greater WELLINGTON
THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

Report	**04.167**
Date	23 March 2004
File	T/10/05/002

Committee	**Passenger Transport Committee**
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Process for the further development of a system identifier for the public transport network in Wellington

1.   Purpose

To provide information about the process for the further development of a system identifier for public transport and the timescales involved.

2.   Background

Market research conducted in 2003 highlighted that public transport services in Wellington were perceived as fragmented, not very user friendly and old and run down. As a result, progress was made last year towards the development of a system identifier, or parent brand, for public transport services to help address these issues.

In July 2003 Councillors were presented with feedback about three options for a system identifier. Although the concept of a system identifier was accepted, the name "Urbo", the recommended option, generated a mixed reaction and there was some concern about introducing a system identifier before other service improvements were achieved.

A promotional campaign was subsequently developed to support the introduction of the new Hutt Valley bus services in October 2003 using the designs associated with Urbo, but without the Urbo name. From market research we know that these designs and the campaign were very successful. This has been supported by 26% growth in Hutt Valley bus patronage in December 2003 compared with the old services in December 2002 and we can assume that some of this growth can be attributed to the new designs.

In addition to the Hutt Valley bus improvements other initiatives are also being undertaken to improve service quality. These improvements, particularly the launch of a new public transport website with a journey planning feature, are driving the need for a system identifier. The new public transport website must be effectively promoted and without a name for the public transport network this is difficult.

As a result, we recently requested Jeff Clark of Clemenger BBDO, Director - Strategic Planning, to independently review the development work conducted to date to ensure that the process so far has been robust and logical and to advise on the next step. Jeff will present his findings at a workshop after the Passenger Transport Committee meeting.

3. Development work

To remind you, the following development work has been completed so far:

3.1 1999 - One of the objectives of the Regional Land Transport Strategy is to increase public transport patronage and this is supported by GWRC's goal of creating a sustainable region. Encouraging more people to use public transport will reduce congestion, environmental damage and pollution levels.

3.2 February - May 2003 - Comprehensive market research was conducted across the region to assist us to grow patronage. This research identified a number of areas for service improvements. This included integration and image. There was a perception that the public transport system was fragmented and not very user friendly and the image of public transport lacked warmth and appeared old and run-down.

3.3 May 2003 - The concept of a system identifier was agreed with the bus and train operators (Tranz Metro, Stagecoach and Mana) in order to address the issue of fragmentation and to assist in improving the image of public transport.

3.4 May - June 2003 - A process was agreed and separate workshops were held with the operators and GWRC Transport staff to collect ideas and input for the creation of a design brief for a system identifier. Councillors were kept informed of the process through workshops and Public Transport Committee reports.

3.5 July 2003 -Three design options were produced based on an agreed brief, which were then assessed by GWRC Transport staff, the operators, and the public using qualitative research. One design – Urbo – was the strongest option as it had the highest visual appeal amongst our target audience.

3.6 July 2003 - The options and feedback were presented to Councillors in July 2003. The concept of a system identifier was accepted but the name of "Urbo" caused some concern, as did introducing a system identifier before other groundwork, such as improving reliability and consistency of service/quality were initiated.

3.7 July 2003 - Concurrently a new look was required for a promotional campaign for the launch of a new network of bus services in the Hutt Valley in October 2003 to help improve the poor image of Hutt Valley bus services.

3.8   August – September 2003 - A promotional campaign was developed for the Hutt Valley using the designs associated with Urbo but without using the Urbo name.

3.9   December 2003 - Market research to evaluate the Hutt Valley promotional campaign and designs was conducted. The results of the research were very positive. The research was supported by 26% growth in Hutt Valley bus patronage in December 2003 compared with the old Hutt Valley services in December 2002.

4.   What are we trying to achieve?

We are looking to establish a system identifier, or parent brand, for public transport that sits above each of the operators' brands and the Greater Wellington brand that will:

- help to make the network easy to use by providing easy identification for the public by using a name, a symbol and colours that visually link all elements of the network that later become instantly recognisable for users

- create an independent parent brand that reflects the partnership between the operators, city councils and GWRC and that each of these parties can buy into and support

- help to create an integrated network by showing users that individual routes and services delivered by different operators are all part of the Wellington public transport network

- reduce confusion and make the network easier to understand and promote

- help to build greater consistency across the network

- improve the image of public transport in the region by building the perception of a network and a relationship with its users

- enable us to refresh the look of timetables and other promotional material, which has been delayed pending a decision about the system identifier.

Overall we are looking to grow patronage of public transport by building integration, increasing its appeal and creating greater awareness of services.

To achieve this the next stage is the development of a system identifier proposition that clearly defines the benefits of using public transport for the public and gives it genuine meaning.

We have already developed the colours (lime green and dark blue) and designs (images, arrow icon, etc) and these have been tested and endorsed in the Hutt Valley, what we are now looking to do is establish the name.

Once the name is agreed, the name and designs can be consistently applied across all facets of the system including: paper timetables; bus stops, bus

shelters, stations and interchanges; maps; tickets; the website; timetable holders and advertising and promotional material. Good branding is about consistency of design and application and repetition over time will help us to build a more positive public transport image.

By launching a system identifier we will be creating an expectation in people's minds of improvements and although we are making improvements across a number of areas, we will need to be careful how the brand is promoted initially so as not to raise expectations beyond what is deliverable. Just as we did in the Hutt Valley, we will need to clearly explain that the launch is the first stage and further improvements will follow.

