

30 August 2018

To: Metlink (via email)
GWRC (Councillor Daran Ponter)
WCC (Councillors Simon Woolf, Diane Calvert, Andy Robertson)
MP Grant Robertson

Subject: Feedback on the new bus service from Northland/Wilton residents

In anticipation of the public meeting tonight in Karori, Creswick Valley Residents Association has compiled this summary of feedback that we have received from members and supporters that live in Northland and Wilton, primarily using the #13 and #22 bus routes.

We used to have a perfectly good bus route that took us to the city – the city is where by far the majority of us need to go – Lambton Quay, Cuba/Manners quarter, Courtenay Place, and from there on to two key destinations for bus users - Wellington Hospital and Wellington College. Passenger feedback on the new services is overwhelmingly negative, and our conclusion is clear – that the effect of the changes is a significantly poorer service for Northland/Wilton people.

These are just some of the comments we received:

“We used to have no. 22 and no. 23 bus services taking us to and from the GOLDEN MILE, Basin Reserve, hospital and Newtown..... Wonderful, practical and usually reliable”

“(Buses) not going down the Golden Mile has been a huge disadvantage to my son who works off peak times – so he is using Uber”

“I live 2.9 km from home to work and it's ridiculous I now have to catch 2 buses or walk – it is easily adding 15-20 mins on a good morning, but the journey home in the evening is worse. I've given up and gone back to my car or Uber”

“My wife used the bus services to get to and from the hospital last week while I had the car out of town. The services to get there were so poor that she took a taxi instead”

“During peak hour the 22 bus is only every 30 minutes in the evening. The old service had buses every 15 minutes during peak time.. They are now overcrowded”

“We are looking at buying our first car since moving here in 2015 – the buses just aren't working for us now”

“An efficient bus system should service the needs of the community, that's why we pay for our rates and bus fares. We travel on the bus with a destination in mind, library, shopping, medical services, theatres and movies ... These services are not at the railway station. Up until July ...the system worked”.

We have grouped our feedback as follows:

1. Operator performance
2. Design – the hubs and connections
3. Design – routes #22 and 13
4. Other comments

1. Operator Performance

- Not being on time and bunching of buses has been mentioned by many, for example, “the #13 is always late in morning, not too bad on way home”. “I have to get to train station in the morning so the new service should be perfect – but the reliability is worse than before”.
- Inaccurate information on the electronic noticeboards – many people can cite examples of the buses disappearing from the boards. (We acknowledge that Metlink has recognised this as an ongoing issue).
- The hub design is based on passengers being able to transfers buses – for this to work, the buses need to be running on time (point 1 above) and passengers need to have confidence that drivers will wait if buses are running late. The #22 and #21 outbound evening services (from Wgtn Station and Courtenay Place via Ghuznee St) are supposed to arrive at Victoria University at the same time, to enable people to transfer between buses. One passenger reports that this transfer has been problematic every time they have used it.. last week the #22 failed to wait at Victoria University for the #21 because that bus was running 8 minutes late. In another example the #21 bus driver requested the #22 driver to wait at the Karori tunnel, as the #22 had departed before the incoming #21; the #22 driver was most reluctant to do so. So much for people coming from Courtenay Place who wanted to transfer to the bus to Mairangi – they would have to wait at Victoria bus-stop for up to an hour. This is not acceptable for anyone – let alone young or elderly people, or those travelling alone. The bus operator needs to provide clear instructions to drivers to wait for designated transfer services, particularly at night.
- Often the bus drivers assume everyone is happy to catch either the 22 or 13 and so when, for example, a driver of the #13 sees a #22 bus stopped to pick people up, it will drive past without stopping even if there are people at the stop waiting especially for the 13. Driver education is required.
- We have received a number of reports of cars being damaged by buses – one in Northland Road this week and in Kelburn. Northland Road, Raroa Road and Norwich Street – where 2 buses often meet, are particular pinch points. More care – and more driver education is required.

2. Design – hubs and connections

- The design of the new system is dependent on hubs for transfers – but these are, in most cases, just bus stops. From the very outset, we gave feedback to the hubs needed to be covered, provide seating and be well lit – if you expect people to wait to change buses, then provide for their needs. We know that GWRC has admitted that not having the hubs available was a failure on their part. This has not been acceptable.
- The example given previously at Victoria University is a case in point – at night, when services are only hourly, if a bus transfer fails, passengers are faced with waiting at

either the Victoria bus-stop for up to an hour, or at Karori tunnel bus stop. This is not acceptable for anyone – let alone young or elderly people, or those travelling alone.

3. Design – routes #22 and #13

- The overwhelming objection to the redesigned routes #22 and #13 is that they go only to the very north end of town, requiring a time-consuming diversion and change of buses to get anywhere in the CBD, Willis St, Cuba Quarter and Courtenay Place.

There is not one person that has provided feedback to us that thinks that this change has improved the service – everyone wants some or all of the services reinstated to Courtenay Place or as close as possible to the central/southern part of town. We acknowledge that a bus route cannot cater to each individual journey that – but surely it should cater to the majority – and by far the majority of bus users are heading to points south of Bowen Street.

Young people, elderly people and those with limited mobility have reported that they find the Bus Station intimidating and confusing. Those passengers who are mobile are transferring on foot between the Terrace and Lambton Quay to avoid diverting in the opposite direction, but this is not an ideal situation for people with mobility issues or disabilities, and not desirable for anyone in the winter darkness or on a rainy night.

