

REPORT ON SUBMISSION TO GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL – PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARE CHANGES

PURPOSE

This paper seeks approval made under delegated authority of the Chief Executive for a submission to Greater Wellington Regional Council (Attachment 1) regarding their public transport fare changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Delivery Committee:

1. Receive the report;
2. Agree to recommend that the Council approve the Porirua City submission to Greater Wellington Regional Council on public transport fare changes.

BACKGROUND

1. In April 2017 Council made a submission to the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) on their draft annual plan. In our submission we commented on the issue of public transport, in particular the issue of fare discounts for tertiary students. Our submission encouraged GWRC to support discounts for tertiary students.
2. GWRC had signalled in its annual plan that it was about to commence a comprehensive public transport fares review in August 2017.
3. GRWC describes public transport going through ‘a period of transformation’ – “The rail network already has a new operator and a new electric fleet. Soon the region will get new bus operators, a new bus fleet and a new network in Wellington city. Snapper will also become the smartcard for use on all buses in the region”.
4. The long term aim is to introduce a single ticketing system for all travel on public transport in the region, whether by bus, train or ferry. To do this GRWC needs to simplify their fares (numbering several hundred at present) and apply them more consistently. Their ideas on how to achieve this are contained in the “Better Metlink Fares” discussion document released in early August. Public submissions close on 18 September.
5. Many changes, including a 25% discount for tertiary students, have been proposed. A number of fare changes will directly affect public transport users in Porirua.

6. Our submission responds to the questions provided in the Better Metlink Fares discussion document. Our comments are, in the main, supportive of the proposed changes.

DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS

7. The key changes proposed in the Better Metlink Fares discussion document are:
 - General 3% fare increase
 - Free bus transfers
 - 25% off-peak discount
 - 25% discount for full-time tertiary students (equivalent to a 50% discount on cash)
 - 50% discount for all school children (whether using a child snapper or cash)
 - 25% premium for all cash fares
 - Free bus connections to trains when using a rail monthly pass
 - Move Porirua zone boundary north so that people in Titahi Bay and Porirua East can travel from their suburb into the CBD and pay for a one-zone rather than two-zone fare.
 - Align ferry fares with wider fares structure
 - Metlink Explorer day pass replacing other day passes
 - Discontinued school term passes, 30-day bus passes, return rail event tickets
 - Allocate Ngauranga Station to zone 3.
8. Our submission (Attachment 1) outlines our views on the proposed changes to fares.
9. Wellington is the only region currently not offering a region-wide tertiary discount. We welcome the proposed fares discount for tertiary students in full-time study.
10. Overall, GWRC has calculated that about half of all passengers will face a fare increase (mainly adults using Snapper or 10-trip or monthly passes) a quarter will experience no change, and another quarter will enjoy a fare decrease.
11. The changes are favourable for Porirua with its youthful population as a number of changes directly benefit children and young people.
12. This paper contributes to the children and young people at the centre of city decisions strategic policy. The submission is an example of our advocacy role whereby we show our support for changes that will be beneficial for children and young people.
13. There are no operational or financial implications for the Council from this paper.

ATTACHMENT

#5032528 - Porirua City Submission to GWRC Public Transport Fare Changes

Report prepared by: Anne Kelly
SENIOR POLICY ANALYST -POLICY, PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

Peer reviewed by: Sue Dahl
ACTING POLICY MANAGER

Report approved by: James Jefferson
GENERAL MANAGER POLICY, PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

#5032528
Wendy Walker
wwalker@pcc.govt.nz
Ph 237 1401

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Greater Wellington Regional Council
Freepost 3156, GWRC
PO Box 11646, Manners Street
WELLINGTON 6142

To whom it may concern

PORIRUA CITY PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARE CHANGES SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the "Metlink Better Fares" proposal. Council's responses to your submission questions are provided below in italics.

1. Overall, do you support the proposed fare changes? *Yes*
 - a) If yes, what do you like the best? *The changes that are most beneficial for children and young people. We welcome the tertiary student and school student discounts, however acknowledge that many adults will face a 3% general increase.*
 - b) If no, why and what would you change? *NA*

2. Do you support a discount for full-time tertiary students? *Yes*

As mentioned in our submission to the GWRC draft Annual Plan in April this year we support a fares discount for tertiary students as Porirua has a youthful population and many of our young people travel outside Porirua for study.

The proposed region-wide 25% fares discount for tertiary students in full-time study makes travel more affordable. It is one less barrier for equity of access to a wide range of tertiary education choices in the region for our community. We welcome this change.

We note that students will have to register for the concession in order for their snapper card to apply the discount. This process needs to be simple and well- advertised in advance of the change to ensure a smooth transition.

3. Do you support a discount for the blind and disabled?

Yes, this is positive change and to be commended.

4. Do you support a new policy to encourage more frequent use of public transport, more off peak travel and greater use of electronic ticketing?

We support the overall intent to improve public transport patronage. These changes are intended to result in less vehicles on the road, less congestion and reduce carbon emissions.

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The 25% premium for cash based ticket purchases will encourage pre-purchase options like snapper cards and rail passes. The 25% cash fare premium will be inconvenient and expensive for occasional users of public transport who may choose to stay in their car, thus undermining the intent.

5. Do you support funding the proposed changes through a combination of fare increases, regional rates and NZ Transport subsidies? If no, how do you propose the changes are funded?

It appears reasonable to recoup a third of the total cost of concessions and fare product changes (\$2.5m) through the 3% general increase while meeting the remaining \$5m through a mix of regional rates and NZTA subsidies.

6. Do you support the proposed 3% general fares increase to help offset the cost of the proposed changes? If no, what level of fare increase would you support?

We recognise that is a balancing exercise and that not all residents will benefit from changes.

Our residents on low incomes who travel into Wellington City for work will feel the impact of the 3% increase more than those on higher incomes. However this is off-set to a degree by other changes to fares. Our Western and East Ward residents travelling into the Porirua City Centre will soon enjoy a 1-zone rather than 2-zone fare. The provision of a free bus connection for Porirua rail monthly passes for travel to and from Wellington station will also benefit our many regular commuters.

7. Do you have any other comments?

We support the proposed 50% discount for all school students whether using a child snapper or paying cash. We have a number of school aged children in Porirua who use public transport to travel to schools outside of Porirua. We note that only shorter trips (1-5 zones) will have reduced fares as the long distance trips are already discounted 50%. Those taking longer trips may be disappointed, albeit a minority, as they may have expected a decrease but now face a general 3% fares increase instead.

We also welcome the proposal to extend free bus connections to trains when using a rail monthly pass to include Porirua and other places, currently limited to Kapiti and Wairarapa. As well as reducing costs to users, this should help ease parking constraints at our local stations and reduce road congestion.

The change to the Porirua zone boundary northwards so that zone 5 includes Titahi Bay and Waitangirua is positive. It will make many short trips from the respective suburbs into the CBD cheaper. A few Whitby families who school in Aotea may be negatively affected as they will be crossing a new boundary and face a 15% increase.

8. Do you wish to speak to your submission at a public hearing in October? *No*
9. Please provide contact details if you want to speak at the public hearing, or if you want to be kept updated on developments. Please provide updates to Anne Kelly, Senior Policy Analyst, akelly@pcc.govt.nz ph 2371522.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Walker
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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