

Kiwi Carpool Week

Campaign Report, July 2014



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1. Introduction

Following the development of Let's Carpool into a national website in 2012, the first national campaign was run in June 2013, under the name 'Kiwi Carpool Week'. Following the success of the promotion, the eight participating regions agreed to run the campaign again in 2014. This year, Kiwi Carpool Week ran from 9-15 June, and was promoted to varying degrees across Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Manawatu-Wanganui, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman and Christchurch.

Each region was responsible for promotions within their areas, however the marketing material was coordinated nationally to ensure consistency of message and content. Most of the campaign materials were adopted from the previous year, as Auckland Transport had invested significantly in their development. Having these resources available helped to minimise costs for smaller regions. Key themes of the campaign included economic ("share the cost, save your money"), social ("share the ride, fill those empty seats"), and environmental ("do your bit for the environment, keep Wellington moving"). Individual regional icons were included in the promotional designs.

Under the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy 2007–2016, the Regional Demand Management Plan identified a carpool programme for workplaces and commuters as a key travel demand management action and set a target of 3,000 registrants by June 2013. That target was achieved in October 2013, and as at 30 June 2014, there were 3,268 people registered on Let's Carpool within the Wellington Region.

Although not officially part of the Kiwi Carpool Week campaign, a separate initiative was begun just before Kiwi Carpool Week. This involved trialling the installation of priority carpool parking spaces at Park & Ride facilities at Waikanae and Petone stations. Ten spaces in Petone and five spaces in Waikanae were reserved for vehicles with two or more people arriving to the station to catch a train. This initiative aimed to promote carpooling to the station, and to increase integration between carpooling and public transport. Press releases and flyer drops were done to publicise the initiative and this may have increased the awareness of carpooling generally.

2. Funding, sponsorship and support

The Wellington regional campaign was a key project of the Sustainable Transport team's overall work programme, which is jointly funded by the Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency. Additional support was generously supplied by four organisations. Auckland Transport contributed much of the design work for posters and promotional material, and also worked to develop a new national Facebook page for Let's Carpool.

Z Energy supported the campaign by displaying the Let's Carpool posters on its electronic displays at petrol stations across the country, free of charge. In addition six of its petrol stations offered free coffee to carpoolers during Kiwi Carpool Week, and Z Energy also promoted carpooling through its social media outlets.

Zealandia was kind enough to offer three complimentary passes, and Mojo offered a coffee subscription and coffee tin. These prizes were offered to carpoolers who shared their experience of carpooling with us.

The budget for the campaign this year was \$7,000.

3. Promotional activities

Various channels were used to promote Kiwi Carpool Week. While the actual week was from 9-15 June, some advertising commenced up to two weeks prior, and the workplace email was sent out to contacts the week before Kiwi Carpool Week.

3.1 Cinema advertising of a 30-second animation

Auckland Transport developed a 90-second animation video to promote Let's Carpool. This was shortened down to 30 seconds and used as advertising in three cinema locations – Lower Hutt, Porirua and Paraparaumu. The video was screened over three weeks (from 29 May – 18 June) at least 35 times a week at each location.

3.2 Workplace morning tea prize draw

Our workplace contacts are one of our most important avenues for promoting carpooling. An email was sent out to a database of workplace contacts (approximately 200) informing them of the campaign, and an incentive for their participation. Any workplace that informed us of their promotions was entered into a draw for a \$300 morning tea. This could either be through forwarding the email, putting up posters in the office, posting the information on their intranet, setting up an employer scheme, or their own creative ideas. The number of entries was dependent on the amount of promotion done.

Seven employers informed us of their promotions and were entered into the prize draw. Judging from registrations after the workplace email was sent, there were at least five other employers who promoted the week in some way but didn't enter the draw.

Porirua City Council won the random prize draw. The morning tea is arranged for the 4th August, and is intended as an opportunity to further promote the website (and sustainable travel) within the organisation. Kapiti Coast District Council won a consolation prize (a \$50 New World voucher) for being the only organisation to achieve the maximum number of entries to the draw, and successfully arranging a new carpool amongst colleagues.

3.3 Sandwich boards on busy roadsides

The two car-shaped sandwich boards were reused again this year. Four students (two for each sign) were employed during morning and evening peak periods to stand on the roadside on some of the region's busiest sections of road. This included sites on State Highway 1 (Vivian St, Karo Dr) and other local authority roads (Waterloo Quay, Aro St, Petone Esplanade).

Under NZTA rules, the images on the boards were restricted to a maximum of nine elements. Thus there was no specific reference to Kiwi Carpool Week. Approval was gained from both NZTA and Wellington City Council for them to appear on roadsides. Unfortunately the weather was fairly poor during the week which meant one day was cancelled and visibility might have been reduced on other occasions.