- **Insufficient capacity** Capacity on inbound and **especially outbound buses at peak times** needs to be increased.
 - The inbound #22 is often full before it gets to Northland in the morning (through till about 9:30). Although the number of buses in the morning is about the same as previously – the buses that start at Johnsonville and Khandallah are well utilised by students getting to Victoria and patronage has increased. It is great to see buses well used, but over-crowding is not satisfactory.
 - Outbound #22 – the number of buses at peak times is significantly reduced from previously. The old service had buses every 15 minutes between about 3:30 and 6:15 pm. Now, the bus frequency inexplicably reduces at 5 pm – to half-hourly. This, combined with the increased use by students getting from the Wgtn Station to the Kelburn campus – means that these buses are invariably absolutely full at the first stop on the Terrace. Passengers trying to catch the #22 home from further up the Terrace watch overloaded buses going past – and have to wait 30 mins for the next one.
(And while there may be more room on the bus to stand, if you're in the middle of the scrum there's limited attachment points to hold on to – some likening the crush to that on a London tube).
- Overcrowded Karori buses also mean it is not practical to use the Karori tunnel "hub" as was presumably intended for the homeward bound run. If you do manage to get on a Karori bus - the infrequent #22 could mean waiting for 30 minutes at the Karori tunnel bus stop (in a corridor of car fumes!)
- #22 Sunday services are now hourly – and again, the diversion north to change buses adds yet more journey time. Formerly they were half-hourly; we would like some

periods of higher frequency services to be reinstated during the middle part of the day.

- The #13 Route is an express/peak route only (five buses only in the morning/evening peak). It is well used and highly valued by Northlanders.
- As the #13 now goes down Featherston Street rather than Lambton Quay (inbound), a new stop at Whitmore Street has been added – and users agree this should be retained.
- However, this route has been shortened – terminating at Brandon Street rather than Courtenay Place. While it is the only direct route into the CBD, we would like this service to be extended further into town (pending any changes to the #22 route).
- Further, the last outbound bus now departs Brandon Street at 5:40 pm (previously it left Courtenay Place at this time). If you miss that bus – then the next one is a #22 at around 6pm on The Terrace – which is packed with people by the time it gets to the beginning of the Terrace (see point above). The next one after that is not till 6:30. We need more buses between 5:30 and 7pm, especially if people have to make their way from other parts of the city.
- Finally, the #22 and #13 can't be caught from the same stop (outbound) so you have to make a decision about which one you're going to try catch and hope that you make the right choice about which one is going to turn up. There must be lots of people running between the Terrace and Lambton Quay – fine when you are fit and able, but a bus service should not be designed with this in mind.

This comment summarises it nicely, from five young professionals working in the CBD and Hutt: “In summary - the afternoon and evening buses simply don't work for us (they're too rare and too full). We don't catch the bus home now which is quite a hassle given we live at the top of a very steep hill”.

4. Other routes

- The reinstatement of route #18 as an all day service (currently peak only) is welcomed – but why wait till the end of the year? And why not run this route at the weekends too – students often need access to events and courses on at Massey and Wgtn High in the weekends, and it provides a service to the Hospital – all while meeting GWRC's objective of keeping the buses off Lambton Quay/Willis St.
- There has been little change, so few comments on route #14, although as this now goes through Hataitai rather than Newtown, this necessitates a change in buses to get the Hospital – a complaint common to the Karori routes.
- The Willis St bus stop and #14 buses are much more crowded in the evening – often the bus fills up on Willis St, and cannot pick up people on Lambton Quay. The bus half-empties again at Molesworth St, so the bus is picking up people going to the train station, while Wilton-bound people miss out.
- The #22 bus was relied on by families and students from Wellington Girls College, St Mary's College, Wellington College and Wellington High School to get to the **National Hockey Stadium** for training and games after school and on the weekends. This is no longer an option with the only alternative (29E) leaving from Hutcheson St in Newtown meaning catching two buses for many of the students and the timing of the two buses are not synced. Not a great outcome for anyone.

- Highbury residents no longer have any bus links with Karori or Kelburn routes, eg, for shops and doctors along Upland Road, or to Victoria University.

Some positive comments

- Transferring buses without additional cost is a good thing (although absolutely necessary under the design model).
- Being able to get the bus to/from Johnsonville and Khandallah is also a great improvement. This route has been adopted by students (hence the full buses and need for more capacity). One resident noted that this had made visits to/from Kenepuru Hospital much easier (as can transfer from train to Mairangi bus).

Summary

The objections of our community to the proposed changes in the Mairangi bus service have been made clear ever since a public community meeting at Cardinal McKeefrey School (in 2014). Objection to the adoption of the Bus Station as the transfer point for buses from Mairangi, and the need for bus hubs in the suburbs to be hubs (not bus stops) was consistently given to GWRC during the consultation about the new service.

As an inner city suburb, with a population absolutely happy to take the buses and leave their cars at home, Northland should be a poster child for public transport. The bus service that we have now is worse than before – and we think we deserve better.

We request that:

- Work on the hubs must be fast-tracked and prioritised.
- The bus operator must be made to fulfill the bus transfer requirements of the timetable
- Passenger capacity for Northland must be increased – in the mornings and, even more urgently, in the evenings for the outbound routes
- Some or all of the services be reinstated to Courtenay Place or as close as possible to the central/southern part of town

Sara Clarke
Secretary, Creswick Valley Residents Association