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Committee	Sustainable Transport Committee
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## Bikes on Trains

### 1. Purpose

This report outlines options to increase the capacity of rail services to carry bikes and recommends options for further development.

### 2. Background

One of the objectives of the Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2014 (PT Plan) is to provide high quality, reliable, safe, and customer focused public transport services. The PT Plan identifies that achieving this requires integrating public transport with walking and cycling.

Following growth in the number of people travelling by bike, customer feedback has suggested that the demand to travel with bikes exceeds the capacity for carrying bikes on some rail services. An initial review has identified options for increasing capacity, and these options are outlined in this report.

The key elements of the existing policy on the carriage of bikes are:

- bikes and scooters are carried free of charge
- folding bikes can be carried on all services
- other bikes will be carried on a first come, first served basis:
  - a maximum of 3 bikes can be carried in the designated area in each 2-car Matangi (bikes must be strapped in and not obstruct doors or aisles)
  - bikes are carried in the luggage areas of Wairarapa services, dependent on space

- bikes cannot be carried on individually identified peak services operated by Matangi on the Kapiti and Hutt lines or on special event services, in order to ensure that the maximum number of passengers can be carried on these services.

These policies are generally consistent with the approach taken in other cities as summarised in **Attachment 2**. In particular, bikes are generally carried free of charge, and restrictions on the carriage of bikes during peak periods apply in two thirds of the policies reviewed. The current cycle policy is attached as **Attachment 1**.

### 3. Comment

Customer feedback has raised issues relating to:

- restrictions on the carriage of bikes on peak services provided by Matangi
- the limit of 3 bikes per 2-car Matangi
- insufficient capacity for bikes on Wairarapa services.

These issues are discussed separately below.

#### 3.1 Peak Services Restrictions

The peak service restrictions contained in the existing bikes on trains policy are well aligned with international practice. Peak exclusions are aimed at fitting the maximum number of customers onto crowded services and at avoiding delays in boarding and alighting that reduce punctuality; however they can have a negative impact on cyclists.

One issue that has been raised is that the current restrictions are not well understood. This can cause frustration for cyclists and can result in conflict between cyclists and the on board staff. The Policy balances the needs of peak passenger demand with the needs of cyclists, and has been amended over time to allow for greater carriage of bikes. The result is a relatively complex set of “rules” – for example:

- there are no restrictions (other than the number of bikes carried) on Melling, Johnsonville, or Wairarapa services
- there are restrictions on the busiest individual Upper Hutt and Kapiti services provided by Matangi during the peak –this means that bikes can be carried on *some* services during the peak period on these lines (see **Attachment 3**)
- there are no restrictions on services provided by the Ganz Mavag EMUs which are soon to be retired.

The following three options are discussed further below:

- making the peak restrictions more consistent

- maintaining the status quo
- reducing the number of peak services with restrictions.

**a) Making the peak restrictions more consistent**

Many operators enforce a blanket restriction excluding all but folding bikes during the peak period, in contrast to the current approach in Wellington of imposing restrictions on individual services.

If the peak restrictions were applied to all services within the current identified peak period on the Kapiti and Hutt lines, restrictions would be imposed on one or two additional services per line in each peak period. This would be an easy to follow policy for passengers and train staff to understand and police.

However, this would also restrict the times that cyclists can use the train services, forcing them to travel at either side of the peak period. This may not fit their schedule; and may also create capacity issues on the services immediately before and after the peak period.

**b) Maintain the status quo**

If the current approach is maintained, ways of improving the communication of restrictions should be investigated to reduce confusion and conflict between cyclists and on board staff.

**c) Reducing the number of restricted peak services**

With the Matangi 2 project nearing completion, the capacity of the rail fleet has substantially increased. Even with growing patronage, this has already reduced the number of peak services where there is significant crowding. Further increases in service capacity will occur up to 1 October 2016.

If the number of restricted peak services is reduced, the uniformity of the restrictions can also be improved at the same time so that the restrictions apply for a set period, rather than to individual services.

**Recommendation: peak service exclusions**

With the additional capacity provided by the Matangi 2 project, additional capacity can be provided on services during peak periods. The new operator has indicated that capacity on services will be increased by 1 October 2016. An initial review suggests that this will allow peak restrictions on the carriage of bikes to be removed from all services except those at the peak of the peak period (approximately 45 minutes) without unduly impacting other passengers.