3.4 Z Energy promotions

Z Energy was interested to support the campaign



Figure 1 - Sandwich board

informally. For this, they offered to display the Kiwi Carpool Week advertisement at around 100 locations around the country.

They encouraged their Facebook supporters to carpool for the week, and offered free coffee during the morning peak period to carpoolers at six locations (two in Wellington – Mana and Petone).

3.5 Lower Hutt community billboards

Two sites in Lower Hutt displayed billboards for two weeks, from 2-15 June. The first site was on Cambridge Terrace in Naenae, while the second was on Waione Street (top end of the Petone Esplanade). The dimensions of the billboards were 2.4 by 1.2 metres and were kept simple in design, as shown in Figure 2.

3.6 Let's Carpool banners

This year a new banner was manufactured with the Kiwi Carpool Week design. This enabled the use of the Jervois Quay overbridge free of charge (other than a small fee for installation). It was displayed on the southern side (visible to northbound traffic) from 25 May – 8 June. The following week was unfortunately not available for use.



The older Let's Carpool banner was re-used along the fence line just south of Featherston, to advertise to commuters travelling over the Rimutaka Hill. It was displayed from 7 June until early July. Permission was gained from South Wairarapa District Council.

3.7 Facebook event and social media

A decision was made to establish a national Facebook page for online promotions. Auckland Transport developed the page with feedback from the regions. The page is intended to be an ongoing platform for promotion as opposed to an event specifically for Kiwi Carpool Week.

A carpool game has also been developed, however it was not ready in time for Kiwi Carpool Week. It aims to encourage people to put their friends in their (virtual) carpool, to go in the draw to win. There are currently 155 people who have 'liked' the page.

4. Media coverage

Efforts were made to attract media attention to the campaign. Free media coverage was achieved in a number of places following media releases and by direct contact with media outlets. The following is a list of the coverage within regional papers and television.

4.1 Dominion Post

On Thursday 29 May, an ad was included in the Regional Council's monthly page of the Dominion Post (*Our Region*). The Wairarapa version included a more detailed story of a carpooler from that area.

4.2 Local papers

Local papers ran stories in advance of Kiwi Carpool Week, following press releases relating to the carpool parking spaces installed at Waikanae and Petone Park & Rides. The Hutt News ran a story on 27 May featuring two local carpoolers. The Kapiti Observer ran a story on 29 May about the Waikanae Station, while the Upper Hutt Leader ran a story on carpoolers employed at Upper Hutt City Council on 28 May. The Independent Herald (Wellington) also covered Kiwi Carpool Week in their 11 June edition.

4.3 TV1, Seven Sharp

TVNZ’s Seven Sharp ran a story on carpooling, with a focus in Auckland, on Tuesday 10 June. It included an interview with Auckland Transport’s Manager of Community Transport. Mike Hosking (one of the lead presenters) was critical towards the idea of carpooling, but overall the story was positive and informative, pointing people towards the Let’s Carpool website.

5. Campaign evaluation

Evaluation of the campaign can be gauged from a number of measures. The most direct indicator is the number of registrants to the Let’s Carpool website, but it also includes Google analytics and use of the GWRC Citizens Panel to investigate awareness of the Kiwi Carpool Week campaign and participation with carpooling. Results and analysis are given below.

5.1 Registrations on Let’s Carpool website

The campaign period used for evaluation is from 26 May to 22 June, a four week period where the various promotions occurred. Over that period, 67 new registrations were added for the Wellington region. This brought the total number of registered users in the Wellington region to 3,256.

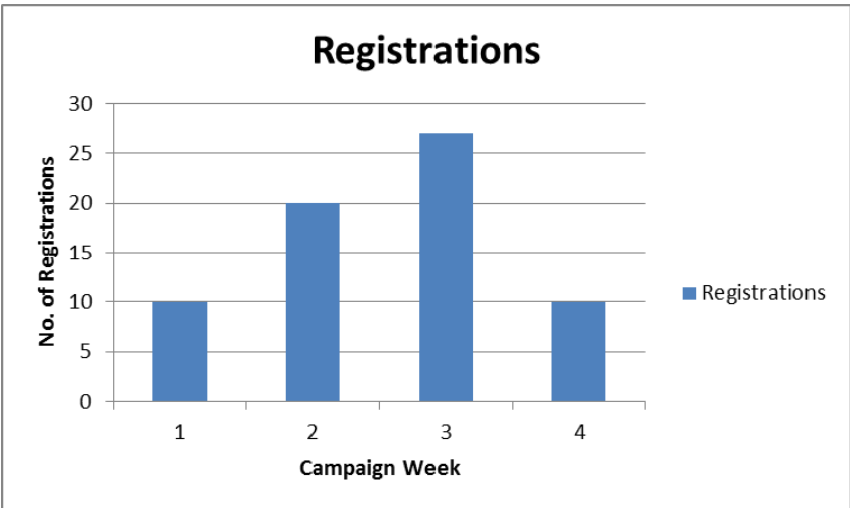


Figure 3 - Weekly Registrations, 26 May – 22 June

Figure 2 shows that the registrations did significantly increase during Kiwi Carpool Week. A typical week has around 10 registrations, whereas 27 people registered during Kiwi Carpool Week.

