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Committee Sustainable Transport Committee  
Author Paul Kos, Manager Public Transport Planning

## **Regional Public Transport Plan 2014: Proposed variation – Levin to Waikanae bus trial**

### **1. Purpose**

This report seeks endorsement to make a ‘not significant’ variation to the Regional Public Transport Plan 2014 (PT Plan) to enable the trial of a Levin to Waikanae bus service.

### **2. Background**

As part of the last Annual Plan process, Council received a request from Horizons Regional Council (Horizons) to trial and jointly fund a Levin - Waikanae bus service. To be viable and eligible for public funding, the service needs to be defined as a separate unit in each regional council’s Regional Public Transport Plan.

The Council initially declined the request based on uncertainty on potential funding via the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), and the subsequent impacts on the value proposition for Wellington regional ratepayers.

Several matters have since changed that warrant further consideration of the proposal, including the timing of the proposed service and further correspondence from the NZ Transport Agency confirming that no new NLTF funding or approval is needed for the trial.

### **3. Process for considering a variation**

The Land Transport Management Act 2003 (the Act) provides the statutory context for preparing and varying the PT Plan.

In terms of content, provisions in the Act that apply to the adoption of the PT Plan generally apply to variations. The key provisions relevant to this variation are set out in section 124(c) of the Act:

- (iii) *the public transport funding likely to be available within the region;*

- (iv) the need to obtain the best value for money, having regard to the desirability of encouraging a competitive and efficient market for public transport services; and
- (v) the views of public transport operators in the region...

For consultation, the approach depends on the significance of proposed changes in the context of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), the Act and the PT Plan. As this proposal relates to a trial bus service, officers consider the proposed variation is ‘not-significant’ and therefore can be put forward to Council for adoption based on targeted consultation.

The targeted consultation guideline for service reviews, set out in the Significance Policy of the PT Plan, provides the most relevant guidance:

- > **Consultation for (not-significant) service reviews:** *as service reviews affect only a part of a region, relevant operators, local councils and community boards or committees) will be included in preliminary consultation as the sector plan is developed. Targeted public consultation may follow once options have been identified<sup>1</sup>.*

This proposal is considered more minor than a service review. Preliminary consultation has been undertaken with operators and community boards, as outlined in section 4.4 of this report.

Finally, Council must resolve to make a variation to a PT Plan (section 119(2) of the Act) and then carry out formal notification under section 121 of the Act. Notification occurs via a public notice and written notice to key stakeholders (including operators), the NZ Transport Agency and the Regional Transport Committee.

The varied PT Plan takes effect 20 days after formal resolution by the Council.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Details of the proposed trial service

The service is proposed to be a twice per week return service from Levin to Waikanae – operating on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The service would depart Levin at approximately 9.40am, which would allow connection to the 10.30am rail service from Waikanae. The service could be arranged to pick up passengers at Otaki, providing an additional travel option for those residents. The return bus service would depart Waikanae just prior to 3pm.

The timing of the service departing Levin is proposed to be amended from the original Horizons proposal to leave Levin at 9am. A later departure date is preferred as this will enable a pick from Otaki and at the same time ensure the service will not impact on the 290 Otaki bus service which provides a 10am link to Waikanae station. Feedback was sought from the six submitters to Horizons that originally requested the service – with three supporting the change and three preferring a 9am departure time. Support from operators was based on the revised departure time.

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<sup>1</sup> Targeted consultation requirements on non-significant variations, set out in the Significance Policy at page 84 of the Regional Public Transport Plan.

The proposed trial will not compete with the Capital Connection rail service.

The trial is proposed to commence in January or February 2017 and is expected to be in place for 18-24 months. Findings of the trial will be reported back after 12 months to determine its on-going viability. Any proposal to commit to a longer term will be reported to Council for endorsement.

#### **4.2 Funding and administration of the service**

The estimation from Horizons is that the service would cost approximately \$50,000 a year after fares. Approximately half of this would be funded via the National Land Transport Fund, with the remainder being covered by local share split between GWRC and Horizons.

The request from Horizons therefore requests that GWRC commit \$6,500 for six months trial in the 2016/17 financial year. This will be absorbed by operational cost savings from the bus contract. The contribution will double in the 2017/18 financial year and will be included in the next Annual Plan round.

Officers have been advised by the NZ Transport Agency that no new NLTF funding or approval is needed for the trial, provided the service can be funded from GWRC's existing PT programme (with standard financial assistance rate).

#### **4.3 Administration of the service**

Given the nature of the service initiating from Levin, administration and contracting of service is to be managed entirely by Horizons.

Detail of administration, including farebox recovery and approach to reimbursement for SuperGold users, will be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between both councils. A similar arrangement is in place between Auckland Transport and Waikato Regional Council for cross-boundary services.

