

Email from: ponter.amor@xtra.co.nz in response to CVRA's Feedback on the new bus service from Northland/Wilton residents (of 30 August 2018)

2 Sep 2018, 09:49

Thank you for your email Sara,

Unfortunately the Karori meeting did not present an opportunity to address matters in the way you have set them out in your letter – it was more of a “free for all” with no real opportunity to respond.

I will address issues in the order you have set them out in your letter.

Before I do, I should say that I am a daily No 22 user, so I am familiar with some of the issues that you have raised.

Operator Performance

Bus Bunching

Metlink has been working closely with the operator on the timeliness of services. Bus bunching was a huge problem across the network in the first few weeks. It causes significant problems with some buses running largely empty while other buses are at capacity and skip stops. We appear to have addressed many of the issues with bus bunching, though it does continue to occur from time to time.

Timeliness

We are working with the bus operator to amend the timetables where it is clear that buses are consistently delayed or behind time. The timing of inter-connections at hubs, such as Karori Tunnel, is a particular issue that we are working on with the bus operators.

Real Time Information

The Real Time Information boards are Metlink's biggest work of fiction. RTI was never perfect, but it was okay. In the first four weeks it was consistently unreliable, with services not showing, services showing for the wrong routes, services dropping off the screen. Metlink has been chasing down a range of issues, each of which has required its own “fix”, including:

- Wiring: On some bus fleets the wiring of the RTI was not giving the best communication – these have been rewired
- Aerial Positionings: Aerials have been repositioned on some bus fleets to provide better pickup of data
- Operator input: Drivers have been retrained on how to properly input code data at the beginning of routes – if data entry is wrong information on RTI is wrong
- Software upgrade: We have upgraded the RTI software to improve the tracking of buses

Metlink are continuing work on the RTI system – One of the biggest issues now seems to be buses dropping off the system when they say “Due”. They usually turn up, but there is nothing more frustrating than to see your bus “vaporized” when you have been waiting ten minutes.

Road Clearance

You mention that cars are being hit by buses. This has been occurring across the network. The operators have been advised to take more care. In some areas Metlink will need to work with the City Council to remove parking – especially on some new sections of routes or areas where things have always been tight.

Design – Hubs and Connections

I agree that the completion (commencement indeed) of the hubs has been our biggest failure in delivering the network. I won't go into the details of this. Hub construction is staggered across the City. Kilbirnie, Hutchinson Rd and Brooklyn shops hubs are nearing completion. This will enable work to start on Karori and other hubs. The Karori hub will have good lighting and CCTV. I am concerned though that the shelters may not be big enough and have communicated this to Metlink staff. Something we will both need to monitor.

Design – Routes #22 and 13

At this stage the focus is on getting the services to run more smoothly, to time with appropriate capacity. Metlink will review the design of the network once things have settled down further.

Insufficient Capacity

As the No 22 Route is my regular services I have witnessed the over capacity problems that you have noted, both in the morning and evening peaks. I have previously raised this with Metlink and will again be raising the fact that we need more capacity in both the morning and evening peaks in particular.

For a number of weeks the operator was running under-sized buses on a number of the services. This meant less seats and standing room (approx. 25 spaces every time this occurred).

Earlier and Later Buses

When the timetables were first put out it became apparent that on some routes you couldn't get into town as early as you could previously, and you had to dash out the door after work to get the last bus coming homing. With the support of my Council colleague we have a package of additional early morning and evening services coming in, in early 2019. If we can get them in earlier we will, but all additional services have to be negotiated with the bus operators, who in turn have a stipulated period for negotiating with the drivers/Union.

Other Routes

18E Route

Yes, an all week No 18E service will address many issues with people access the

Universities and hospital, both in the West and the East of the City. The introduction of the all day service is hampered by the process I have identified above – the requirement to negotiate with the operator – NZ Bus, and for them to confirm rosters with driver/Unions – the later process is an eight week process. Metlink has advised NZ Bus of the change.

14 Route

The No 14 Route always went through Hāitaitai. A change was always required if you wanted to go to the Hospital.

29E / National Hockey Stadium

In the peak period the 29E starts at the Railway Station which will take the girls right past the Hockey Stadium. In the off-peak a change will be required at the Hospital (1 or 23E onto the No 29E. Alternatives are the 32X or staying on the No 1, but this is a longer walk (about 13 mins) at the Hockey Stadium end. We will be looking at whether additional 29E services are required when we review the network.

Highbury Routes

Highbury residents are in regular contact about this route. We have a part of the community that really like the new service (i.e. they previously had no service) and the other half who want to go back to the Kelburn Route. We will look at how we might be able to cater for both communities as part of the review, but I can make no promises that we will be able to cater for everyone.

Summary

Your summary points are all well made. The operational matters are being worked on now, and I have reinforced these to officers on Friday.

I appreciate that the response to issues seems slow. The way in which public transport is provided for now in New Zealand does not provide for as nimble a response to issues as we would all like. Having said that we have been working hard with the operators and we have seen definite improvements across the network (though far from perfect).

Email Distribution

I hope you don't mind, but I have copied my fellow councillors (from across the Region) and senior officers. All the better for them to hear from the source.

Happy to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

Daran

Cr Daran Ponter

Greater Wellington Regional Council

0274 540689