

19 September 2019

Greater Wellington Regional Council
Level 2, 15 Walter St, Te Aro
Wellington 6011

Re: Bus Network Review

Tēnā koe,

Regional Public Health (RPH) serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and as a service is part of the Hutt Valley District Health Board. We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population.

RPH **commends** Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) on carrying out this consultation following the changes to the bus network last year. The importance of listening and responding to the multiple concerns expressed by those using the bus network is significant. The recent amendments to the Local Government Act to reinstate the four aspects of community wellbeing – economic, social, environmental and cultural – has highlighted the importance of putting the wellbeing of citizens at the centre of all that GWRC does.

RPH **recommends** that GWRC ensures continued meaningful consultation with communities who may not naturally connect through traditional channels. This is particularly important for those who traditionally have less power and representation in the planning process; this includes Māori, Pacific peoples, migrant and refugee communities, older people and those on low-income. Alternative approaches may be needed, including the use of focus group discussions or working alongside others who have existing connections with these communities.

When changes are being made to the bus network it is important that equity is considered and that those who might already be struggling are not unduly punished through these changes, for example those living with disabilities, those whose regular public transport routes are disrupted and shift workers. RPH **recommends** that GWRC make equity a priority and ensure that the review of the bus networks includes a commitment to making certain that this process does not inadvertently deepen societal and health inequities. This can be achieved through inclusive planning that takes into account the diversity of the city and ensures the voices of vulnerable residents are included.

Transport planning decisions have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, by influencing traffic crashes, vehicle emissions, physical activity, access to services, and mental health.¹ By adjusting the bus network in response to public concern, GWRC has the opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of its population.

¹ Litman, T. (2013). Transportation and public health. Annual review of public health, 34, 217-233.

Convenience and accessibility are two key factors in work-related travel behaviours². The first steps to influence and change work-related travel behaviour requires public transport to be perceived as being affordable and accessible (within a 200-metre radius of a residence, arrival coinciding with work place hours), coupled with restrictions on car parking around worksites. Changes to the bus network by Greater Wellington Regional Council should be made in close consultation with Wellington City Council (WCC) as they make changes to how they manage parking.

Finally, RPH recognises the importance of reviewing the bus network and engaging in consultation with individuals; however, partnering with workplaces provides the opportunity for further gains in promoting and improving public transport while reducing negative impacts and disruption to business services. RPH **recommends** that bus timetables should consider large employers and their work start times as well as where people might come from seeking their services.

One opportunity to improve the delivery of public transport for vulnerable communities is to work in partnership with WCC and the Capital & Coast District Health Board (CCDHB) to improve timely public transport to Wellington Hospital. This is important as this is a key destination for aging and vulnerable members of our society needing care – currently reaching Wellington Hospital from some lower-income Eastern suburbs is particularly challenging and can take a long time. WCC is planning to review the parking around Newtown which currently has significant unlimited on street parking used by Hospital staff, this will very likely change and have an impact on demand for public transport. This is where GWRC has an important role to play in syncing public transport with this significant employer's work start times. GWRC recently supported CCDHB to run a workplace travel survey. This survey may provide useful information to barriers and enablers to public transport, which may be useful when considering bus network changes. RPH **recommends** that the Public Transport team meet with the CCDHB Senior Sustainability Advisor, Jay Hadfield (Jay.Hadfield@ccdhb.org.nz), to identify positive ways forward when considering changes to the bus network.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

The point of contact for this letter of support is:

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Naku noa, na

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² Badland, H. M., Garrett, N., & Schofield, G. M. (2010). How does car parking availability and public transport accessibility influence work-related travel behaviors? Sustainability, 2(2), 576-590.