#### **4.4 Targeted consultation**

In line with the requirements of the Act and the Significance Policy in the PT Plan, targeted consultation has been carried out with relevant operators and the Waikanae and Otaki community boards. Feedback is summarised below:

- *The Waikanae Community Board is in support of the proposed trial service from Levin as it will provide an important link for the Rail service for the district. Many residents of Horowhenua and Kapiti will value this service to access services and family in the region. The Board looks forward to the start of the connection.*
- The Otaki Community Board provided a copy of an earlier submission to GWRC requesting additional services be provided to serve the local community. The final paragraph concludes that the Otaki Community Board: *...welcome any additional services for Ōtaki and respectfully ask that those considering this proposal take into account the issues our residents in Ōtaki face. The proposed additional service will make a difference in these people lives.*

- UZA bus - *Fares aside I don't see any issue with the proposed times impacting the 290 service other than the odd Otaki passenger that may choose to use the service.*
- Mana bus - *The proposed service as described in your email would not impact on any services currently operated by Mana Coach Services.*

*I would however be concerned if the existence of the proposed contracted service was used in future by either council as a ground for refusing an exempt service registration or variation in respect of any service which was proposed to pick up or set down between Waikanae and Levin whilst en route to points further north. If both councils are able to give some assurance regarding this we will have no objection to the proposed Levin to Waikanae service.*

Officers have responded to Mana, noting that it is not possible to provide such an assurance, and that registration of future exempt services would be considered at that point in time.

- Transit Coachlines – indicated that they had no issues with the service.

The six submitters to Horizons (who initially requested the service) were also consulted on the proposal to change the time of departure from Levin from 9am to 9.40am. Three of those submitters supported the revised change, with the remaining preferring a 9am departure time.

## 5. Proposed variation

The proposed ‘not significant’ variation is Variation 2 to the Regional Public Transport Plan. The changes proposed are as follows:

### Page 74 **Grouping services into units**

- Include a new unit: Unit 19 – Levin to Waikanae cross boundary service

### Page 90 **Appendix 1 – Services integral to the Wellington public transport network**

- Add a new category:
  - > Cross boundary services

Page 126 following the section on Total Mobility Services

- add a new section and table as follows:

#### **Cross boundary services**

Unit 19 - Levin to Waikanae cross boundary service\*.

Route number	Service Type	Weekday	Hours of service (approximate)

-	Targeted	1 trip return	9am – 3pm
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This unit provides for a cross boundary bus service between Levin and Waikanae. The service will be trialled and is proposed to operate two days per week (Tuesday/Thursday) during the off-peak period. The service is proposed as one trip from Levin in the morning, with a return trip from Waikanae in the afternoon. Timing may change following the outcomes of the trial.

\*The portion of the service from the southern boundary to and from Waikanae is included in the GWRC Regional Public Transport Plan. The portion of the service from the southern boundary to and from Levin is included in the Horizons Regional Public Transport Plan.

Note: subsequent changes to maps may be made, subject to the outcome of the trial.

## 6. The decision-making process and significance

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002, Section 126 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003, and the Significance Policy set out in the PT Plan.

### 6.1 Significance of the decision

Part 6 of the the Local Government Act 2002 requires GWRC 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.

The variation to the PT Plan also needs to be considered in relation to Section 126 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 and the significance policy of the PT Plan.

Significance is measured against the significance policy in section 6.1 of the PT Plan, where it states ...*GWRC will determine the significance of variations to the PT Plan on a case by case basis, taking into account the extent to which the variations:*

- *Signal a material change to the planned level of investment*
- *Affect the purpose of the Land Transport Management Act*
- *Affect residents*
- *Affect the integrity of the PT Plan, including its overall affordability.*

Section 6.1 of the PT Plan also sets out ...*matters that will usually be considered ‘not significant’:*

- *Those that have recently been consulted on, i.e. the addition, removal or amendment of any matter on which there has already been consultation in accordance with the special consultative procedure*
- *Minor changes to service descriptions after a service review, e.g. changes to the frequency and hours of a service that result in the same, or a better, level of service*
- *Changes to the descriptions of services or service groupings as a result of an area-wide service review, as long as there have is no significant increase in cost.*

Given the changes proposed are minor, officers consider it appropriate to process the variation as a not-significant variation under the Land Transport Management Act 2003 and PT Plan.

## **6.2 Engagement**

Engagement with operators, community boards, Horizons (and submitters to Horizons Annual Plan), has been carried out in preparation for this report. Further engagement may occur following the reporting of the outcomes of the trial.

## **7. Recommendations**

*That the Committee*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Recommends that Council adopts the not-significant variation to the PT Plan to enable the Levin to Waikanae bus trial to proceed.*

Report prepared by:

**Paul Kos**  
Manager Public Transport  
Planning

Report approved by:

**Angus Gabara**  
Acting General Manager,  
Public Transport