



Report 06.113
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Committee Passenger Transport
Authors Rhona Nicol Manager - Transport Procurement
Rob Braddock Contract & Quality Manager

Metlink ID Cards

1. Purpose

To provide information on the need and benefits of introducing a Metlink ID card at the same time as the possible implementation of a universal concession fare for young people and seniors

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background/Concessionary Fare Review

One of the fare and ticketing objectives of the draft Regional Transport Passenger Plan (RTP) is to “Implement universal concession fares for young people (aged 18 and under) and seniors (aged 65 years and over)”

As per the draft RTP, we in conjunction with transport operators, wish to standardise concessionary fares (50% discount) for the following groups of passengers.

- Youth from the age of 5 until 31 December in the year in which they turn 18 (or until their 19th birthday, whichever is operationally more workable).
- Seniors (defined as people who are eligible to receive New Zealand Superannuation).

We propose to introduce a standardised ‘Metlink’ branded photo ID card for young people and possibly also for seniors. Issuing of ID cards for seniors may depend on the format and timing of Government’s proposed ‘Seniors Card’.

4. Purpose of Photo ID Cards

The purpose of the card is to simplify the whole process of obtaining a concessionary fare both for the passenger and the transport companies.

This is more of a problem for youth/school students as there is presently no mechanism for establishing age other than school ID cards which can differ from school to school and create uncertainty for bus drivers and train guards. Another similar issue is the issuance of photo ID cards by accredited institutions such as the Wellington City Mission. These institutions teach an approved curriculum however as the name does not imply 'school' these students often run into problems obtaining concessionary fares from bus drivers and train guards. There is also no 'Under 18' alternative to the '18 Plus' card

Not all schools are able to complete the issuing of cards in what might be considered an ideal timeframe. Sometimes this process is not complete until the end of March, meaning two months of problems in some instances for students who may possibly be refused a concessionary fare.

Senior passengers face similar issues from time to time when their age is in doubt. It is unfortunate but there have been instances where seniors are refused a senior fare because bus drivers and train guards do not believe they are old enough. In other cases, seniors are not aware of ID requirements but do assume a concessionary fare is available to them.

We do not believe it is practical to expect passengers to carry documents such as passports or drivers licenses as not everyone (particularly youth) have these and there is still a requirement for bus drivers and train guards to calculate ages from birthdates themselves if age is in question.

In short, it is all about making it easier and 'reducing the drama'.

5. Views of Transport Operators

The proposal to introduce a standard photo ID card has arisen from discussions with transport operators who have indicated that it is a necessary requirement for the introduction of the proposed concessionary fares.

Letters from Stagecoach Wellington and Mana Coach Services Ltd in support of the proposed 'Metlink' photo ID card are included (**attachment 1**).

6. Government Issued 'Seniors Cards'

There does not seem to have been any central government progress in this respect. As we understand it, these cards were supposed to replace the current 'Superannuation Card'. The current superannuation card is not seen as ideal as it does not carry a photo and it is only available to people who are eligible for New Zealand Superannuation. Those people not eligible include:

- Those who are not New Zealand citizens or permanent residents.

- Those who have not lived in New Zealand for a total of ten years since they turned 20 (and five of those years must be since they turned 50) unless when overseas they were: working overseas and paying tax in New Zealand or working in the armed forces and various other similar scenarios.

We currently do not exclude people affected by this criteria (such as new immigrants without permanent residency or citizenship) and suggest that we do not plan to.

7. Public Consultation

We intend to use a two stage public consultation process during this project. The first stage will invite comment on the 'Metlink' ID card proposal and will be included in the fares simplification consultation due for release mid-April. The second stage will provide a summary of the feedback received and the issues brought to bear, our intended way forward complete with any proposed solutions to those issues, and an invitation for further comment.

As part of the fare simplification consultation that took place in 2003 the possible issue of a universal fare discount card was highlighted as a feedback point in comment around discounted travel for youth and students. There was no feedback received on this point.

8. Project Cost

We called for expressions of interest (EOI) in February 2006 for the project management and implementation of a Metlink ID card system. The aim of this was to gain an understanding of potential supplier and options for delivery of a successful quality system. As part of the EOI we asked for indicative cost of the project and typically this cost ranged from \$8-\$12 per card (including all production and management aspects). A user charge within this range (see below) will ensure the ongoing maintenance of this project will be cost neutral to the Council.

