



Report 10.101  
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Committee Transport & Access Committee  
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## Central Area Bus Operational Review update

### 1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the recommendations of the Central Area Bus Operational Review.

### 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

As previously reported on 22 October 2009 (report 09.619) consultants have been undertaking a Central Area Bus Operational Review for Greater Wellington, including a comprehensive survey of bus travel times and boarding's for 554 bus trips on the Golden Mile. This Central Area Bus Operational Review (the Review) is now complete.

The Review builds on the work of previous studies including the Golden Mile Capacity Assessment (2006), Ngauranga to Airport Strategy Study (2008) and Restoring the Golden Mile: Taranaki to Willis Street (2009).

The main objectives of the Review were to identify options and recommend a pathway for improving the efficiency and reliability of bus operations through the Wellington central area along the length of the Golden Mile, particularly during peak periods. A key focus in doing this was the need to highlight key priorities and deliver affordable recommendations for the short, medium and longer term.

### 4. Issues identified

The Review has confirmed that existing public transport delay and variability is significant and will only increase in the future without interventions or modifications to the way bus services are operated.

During the PM peak when variability is at its greatest northbound buses can take anywhere from 9 to 27 minutes to get from Courtenay Place to Wellington Station. In the southbound direction travel times are typically faster but still vary from 5 to 22 minutes.

The slowest travel speeds were recorded on Lambton Quay in the PM between Cable Car and Farmers bus stops with buses averaging just 6km/h, barely faster than a walking pace.

The Review noted that the maximum throughput of buses that could be accommodated by the Golden Mile to be between 75 to 130 buses per hour per direction. With up to 124 buses per hour per direction already operating bus volumes are already at the upper end of this capacity range.

The Review found that many bus stops have insufficient length to accommodate the number of buses arriving resulting in significant congestion and queuing at bus stops as buses have to queue behind other buses to access bus stops.

Congestion and delay is further exacerbated by the close spacing of bus stops from just 110 to 370 metres apart. This is significantly less than the 400m-600m spacing recommended in various national and international literature.

Processing cash fares and older ticketing technologies on some buses also contributes to delays as slower buses hold up faster buses at stops.

The Review has projected that peak passenger numbers on the Golden Mile will grow by up to 44% by 2026. This will place yet more pressure on existing operations and infrastructure, highlighting the need for measures to not only address immediate congestion and journey time variability but also provide capacity for future growth in bus usage.

The current approach to the operation of buses on the Golden Mile is based on historic route planning and has developed incrementally over time. It is characterised by a combination of routes travelling through the Golden Mile with many terminating at either Wellington Station or Courtenay Place.

Analysis suggests that the current approach to bus operations may not be the most cost effective and results in larger numbers of buses (and drivers) operating in the Golden Mile than might be necessary. Reducing the number of buses would improve efficiency and reliability of bus services.

## **5. Review recommendations**

The Central Area Bus Operational Review makes recommendations in several key areas relating bus operations on the Golden Mile.

These recommendations are summarised here in order from the short to longer term (with details in **attachment 1**):

- **Manners Mall (short term)**  
 Re-route bus spine through Manner Mall to relieve a significant bottleneck for bus operations on the Golden Mile.

*Action – Greater Wellington are working in partnership with Wellington City to support opening of Manners Mall to buses.*
- **Bus schedule co-ordination (short term)**  
 Retime bus departures to smooth the flow of buses along the Golden Mile and reduce peak queuing of buses at bus stops.

*Action - Greater Wellington will work with operators as timetables are reprinted to make small changes to bus departure times which reduce peak congestion on the Golden Mile.*
- **Bus stop rationalisation (medium term)**  
 Create higher capacity “dual flag” bus stops, relocate and remove selected bus stops to balance accessibility vs. travel time.

*Action - Greater Wellington have commissioned further work in partnership with WCC to determine optimal bus stop locations for the Manners Mall precinct. GW will work with Wellington City to pursue opportunities for bus stop rationalisation as part of the Wellington City Public Transport Review.*
- **Express services (medium term)**  
 Rationalise service stopping pattern to separate express and regional services from local all-stops services.

*Action – This recommendation depends on implementing bus stop rationalisation recommendations and will be pursued as part of the Wellington City Public Transport Review.*
- **Integrated and Cashless ticketing (long term)**  
 Implement ticketing system changes to reduce bus dwell time at stops by speeding up passenger boarding times.

*Action – Consider as part of the Fare Review Process the need to reduce the number of passengers paying cash fares and speed up boarding times.*
- **Network Structure (long term)**  
 Move to fewer high frequency routes on the Golden Mile with suburban transfer hubs.

*Action - More efficient alternative approaches to the operation of buses on the Golden Mile will be explored as part of the Wellington City Public Transport Review.*
- **Reallocation of Road Space (long term)**  
 Provide additional road space to public transport consistent with the level of use.

*Action – Implementing the opening of Manners Mall to buses represents a significant step in this direction. Greater Wellington will work with WCC*

*to pursue further opportunities to provide more dedicated road space for public transport as part of the Wellington City Public Transport Review.*

## **6. Comment**

The Central Area Operational Review has concluded that significant opportunity exists to enhance public transport operation on the Golden Mile through a mixture of infrastructure and operational interventions. The most significant of these interventions in the short term to medium term is delivery of the Manners Mall project which will address significant bus delay, reliability and legibility issues. Longer term measures relating to the approach to bus operations should be investigated in conjunction with GWRC plans for an Integrated Public Transport Network Framework (identified in the Regional Passenger Transport Plan) and the current GWRC Wellington Public Transport Review.

Despite the very high levels of public transport demand and the predictions that this will increase in the future, it is important to ensure standards do not slip, passengers are offered a quality system, and efficiencies are achieved to ensure additional demand can be accommodated. This will not only provide benefits for existing and future public transport users, but also assist in delivering the targets in the Government Policy Statement for Transport 2009 which seeks to reduce congestion and get traffic moving on key strategic corridors, through a modal shift away from private motor vehicles.

## **7. Communication**

No communications are required.

## **8. Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

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

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**Attachment 1: Central Area Bus Operation Review Key Recommendations**