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Committee Transport & Access Committee  
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## Carriage of cycles on buses and trains

### 1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the issue of the carriage of bikes on buses and trains.

### 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

The integration of cycling and public transport is embedded in Greater Wellington policy. The Regional Passenger Transport Operational Plan states that Greater Wellington will seek to:

- *Improve integration between passenger transport and cycling commute modes*
- *Increase the number of cycle lockers at rail stations and bus interchanges*
- *Investigate and ensure adequate safe and secure storage for bicycles on trains*
- *Investigate the introduction of free carriage for cycles on trains*
- *Investigate the introduction of cycle racks onto buses to allow free cycle carriage.*

The Committee has at various stages over the past years considered the issue of the carriage of bicycles on buses and trains.

With regard to buses, the Committee is aware that a trial was undertaken in Christchurch recently where some buses were fitted with cycle racks. The outcome of the trial is discussed below.

With regard to trains, on 1 July 2008 cycle carriage on trains changed, with carriage being made free, but with certain rules being introduced by Tranz Metro relating to the carriage

#### **4. Bikes on buses**

The Passenger Service Vehicle Rules (set by the Ministry of Transport and administered by the NZ Transport Agency) specify the legal requirements for the design and construction of all passenger service vehicles. The rules don't address bike racks specifically, but NZTA has not allowed (primarily for pedestrian safety reasons) bike racks to be fitted to buses.

However in 2007 the NZTA agreed to an Environment Canterbury request to trial bike racks on buses in Christchurch. Six bike racks ("Veloporter 2" racks from the USA, costing \$2,000 each) were imported and installed on buses under NZTA supervision.

In September 2007 NZTA issued Environment Canterbury exemptions for the six buses involved in the trial.

The trial commenced in November 2007 and ran until May 2008. The trial (and the NZTA exemptions) was then extended to November 2008.

The trial was fully evaluated and deemed to be a success (usage was moderate, there were no safety concerns, and feedback from users and bus drivers was positive). NZTA indicated that it would seek a change to the vehicle rules, and extended the exemptions to the whole Environment Canterbury bus fleet until such time as the rule could be changed. The extended trial is being undertaken to establish the issues, if any, that may arise when racks are fitted to large buses (the initial trial was with smaller buses). The extended trial starts in November, and will run till April 2010.

An amendment to the Passenger Services Vehicle Rule is planned by the Ministry of Transport allowing all buses to be fitted with bike racks. This rule change however is not on the MOT rule change programme for 2009/10. Instead, NZTA has now advised that it will seek a change to the Vehicle Dimensions and Mass rule amendment to allow for bike racks. This amendment is due to be signed at the end of this year, with a coming into force date early next year.

NZTA have also advised that no further exemptions to allow bike rack trials will be issued.

It is also noted that:

- Bikes may be carried inside a bus only if the bus has been designed and built accordingly. No Wellington buses have been built to carry bikes

- Bikes may also be transported at the outside rear of a bus provided certain conditions (related to driver vision of the loading/unloading, bus length, obscuring lights etc) are met. NZTA approval is needed.
- NZ Bus is opposed to the carriage of cycles inside buses on health and safety grounds
- NZ Bus has also indicated that the addition of cycle racks would pose significant issues for bus storage at depots.
- Unless operators will do so at their own expense, the cost to Greater Wellington to provide racks, given about 450 buses in the region, amounts to almost \$1m.
- There has been little demand for bikes to be carried on buses.

It is therefore recommended that Greater Wellington not install bike racks on buses, or move to carry bikes inside buses.

## **5. Bikes on trains**

### **5.1 Background**

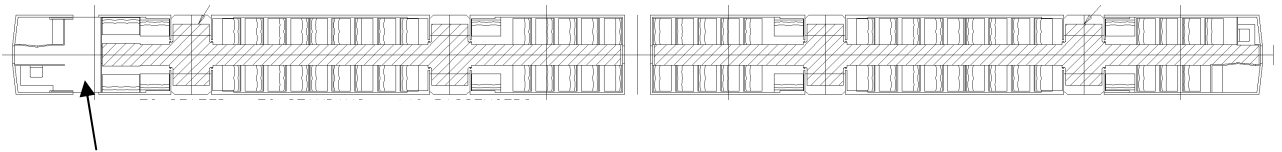
Until mid-2008 cyclists paid to take their bikes on trains. There was no limit, other than available space, as to how many bikes were taken on each train, with the decision being made by the on-train staff. This resulted in some uncertainty for cyclists regarding how many bikes could be carried. Bikes were carried on a first come first served basis.

The issue of charging for bike carriage was addressed by this Committee in 2008. Prior to doing so, Council undertook an on-line survey of cyclists which supported the removal of the charge. Subsequently the Committee agreed to a trial of removing the charge for bikes to be transported on trains.

In order to remove the ad hoc nature of the cycle carriage, Tranz Metro undertook an exercise to establish some official rules. Based on a health and safety audit, it introduced the following rules:

- Bikes can only be carried in the “dog box” (there is one “dog box” per two-car set)
- First in first served, with a maximum of two bikes per “dog box”
- If the “dog box” is full (with e.g. bags), bikes may not be able to be carried
- Bikes cannot be carried on special services e.g. stadium services or when buses replace trains.

