note that there is no extra cost to travel to Waterloo Station; and the rail fare from Waterloo Station is the same as the fare from Melling Station).
43. Route 149, introduced from 9 October 2023, currently connects Harbour View and Tirohanga with Lower Hutt via Melling Station (with selected trips to/from Waterloo Station during peak times).
44. Route 149 will no longer stop at Melling Station and all services are planned to be extended to connect at Waterloo Station (note that there is no extra cost to travel to Waterloo Station; and the rail fare from Waterloo Station is the same as the fare from Melling Station).
45. Note that planned route changes need to be finalised with the bus operator.
46. Metlink is actively investigating adjusting the timing of the Routes 145 and 149 to meet with express trains from Waterloo Station.
47. Metlink considers that there is adequate capacity on current rail services to accommodate the increased number of passengers using the Hutt Valley Line as a result of more bus services connecting at Waterloo station; patronage will be monitored.

Mitigation plan for customers who use kiss and ride to access Melling Station

48. The small number of customers who use 'kiss and ride' to access Melling Station will have the option to use other local stations (including – southbound: Western Hutt Station, Petone Station; and northbound: Manor Park Station).

Mitigation plan for customers who use active modes to access Melling Station

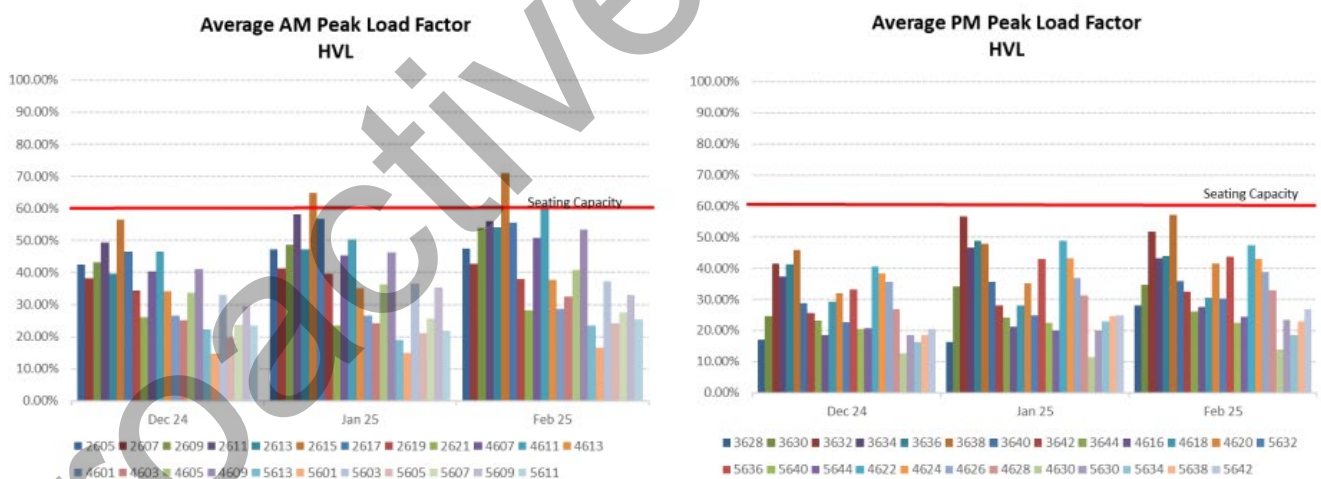
49. Closure of the Melling Station will impact customers from the Western Hills who use active modes to access Melling Station as it will increase the distance required to be travelled to access a railway station.
50. For the 1% of Melling Station users (March 2023 observation data) who arrived at the Station on cycles; cycle storage facilities are available at:
 - a Waterloo Station with a total of 28 casual user (racks) bike spaces and 22 long term (lockers) bicycle space
 - b Petone Station with a total of 40 casual user (racks) bike spaces and 8 long term (lockers) bicycle space.
51. Note that, due to station limitations, there are currently no plans to include cycle storage facilities at Western Hutt Station. If a decision were made to include cycle storage facilities this would require the installation of lighting and CCTV. In addition, it would not be possible to use Metlink's typical standard bike racks; a

different style of bike rack would be required, which would provide a lower level of service for users.

52. For people who do not continue to use active modes to access the rail network, Metlink buses (Routes 145 and 149) are planned to provide an alternative access to Waterloo Station.

Public transport as a means to address traffic congestion caused by RiverLink construction works

53. Reliance on public transport may be increased during the construction of RiverLink, as road-users choose public transport over the road network due to expected congestion on State Highway 2.
54. Metlink is represented on The Hutt Valley Disruption Stakeholder Group, whose role it is to manage and co-ordinate travel disruptions in the Hutt Valley caused by amongst other things, RiverLink.
55. Metlink notes that the current train capacity and frequency of train services cannot be increased due to:
 - a network limitations (power supply)
 - b train availability
56. However, loading information for current rail services on the Hutt Valley Line at peak times shows that services are well below maximum capacity. Data for February 2025 shows the following loading information for the Hutt Valley Line (including the Melling Line):



Impacts of RiverLink construction which will occur after Melling Station reopens

57. The new Melling Station is expected to be opened before full completion of the Melling Transport Improvements, meaning that vehicle access to the Station is expected to be limited until construction north of the new station is completed.
58. While vehicle access to the Melling Station will be limited, direct pedestrian access from Hutt City CBD is expected to be available through the City Link bridge.

59. Provision of the new City Link bridge (aligned with new Station opening) will provide walking access across the Hutt River, from Lower Hutt CBD directly to the new Melling Station which provides opportunity for new patronage.

Te whakatūtakitaki Engagement

60. In developing this report, Metlink has engaged with NZTA, the Delivery Alliance, HCC, Transdev Wellington, Hutt Valley Disruption Stakeholder Group and KiwiRail.

Ngā tūāoma e whai ake nei Next steps

61. Metlink is in the process of developing a comprehensive engagement and communications plan to enable early engagement with impacted communities regarding the temporary closure of the Melling Station, and alternate travel options. Commercial arrangements are being drafted to support our plans.
62. This report will be released in full following the signing of the RiverLink delivery agreements.

Ngā kaiwaitohu Signatories

Writers	Alex Campbell – Principal Advisor Network Design, Network Design David Boyd – Manager Customer Experience, Network & Customer Nathan Briggs – Rail Manager Assets & Infrastructure
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**He whakarāpopoto i ngā huritaonga
Summary of considerations**

Fit with Council's roles or with Committee's terms of reference

The Committee has the specific responsibility to:

Approve strategies, policies and guidelines to deliver public transport in accordance with the Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan.

Approve transport strategies, policies, plans, programmes, initiatives and indicators related to transport demand management and active mode promotion.

Contribution to Annual Plan / Long Term Plan / Other key strategies and policies

This report sets out how Metlink proposes to ensure the continuation of public transport service delivery during disruptions caused by the of RiverLink construction works. The delivery of public transport is a key activity in the Long Term Plan.

Internal consultation

In preparing this report there has been consultation with officers in the Public Transport and RiverLink Groups.

Risks and impacts - legal / health and safety etc.

This report sets out mitigations for the imminent closure of the Melling Station, which is required for RiverLink construction works.