There will also be the potential to outsource application validation and processing to an outside agency. We have not established an actual cost here as this will be determined by the scope of the agent's involvement. However agency costs may be offset by lesser involvement on the part of the card manufacturer.

All costs to Council and users would be established in greater detail through a tender process.

9. Issues

We expect that there will be some questions raised by the public around the requirement for the ID cards. We are of the opinion that any perceived negatives are outweighed by the positives in that the issues described in Section 4 will no longer be present. The main issues as we see them are:

- User charges:

We expect the initial user charge to be around \$8-\$12 or rather the cost of card production as per Paragraph 6 above (this will also apply to card renewals). However the value to the customer of holding a Metlink ID card is the guarantee of cheaper fares. We expect that there will be a card renewal requirement for young people on a yet to be decided basis due to the significant changes in their appearance during their teenage years.

- Collection of personal information:

Management of the cards will require a database including personal information of card holders such as full name and DOB etc as well as a photo image. This will be required in order to maintain the integrity of the cards. To reassure users that the personal information provided will not be used for any other purpose a confidentiality statement will be provided with application forms.

We expect these issues and others to be raised throughout the public consultation phase. It should be noted that any personal information held will be secure and is not intended for any other purpose.

10. Existing Policies and Processes

10.1 Greater Wellington (GW)

10.1.1 Concessionary fare policy for youth/students

- Travel is free for children under 4 years of age. They must be accompanied by a fare paying passenger.
- Children aged 5 to 15 travel for a child fare.
- Full-time high school students aged 16 – 19 years (inclusive) can travel for the child fare. They must be in a recognised school uniform or be able to show current student or official form of ID.

10.1.2 Concessionary fares currently available to seniors

- Concessionary fares for seniors differ between transport operators and areas within the region.

In short;

Seniors on Stagecoach Wellington services are eligible for a 50% discount during off-peak times during the week and at all times on weekends after presenting a card issued by the Wellington City Council. These cards are available to all residents of the Wellington region aged 60 and over.

Seniors on Cityline services pay special fares which are only available when purchased with a 'GoRider farecard'. This card is available to people aged 60 and over. There are no Senior Citizen cash fares. The senior citizen 'GoRider' fares are available from 9am weekdays and all day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays and offer a maximum fare of \$2.00 per trip.

Seniors are not eligible for concessionary fares on Mana or Newlands Coach Service services.

10.2 Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA)

10.2.1 Concessionary fare policy for youth/students

- Travel is free for children under 4 years of age. They must be accompanied by a fare paying passenger.
- Children aged 5 to 15 travel for a child fare.
- Full-time high school students aged 16 – 19 years can travel for the child fare. They must be in a recognised school uniform or be able to show current student ID.
- Full-time tertiary students can purchase a Multi-ride ticket for up to 20% off the cash fare from on-campus ticketing agencies. They must show current student ID or produce a letter of eligibility from their tertiary institution.

10.2.2 Concessionary fare policy for seniors

Applicants must be either:

- a resident in the Auckland region or;
- be receiving New Zealand superannuation or have reached the qualifying age to be old enough for New Zealand superannuation, which is 65 years.

10.2.3 Use of photo ID cards

ARTA currently operate an ID card system similar in many respects to the proposed 'Metlink' process. The main difference is that the schools still organise their cards through their chosen manufacturer. The cards are then manufactured in the 'MAXX' brand – the current design of which has been arrived at through a competition between schools.

The main difficulty with this is the potential for delays in completing the card issuing which is not something ARTA have direct control over. To be fair, there is a large amount of administration involved and so ARTA's preferred timeframe for completion (by the end of February) is not necessarily a practical one especially now that schools do not start back until after Waitangi weekend. The aspect of timely issue of the cards is however an important one.

Seniors cards are managed differently in that the administration of these is done in-house. The main problem ARTA have identified here is the quality of the applications that are posted in. Approximately 10% of these arrive with incomplete details or missing photographs.