Over the same period in 2013, 85 new registrations were received, slightly higher than for 2014. This may be due to the fact that it was the inaugural national Kiwi Carpool Week and several more employers promoted it last year. It also received slightly more media coverage in 2013. Last year's evaluation was done over a five week period due to an ongoing calendar promotion, and was also boosted by a storm event during the fifth week, although those figures are additional to the number given above.

5.2 Google Analytics

The number of web hits to the www.letscarpool.govt.nz site was analysed for the Wellington region. The four week campaign period was compared to the four week period prior to the campaign.

There was a significant jump in numbers over the campaign, mostly in 'new visitors'. There were 875 total visits, up from 371 for the four weeks before, which is a significant increase. However, it was lower than last year's campaign visits of 1,313.

5.3 GWRC Citizen's Panel

Following the campaign, a carpool survey was sent to the online GWRC Citizen's Panel. The Panel is a self-nominated group of around 1,200 people from across the region, used to gauge opinion and knowledge on various matters. A total of 475 responses were received. The survey investigated current means of transport, attitudes to carpooling, and awareness of Kiwi Carpool Week.

Only 2.3% of respondents indicated that they were regularly a driver or passenger in a carpool. However, 15.3% indicated they were passengers in a private vehicle. This indicates that some people were carpooling with their partners or family members, but not considering it to be 'carpooling' when it is done within their own household.

Of the people using a private vehicle to get to work, 29% were aware of Kiwi Carpool Week. Of those who were carpooling, or who had carpooled in the past, 38% were aware of it. Awareness was lowest in the Kapiti region, at only 6%.

Responses to how people heard about the week showed that the highest percentage was through Z Energy advertisements and in regional newspapers (35% and 31% respectively). Banners and billboards were also quite well-sighted (19%). None of the panellists viewed the cinema ads, indicating that this channel did not reach large numbers of people (although may still have been more effective to those who did view it). The fliers at the Park & Ride stations did not specifically mention Kiwi Carpool Week, so this result (0%) is understandable. The full results are shown in Figure 4 below.

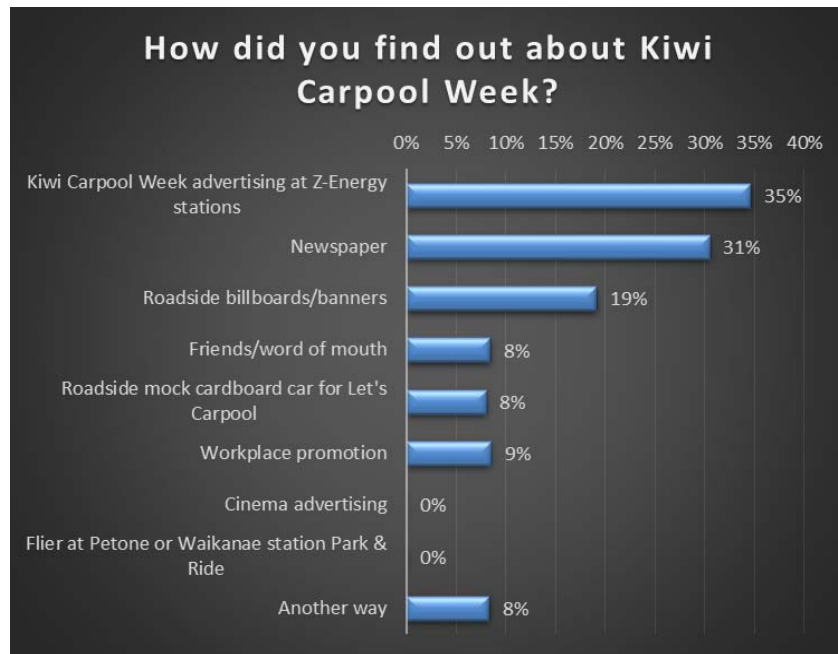


Figure 4 - How people heard about Kiwi Carpool Week

Those who had heard of Kiwi Carpool Week were surveyed on their opinions and barriers to carpooling. Of the 15% who had carpoled, they rated their experience of carpooling at 7.7 out of 10, and were positive towards the benefits (to the individual and society) of carpooling. For the 85% who hadn't carpoled, the most common reasons why they don't carpool were their inconsistent work hours or destinations, and the need to drop or collect family members at other destinations. Eighty three percent of people who had carpoled in the past said they would consider carpooling again if their circumstances allowed.