5. Reasons for a system identifier

5.1 Service integration

From the market research we conducted in 2003 we know that public transport users perceive the current public transport system as fragmented and consequently not very user friendly and more Wellingtonians would use public transport, or would use it more often, if the public transport system was better integrated.

Therefore there is potential to encourage further patronage of public transport through improving integration within and between public transport services and creating the sense of a network. Establishing a system identifier will provide the means to do this.

5.2 Image

The image of public transport in Wellington is seen as functional and solid but lacks warmth and appears old and run down.

The values that people actually want associated with public transport are modern, sleek/smooth, reliable, efficient, integrated and a sense of family/community. These are the values that we will need to associate with the system identifier so we can more closely match people's expectations.

5.3 New public transport website

The implementation of new journey planing software provides us with an opportunity to relaunch an upgraded version of the public transport webpages as a separate improved website under the new system identifier name. This will be a significant region-wide improvement that will provide an ideal opportunity for the launch of the system identifier.

We know that a quarter of public transport users use the current webpages to obtain public transport information. With the journey planning feature, increasing numbers of people using the internet and promotion of this service, it will be possible to increase the usage of the website, which should contribute to increased patronage.

The journey planning software will be tested initially by the Ridewell team when they are answering queries from the public. Once the testing is completed we will be ready to launch the new public transport website to the public, using this new software, around August 2004. This provides us with a deadline for approving the name for a system identifier.

We could delay the launch slightly, if necessary, but we do not want to launch the site with a temporary name and then have to relaunch it shortly afterwards at additional cost under the system identifier name.

5.4   Reduce inconsistencies

Now that the Hutt Valley promotional material and pocket-sized timetables have been developed using a new look they are very different to the old style timetables and material, such as posters, maps, bus stop signs, bus stop timetables, used elsewhere in the region. These inconsistencies compound the fragmented perception of the system.

5.5   Learning from other cities from around the world

Having a system identifier, or parent brand, has been used to great effect in other cities around the world and it would make sense for us to learn from their experiences. Examples of system identifiers include: the Metro brand in Christchurch, Maxx in Auckland, Metlink in Melbourne, the Adelaide Metro in Adelaide, Transport for London (TFL) in London, TMB in Barcelona, Wiener Linien in Vienna, etc. These brands are helping to create integration and consistency, reduce confusion about operator brands, make promotion and advertising easier and improve the image of public transport.

5.6   Promotion

We currently do not undertake any general public transport advertising because we do not have a system identifier in place (there is only limited radio and press advertising to advise the public of service changes). Without a name or the sense of a network, public transport services are difficult to promote.

6.   Improvements to public transport services

There was some concern expressed by Councillors last year that introducing a system identifier might raise expectations beyond what the public transport system could currently deliver. Firstly, we will need to communicate that the introduction of a system identifier is the first stage and other improvements will follow so as not to raise expectation too much. Secondly, work is being undertaken to address service quality issues highlighted in the market research, such as customer service, information, infrastructure, fleet quality, frequency, fares and reliability. Examples of current initiatives include:

- The Hutt Valley bus review increased the frequency of the services and we know from market research that this message was communicated effectively to bus users and potential bus users in the Hutt Valley. High

frequency is constantly reinforced by the message on the sides of the buses operating the three core routes: "going places every 15 minutes".

- Standardised service quality evaluations, which measure customer service and other attributes, will be introduced shortly by GWRC Transport staff and performance will be discussed with the operators at monthly meetings.

- The complaints reporting procedure is being standardised so that GWRC Transport can monitor complaints more effectively.

- Paper timetables are being made more realistic so that maintaining the timetables is easier to achieve, particularly in the Hutt Valley.

- The bus fares are being simplified. A schematic map has been produced for the Hutt Valley to clearly define fare boundaries. Fare boundaries are also being more clearly shown in timetables in the Hutt Valley, Wainuiomata, Porirua and Kapiti, with Wellington to follow.

- The introduction of green lanes in Wellington City has helped improve the reliability of bus services in the city. Green lanes may be extended to other areas.

Further information about service improvements will be provided at the workshop following the Committee meeting.

7. Independent review

Jeff Clark of Clemenger BBDO recently conducted an independent review of the development work that we have conducted so far and he will talk about his findings in the workshop after the Committee meeting.

Jeff has suggested the following process as the next stage towards implementation of a system identifier:

7.1 Conduct a workshop with operators and Councillors to summarise the development work undertaken so far, what has been found out and additional work that needs to be completed.

7.2 Carry out the additional work, such as further research exclusively with potential users and establishing the Consumer Brand Proposition.

7.3 Feedback the findings from 7.2 to the operators and Councillors.

7.4 Develop 2 or 3 additional names and test these, plus "Urbo" and "Go" (Go was one of the other options that was previously tested with the public), against the brand proposition using separate groups of heavy users, occasional users and potential users.

7.5 Provide feedback to the Councillors and operators about the names and application of designs.

8.   Timescales

We need to agree the name of the system identifier in order to launch the new website and we anticipate that we will be ready to do this in August 2004. The workshop at the close of this meeting is the start of this process and the results will be presented at a later Committee meeting for decision.

Once the system identifier is launched the designs would be gradually rolled out across all elements of the network over time.

9.   Communication

There is nothing to communicate at this stage.

10.   Recommendation

That this report is received.

Report prepared by: Report approved by:

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