We believe we have answers to these two issues. These are detailed in Section 13 but in short:

- We intend to introduce year-round availability of the ‘Metlink’ ID card.
- We intend to outsource the ongoing collection of applications to an outside agent who will be able to validate applications prior to them being processed.

10.3 Environment Canterbury (ECAN)

10.3.1 Concessionary fare policy for youth/students

- Applicants must be under the age of 18. There is no requirement for them to attend school. An ECAN issued ‘CanDo’ photo ID card is the only identification able to be presented in order to obtain a concessionary fare.

10.3.2 Concessionary fare policy for seniors

- There are no concessionary fares available for seniors.

10.3.3 Use of photo ID cards

ECAN report that there has been a very high level of acceptance of their ‘CanDo’ card. This card serves the same purposes as the proposed ‘Metlink’ card. All schools bar one have taken on the ‘CanDo’ card as a replacement for the old school ID’s. The end result of this has been a uniform method of identification resulting in the resolution of the same problems we face under our current system. The cards were introduced following consultation.

ECAN also report that because management of the cards was outsourced, it has been a very ‘hands off’ seamless process.

11. Proposed Greater Wellington (GW) Process

The proposed ‘Metlink’ ID card will be available through schools on a ‘bulk run’ basis where the card manufacturer will visit the school to take photos.

Other persons eligible for concessionary fares will be able to obtain a Metlink ID card via an outside agency. The outside agency will be able to validate applications for authenticity.

Because we propose that the whole administration process be outsourced we do not envisage that a large volume of work for Council staff will be created.

Please also note that outsourcing of all card management aspects is included in our intended neutral cost structure.

12. Feedback from Schools/Tertiary Institutions

Wellington College

- Wellington College (through a contractor) issue their own ‘standard type’ photo ID cards. These cards serve various purposes and carry stored information for use in the school library etc.

- They are in support of the reasons behind the proposed card and have offered us the use of their school for a ‘trial run’ if we would like to take the opportunity. This would involve the sharing of information from their own records however they believe that this will not present a problem.
- They do have questions around privacy and collection of personal information which becomes an issue if the card is proposed for multi-use. To that end we would imagine that at the outset they will probably continue to issue their own ID cards but as indicated previously, happily share information for the purposes of the ‘Metlink’ card. We believe these issues will be solved through a trial process.

Wellington East Girls College

- Wellington East Girls College (through a contractor) issue their own ‘standard type’ photo ID cards. These cards do not carry any stored information or are used in any other capacity.
- They are also in support of the reasons behind our proposal in that it will be easier for their students to obtain concessionary fares, particularly on weekends etc when they are out of uniform.

Aotea College

- Aotea College are in support of the proposed ‘Metlink’ photo ID card. They currently issue photo ID cards for students primarily for use on public transport but not for any internal aspect. In their words, administration of the cards is not their ‘core business’ and find the whole process quite onerous.
- They have expressed interest in the card including ‘Metlink’ branding as well as their school name etc, which is well within the scope of the project.

13. Proposed Solutions to Common Administrative Problems

In addition to the intended purpose of the proposed ‘Metlink’ card we consider that the various administrative problems faced presently can be overcome with introduction of the ‘Metlink’ card and propose solutions as follows.

- Constant availability of the card will help solve the issue of the ‘mad rush’ at the beginning of the year to get the cards issued although the bulk of youth cards would still be issued through schools. Year round availability will also be of assistance in processing renewals and to young people who are not at school. We also believe that the bulk run does not actually have to be at the start of the year and could in fact be done towards the end of the previous year. This would then mean that students have an up to date card right from day one of the new term. This in itself may eliminate the driver/passenger issues as discussed earlier.

Quality of non-school and seniors applications will be managed by an agency. There are agencies in the market place that have extensive experience in the handling of similar processes and are able to validate applications prior to them being sent off for processing.

14. Communication

As mentioned within this report public consultation on the possible introductory of a Metlink ID card will be sort as part of the simplification of fares consultation, planned to begin mid-April 2006.

15. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

Report prepared by:

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Rob Braddock
Contract & Quality Manager

Rhona Nicol
Manager - Transport
Procurement

Wayne Hastie
Divisional Manager

Attachment 1: Concession Identity Cards letter from Stagecoach