It is therefore recommended that officers be requested to report back later in the year on whether it is possible to reduce the peak period restrictions without undue impact on passenger capacity and comfort.

### 3.2 Capacity of Matangi trains to carry bikes

The Matangi electrical multiple units were designed to carry up to three bikes per two car unit. There is a labelled area in each trailer car that has five flip up seats and three bike straps. Issues can arise when more than three customers with bikes try to board a two car unit. Two options have been identified that would increase capacity on the Matangi units.

#### a) Increase the storage at the current location

An initial review suggests that it may be safe to allow four bikes to be stored in the current designated location. This would require a change in signage and possibly the addition of a bike strap, although this may not be necessary if the existing straps can restrain more than one bike. Further work is required to ensure that this option is feasible.

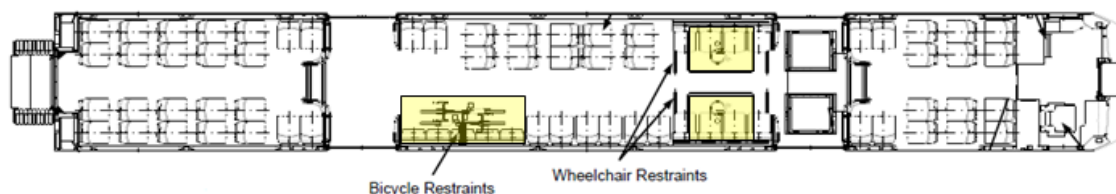
#### b) Utilise one of the wheelchair areas

Each Matangi two car unit has two spaces designated for wheelchairs. These spaces are also used by customers travelling with prams or strollers/buggies. By allowing one of the wheelchair areas to be used for bike storage if not in use, an extra 3 to 4 bikes per two car unit could be carried on a Matangi service. Retention straps could be kept locked away in the wheelchair strap boxes.

If implemented, it is recommended that this would only be an option for off peak services, and that it would be made available only at the discretion of onboard staff.

Allowing carriage of cycles in designated wheelchair spaces is an approach that is taken in other areas internationally, however, a number of issues would need to be investigated and resolved before a decision is made, including:

- understanding the views of the current users of the wheelchair spaces
- developing protocols requiring cyclists to leave the service if the space was required for a wheelchair user, including providing transfer tickets for any cyclists required to transfer to another service
- developing a communication plan and clear signage for the area.



#### Recommendations: increasing the capacity of Matangi to carry bikes

It is recommended that further investigation be undertaken to determine if the current bike storage on the Matangi can safely accommodate more than the current 3 bikes. The outcome will be reported back to Council later in the year.

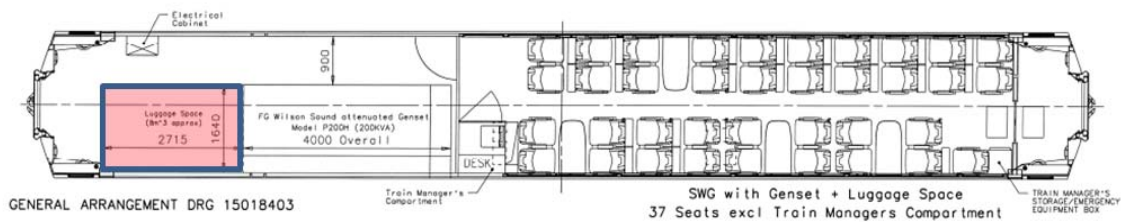
It is not recommended at this time that bikes be allowed in the wheelchair spaces.

### 3.3 Capacity of Wairarapa Services to carry bikes

The Wairarapa is increasingly a popular destination for cyclists, and customers are seeking to use the rail service to travel between Wellington and the Wairarapa with their bikes. However, because the current storage space is very limited, cyclists are regularly turned away from services.

The Wairarapa service is provided by the SW or SE carriages; each train is made up of a generator car (SWG and SEG), a number of standard passenger carriages and for the SWs, a servery car with wheel chair access. In addition, GWRL also owns one AG wagon.

The storage of luggage and bikes is currently limited to the generator car on both carriage types on a first come first served basis. The generator car is fitted with seven hooks for bike storage, but luggage can encroach on this area making the hooks unusable, as the bikes would need to be lifted over the luggage (see photos below). The volume of bikes and luggage can create a hazard by obstructing the emergency exit for passengers and staff.



