



NEWS

Media Release

“Auckland and Wellington anticipate urgent Government decisions over national rail policy”

Tuesday 28 November 2000

Auckland and Wellington regional councils applaud signals that Cabinet is to consider key national rail policy on 4 December.

The Auckland Regional Council and Wellington Regional Council are both seeking urgent direction from Government regarding national rail policy.

Government has been considering its options after Tranz Rail's 10 October announcements that it plans to ditch its urban and long-distance passenger operations and close some regional freight lines. There had been calls for Government to buy into Tranz Rail. Auckland and Wellington regions have also both been negotiating with Tranz Rail to get greater community control of passenger services in their regions.

Representatives from both councils met last week and confirmed that they share common ground in relation to their issues with Tranz Rail, and especially a common urgent need to have clear direction from Government as to the national policy framework.

“The key issue for both regions is that we are seeking to develop and improve the passenger transport services in our areas and we need greater control over the rail corridors in order to do that,” said Transport Committee chairman Les Paterson.

For Auckland, the urgency relates to an 8 December deadline to finalise key conditions for the Auckland region to purchase the tracks and lease from Tranz Rail. Government commitment to sign the lease over to the region is required.

Auckland also faces an urgent decision over the commitment of about \$50 million for purchasing new rolling stock if there is to be any continuation of a rail service past 2003. “We want some certainty about the future of the rail corridors before we know on what basis we can commit to these basic upgrades,” said ARC Cr Les Paterson.

Further, recent developments around Tranz Rail's shareholding have created uncertainty about how long the opportunity to purchase the tracks will be open past 8 December if key conditions to the deal are not finalised by that date.



caring about you & your environment



Auckland *Regional* Council

Wellington's situation also requires clarity about the future shape of the rail network soon as the Council's contract for services with Tranz Rail ends in June 2001, and the Council will have to start a rolling stock replacement programme within four years with the first phase costing about \$60m.

"We want a clear steer over the status of the corridors so we can plan our investments. We want more control over the corridors, the assets and the investments," said WRC Transport Committee chairman Terry McDavitt.

"While Wellington has a much more mature rail system than Auckland and we are not looking at committing the size of investment into infrastructure upgrades that Auckland has to consider, our investments will still run into millions of dollars of public money."

"Wellington may not want the same ultimate arrangements that Auckland wants, but we share a common need for urgency in establishing a clear direction from Government," said WRC Cr McDavitt.

"We can't move forward without certainty that Government is going to work with us in resolving our problems," said ARC Cr Paterson. "We are glad that the Government has realised the urgency of the situation and we are looking forward to meeting our objectives."

"We both want to work in partnership with Government to resolve the issues surrounding provision of passenger transport on our urban rail networks," said ARC Cr Paterson.

- END -

For further information please call:

ARC Transport Committee chairman Les Paterson, on 09 366 2000 x 7111

Or: WRC Transport Committee chairman Terry McDavitt, on 04 938 7036