The changes came into effect on 1 July 2008. The changes were for a one year trial period. The “dog box” can be seen on the following diagram and a clear passage way must be retained for emergency egress.



"Dog box" on a GanzMavag EMU

The main impact of the Tranz Metro changes was from the two bike maximum per luggage compartment rule, and there was substantial reaction from cyclists about that. Some cyclists who had previously been able to take their bike on the trains now found that they were not able to. And at weekends, when only one luggage space was available, many were unable to use the trains.

A review of the changes has been completed and is discussed in more detail below.

## 5.2 The review

This review consisted of a formal survey (web based) and feedback from public transport users.

The questions in the survey included all the questions asked in the 2008 survey and a few additional ones were included to give a broader understanding of the current issues.

## 5.3 Survey results

The main results from the survey are summarised below. Further results are in **Attachment 1**.

- A total of 554 responses were received.
- Most people (53%) said they had taken their bike on the train more since the trial began in July 2008 (434 responses)
- A large percentage of people – 61 per cent, said they would take their bike on the train more often if there were better storage facilities on the train (310/506 respondents) and if they were guaranteed carriage on the train (289/506 respondents)
- People take their bikes on the trains for both recreation (67%) purposes and for getting to work (57%)
- Most people rated the service of onboard staff as good or very good
- Fifty nine per cent of respondents said they had not been refused carriage since the beginning of the trial with 11 per cent saying that they've been refused three or more times (453 responses)

- Of those that had been refused carriage, 86 per cent said it was because the maximum number of bikes was already on the train and the majority of these were refused at peak time
- Asked how much they would be willing to pay to take bikes on trains the majority (51%) said they would not be willing to pay anything while 21 per cent said they'd be prepared to pay \$1 per trip, 18 per cent said they would be willing to pay \$2 per trip
- 50 per cent of respondents said they would not make use of bike racks if they were available at the station while 25 per cent said they would be likely to use them, and the remaining 25 per cent said they'd be very likely to use them.

Generally people feel that they shouldn't pay to take their bikes on trains – they feel that they're being environmentally friendly and that they should be rewarded for that effort.

They feel that the limit of two bikes per two car set is unreasonable, that guards should be encouraged to use their initiative and add more bikes when families are travelling together, and that the storage area for bikes should be clearly marked on the trains themselves. Some people also suggested that folding bikes be allowed over and above the two bike limit.

And most considered that off-train storage of bikes isn't secure enough.

#### **5.4 Tranz Metro survey**

Tranz Metro recently conducted a train staff survey that focussed primarily on health and safety issues. The on-train passage needs to be kept clear in case of an emergency and train staff reiterated in the survey that no more than two bikes can safely be stowed in the luggage area of the Ganz Mavags. The Wairarapa train can carry 6-8 bikes, depending on available space. There is no booking system and Tranz Metro has no intention of setting one up in the near future.

#### **5.5 Matangi trains**

The new Matangi trains will have a dedicated area for cycle storage in the multifunctional, low floor section of the train (see drawing below, and photo from the mock-up). This area will be able to take three cycles.

But a new issue that will arise will be that as the bike storage area will be part of the passenger area, cyclists will have to bring their bikes on board past passengers, some of who may be standing in near the doors. This is likely to cause problems at peak times. As can also be seen from the drawing, there are five fold-up seats in the bike carriage area, and any passengers using these seats are likely to be reluctant to give them up for a bike.

And there will still be no guarantee that bikes will fit onto the train the commuter wishes to take, with only three allowed per two-car set. There will

be no specific bike racks but it is envisaged that bikes will be secured to prevent them from falling onto passengers.



It is likely therefore that cycle carriage at peak times on the Matangi trains will be impractical. An operational policy will need to be developed addressing this matter.

## **5.6 Station cycle storage facilities**

More cycle storage facilities have been provided by Greater Wellington/Tranz Metro at a few of the stations (Porirua, Plimmerton and Paraparaumu) in recent months. Reports are that these have been well used during that time. More storage (at Redwood, Tawa, Linden, Paekakariki and Silverstream) is due to be introduced in the coming year as part of the station upgrade programme.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The survey indicates that more people take their bikes on the trains now than prior to the charges being dropped. The move to free carriage has been popular and few want the charges re-instated. However the change in Tranz Metro policy to restrict cycle carriage to two per luggage compartment is clearly unpopular, but it does provide certainty. We consider that there are valid health and safety reasons for the limit. However, we can continue to provide additional cycle storage facilities at station.

It is recommended therefore conditions applying to the carriage of cycles on trains continue at present, but that a new operational policy be developed prior to the new Matangi trains coming into service.

## **5.8 Communication**

Any change in policy will be communicated to the public and affected operators. In addition, cyclists who filled out the survey will be sent a link to this report.

## **6. Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

- 1. **Receives** the report.*
- 2. **Notes** the content of the report.*
- 3. **Agrees** to take no further action regarding the carriage of bikes on buses.*
- 4. **Agrees** to continue the free carriage of bikes on trains on the current terms and conditions set by Tranz Metro, but to develop new operational policy prior to the new Matangi trains coming into service.*

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**Attachment 1: Responses to Survey**