The highlighted area indicates the current space allocated for bikes and luggage



Mix of bikes and luggage



**Bikes obstructing walkways and exits**

Several options have been identified that could help alleviate the current problem.

**a) Use the AG generator car on identified services**

The AG wagon is primarily used as a generator car when the SEG or SWG is not available for service due to maintenance requirements. It is also connected to a train service when a high demand for bike or luggage storage is known in advance through the booking service.

The AG wagon could be used on regular scheduled services to increase the capacity for bikes and luggage, although the following impacts and limitations would apply:

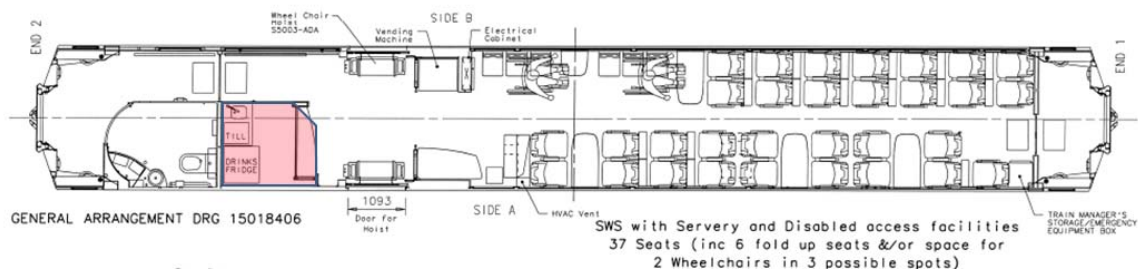
- As there is only one AG, there will be times when it needs to be removed from service for maintenance; in some cases when heavy maintenance is required it may be out for several weeks at a time
- Adding the AG car to services will result in higher mileage, increasing maintenance requirements
- As the AG wagon is the only spare generator set available for the SE carriages, if the SEG fails or is not available due to maintenance it must be replaced with the AG wagon
- The AG wagon is also a backup generator for the SW carriages, there is however one spare SWG carriage.

Pressure on the storage space for luggage and bikes is greatest at the weekend. It would be relatively straightforward to schedule the AG wagon to be used on all weekend services (including one identified service on Friday night and Monday morning). Costs for this option need to be further investigated, but should fit within the current operating budget.

GWRL could look at the options for purchasing additional luggage vans to add to all Wairarapa services. These additional wagons could also be fitted with generators in the same way as the AG wagon which would supply redundancy for the main generators in the event of a failure. Due to the scarcity of AG wagons it may be necessary to investigate the purchase of new luggage carriages to carry out this function, at an estimated cost of \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000 each.

**b) Modification of SWS carriages (not applicable to SES)**

The SWS carriages are fitted with a servery area which has never been utilised, and therefore is a unutilised space in the carriage (highlighted in the diagram below).



The servery area could be removed and the area could be re-established as a luggage storage area. This would reduce pressure on the generator cars capacity, making more space for bikes and luggage.

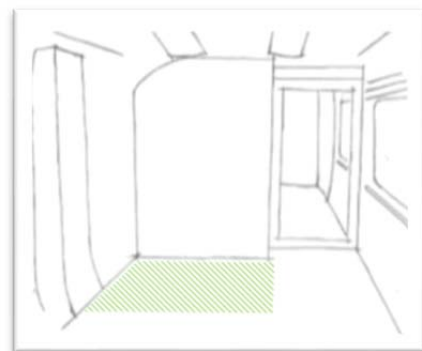
The new luggage storage area would be suitable for passengers to store their own luggage, which would be a change in the way luggage is dealt with, from sole handling by train managers to a more internationally recognised practice of passengers being responsible for their own luggage.

The capital investment required to make the change is estimated at approximately \$30,000 per SWS (i.e. approximately \$90,000 in total).

An alternate use for the servery area would be to replace the servery with additional seating – previous investigations have identified that three additional seats could be installed in the space available.