Asked about the benefits and barriers to carpooling, participants gave a range of explanations. For the benefits, most comments pointed to the following:

- Cost savings
- Having company for the journey
- Environmental benefits
- Reducing congestion

For the barriers to carpooling, six main areas were commented on (several of which overlap), as listed below:

- Loss of flexibility
- Difficulties in coordinating plans
- People who are difficult to socialise with
- Inconvenience, going out of your way
- Timeliness, unexpected delays caused by others
- Work hours, working unusual or varying shifts

In summary, the citizen's panel showed that people do recognise benefits, but often feel their circumstances don't make carpooling a practicable option. Many people are open to carpooling in the future if their circumstances change. With 29% of solo drivers being aware of Kiwi Carpool Week, the reach was surprisingly high, although there is still scope to expand that to reach a higher proportion of the region.

6. Reflections and recommendations

The national Kiwi Carpool Week has again provided a useful opportunity for coordinated promotion of the Let's Carpool website in the Wellington region and has resulted in a moderate number of new registrants. Some new employers were even willing to promote the site within their organisations. Nationally, the number of registrations has passed 10,000 making it a well-established brand in the eight regions.

It is difficult to determine exactly which forms of promotion provided the best returns in terms of effort to normalise the idea of carpooling and to get people signed up. However, the following reflections can be drawn from recent experiences over the campaign.

- The on-going relationship with Z Energy was valuable, with the Citizen's Panel results indicating that many people were aware of Kiwi Carpool Week through Z Energy's advertising or social media. Although Z Energy doesn't officially commit to corporate 'sponsorship', it is hoped they will continue to promote Kiwi Carpool Week in future campaigns.
- Workplaces are a major ally in promoting carpooling. Although fewer people heard about Kiwi Carpool Week through their employer (according to the Citizens Panel), many new registrants signed up after an internal promotion. Efforts should continue to focus around encouraging workplaces to promote carpooling.
- Cinema advertising made an interesting trial for a new media channel, however it reaches a relatively small number of people for the cost. It may be that it has more impact over a longer timeframe, but is perhaps unlikely to result in quicker boosts to registrations. If larger budgets are available in the future, it could make a useful addition to promotions but it should not be prioritised for lower budget campaigns.
- Radio advertising was not used this year – it has similar disadvantages to cinema in that drivers are not usually online at the time, and cannot sign up immediately after hearing an ad. Small amounts of radio space are relatively expensive to purchase, but it is another option if higher marketing budgets are available. Alternatively, opportunity can be sought through the Comms team who have purchased larger amounts of airtime at a better rate.
- The car-shaped roadside signs were used again, and attracted some smiles and attention from passing car drivers. Informal feedback raised questions about their visibility in poor weather, when rain and darkness make them difficult to read. They could be used at any time of year (in lighter, drier conditions), especially in reaction to unforeseen events, such as last year's storm and rail disruptions.
- There would be benefit in having some form of event within the campaign, such as a particular day where something special happens and which could attract media attention for the day. A full week is beneficial for people to try it out on the days it may suit, but is not as helpful for catching media attention around a specific one-off event.
- Altering the length of the campaign is another possibility to consider, either by running campaigns over a longer period prior to Kiwi Carpool Week, or having a Kiwi Carpool Month rather than a week.

7. Conclusion

The Kiwi Carpool Week campaign utilised a range of media channels with the aim of reaching a wide audience. The campaign did not quite achieve the same numbers of registrations as last year. This may in part be due to last year being the inaugural national event, making employers more excited to get behind the campaign. However, it did still provide a significant boost over the regular number of registrations to Let's Carpool, and worked to promote carpooling in general.

Registrations in the region have now passed 3,000. There could now be benefit in focusing more on the quality of the database as opposed to quantity alone. This can be done by working to keep the database current and thereby increasing the likelihood of a workable match when registrants contact each other. This process has begun through sending reminder letters to registrants after a year of inactivity, and marking users as 'inactive' if they do not update their details. While the number of people available for matching will be lower, the quality of those matches is higher – a worthy trade-off now that there are a high number of registered users in the region.

A growing number of people are aware of the Let's Carpool website and the option of carpooling for the commute to work. As new people register, the chance of finding a match improves. It is important that carpooling is viewed as a safe and socially acceptable alternative for those who are not served well by public transport. The safety and security of the Let's Carpool website, along with the wider benefits of carpooling, should continue to be emphasised. Carpooling should be seen as one option among many sustainable transport alternatives, and particularly suited to those who do not have active or public transport alternatives.