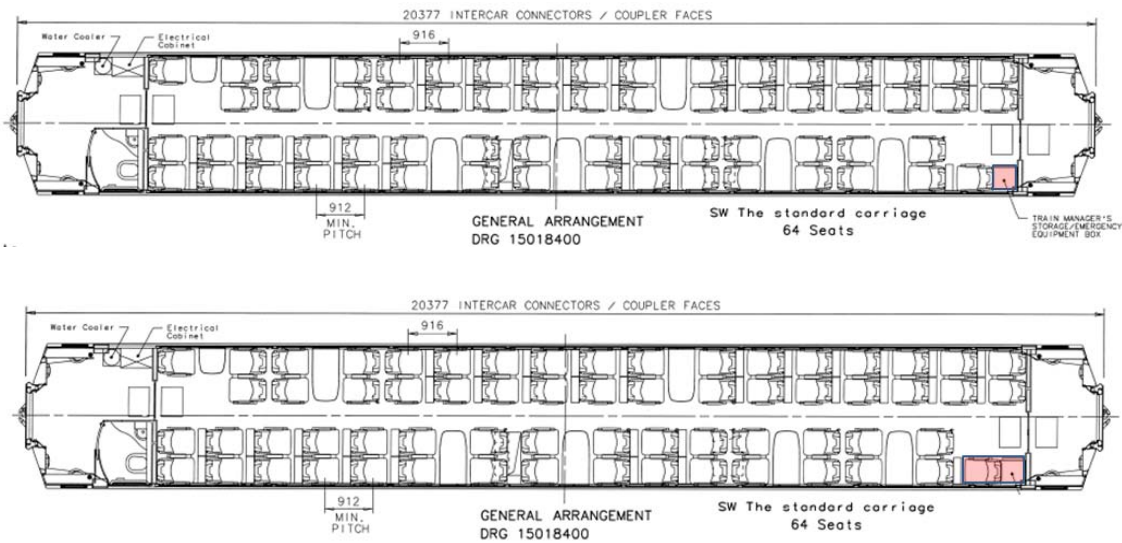
Current configuration



Proposed Luggage area

**c) Modification of SW carriages (not applicable to SE Carriages)**

A further modification of SW carriages could increase luggage space, further decreasing the reliance on the generator car for luggage storage. Each SW carriage is currently fitted with a safe which may be able to be removed in some or all carriages.



If the safe and a single seat are removed in each car, a luggage rack could be installed. The capital expenditure required is estimated at approximately \$10,000 per SW carriage (or a total of approximately \$120,000). This would allow passengers load their own luggage and keep it in view

**d) Improved reservation system**

The current reservation system provided requires groups of ten or more cyclists to reserve space on a service at least a week before travel. This leaves it open for up to nine bicycles to turn up at a station expecting to get onto a service which can cause problems, by reducing this number down to 3 to 4 a much more realistic picture of demand for the services would be understood by the operator and cyclists, allowing for better planning and less disappointment.

**Recommendations to improve the capacity of Wairarapa Services to carry bikes**

It is recommended that the AG wagon be scheduled on all weekend services (including a Friday evening and Monday morning service), other than when it is required to replace the SWG or SEG cars or when it is out of service for maintenance. It is further recommended that this change be implemented as soon as practicable.



It is also recommended that staff carry out further investigations into converting the server area to a luggage area and discuss improvements to the booking system with the new rail operator.

#### **4. Communication**

The immediate communications need is to advise cyclists of the addition of additional capacity on weekend services through the addition of the AG car, including being clear on the circumstances when that car will not be available. The timing of the communication will be linked to the commencement date when that is known.

#### **5. The decision-making process and significance**

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act). Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

##### **5.1 Significance of the decision**

Part 6 requires Greater Wellington Regional Council to consider the significance of the decision. The term 'significance' has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance and engagement policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

##### **5.2 Engagement**

Engagement on the matters contained in this report aligns with the level of significance assessed. This report sets out options for further investigation and engagement will occur during this process.

#### **6. Recommendations**

*That the Committee*

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*
- 3. Agrees that the AG wagon should be scheduled on all weekend services (including a Friday evening and Monday morning service) as soon as practicable.*

4. *Notes that the Matangi 2 project will enable an increase in the capacity of the rail fleet during peak periods.*
5. **Requests a report later in the year with:**
  - a. *An updated assessment of the ability to reduce peak period restrictions on the carriage of bikes in the Matangi fleet following the completion of the Matangi 2 project*
  - b. *An assessment of the feasibility to increase from three to four the number of bikes able to be stored the designated Matangi bike storage area*
  - c. *A proposal to convert the SW serverly areas to luggage areas*

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**Attachment 1:** Current policy for the carriage of cycles on trains

**Attachment 2:** International comparison of policy settings for bikes on trains

**Attachment 3:** Peak rail services showing existing restrictions