

9. REVIEW OF THE CHRISTCHURCH PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the need for a full review of the Christchurch Public Passenger Transport Strategy, and to seek agreement on an outline for the proposed process and timeline for this review. The current strategy expires on 30 June 2006.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Christchurch Public Passenger Transport Strategy (the Strategy) is a joint strategy of Environment Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council. This is the case because the provision of the public transport system is a joint responsibility. The City Council is responsible for public transport infrastructure such as bus stops, seats and shelters, the bus exchange and roading matters (on City Council roads); whilst Environment Canterbury (ECan) is responsible for the planning, funding and administration of the public transport (bus and ferry) services, known in greater Christchurch by their brand name, "metro". The Strategy sits within the Council's suite of transport strategies, directing planning and investment in public transport infrastructure, in addition to ECan's development of metro services.
3. The Strategy was first developed in 1997/98, at a time when public transport in Christchurch was at its lowest ebb. The deregulation of public transport and a fragmentation of services, combined with major public sector employment changes and a cheaper imported vehicle market led to a dramatic decline in public transport patronage. At the same time increasing population, urban spread, changing lifestyles and household sizes led to strong, steady increases in traffic volumes and increasing congestion. The strategy identified that unless action was taken to provide viable alternatives to the private motor vehicle, the consequences of a projected 43% rise in traffic volumes over 20 years would include slower journeys, longer travel times, air pollution, higher roading costs and more traffic accidents. This first strategy was developed with significant input from the community, involving a wide cross-section of interests and sectors. Significantly, the process led to the development of the Passenger Transport Advisory Group (PTAG) comprising representation from bus non-users and users, local and regional politicians, bus companies, the Automobile Association, the Taxi Federation and a number of other groups. PTAG acted as a sounding board for all public submissions during the development process and this information was used to develop what became the first Strategy, adopted by the City Council and ECan in August 1998. This Strategy set the vision, goals, and targets for public transport and identified a number of improvements and investigations to be undertaken to achieve these vision, goals and targets.
4. As a result of the first Strategy and the significant hard work and investment by both Councils, a number of improvements to the system were introduced:
 - express and cross-suburban (Orbiter) route
 - faster ticketing (gold coin fares, multi-trip tickets)
 - frequency improvements
 - newer buses
 - new shelters and improved branding
 - driver training
 - central city bus priority facilities
 - central city shuttle
 - real time information

(The bus exchange was also a significant improvement to the system completed in 2000 during the life of this first strategy.)
5. As a result of these improvements each of the short term (2003) targets of 7.5% annual patronage growth, an increase in the proportion of trips by public transport from 3% to 4-5% and an increase in per capita public transport trips from 26 to 40 trips per head of population, were achieved. This success confirmed the robustness of the Strategy development process and underlined how effective both Councils could be in delivering system improvements by working together on a co-ordinated and well resourced footing.

6. In 2002/03 an update review of the strategy undertook a similar but lower key process of public engagement and PTAG strategy development. This revealed that the original vision, goals and targets expected by the community and first developed in 1997/98 were still valid. In the face of continued traffic growth, however, new improvements to maintain progress towards the vision and goals were identified. The updated Strategy was adopted by both Councils in July 2003 (to be tabled) and is the current document that guides the Councils in their planning and investment. Whilst progress on the Strategy commitments and work programmes continues, so far the following improvements have been introduced:
- new passenger shelters, seats and real time information at bus stops
 - a new cross-suburban route (metrostar)
 - improvements to the central city shuttle
 - adoption of the parking strategy
 - introduction of the metrocard
 - review of all services and introduction of service improvements
 - initial investigations into rail opportunities
 - introduction of new low emission buses
 - adoption of a plan to develop three bus priority corridors
7. In order to ensure a timely transition from the current Strategy to the next, work should commence now on progressing the development process on a new Strategy to cover the next five years. Officers recommend the four stage process outlined below to develop a new strategy, with representation of the City Council on both PTAG and a joint Councils Steering group by Councillors Buck and Shearing, nominated for this role by the Liveable City portfolio group which oversees public transport matters:

Stage 1 – issue gathering and capacity building

This primary stage of community engagement will be undertaken with a focus on identifying the views of all who have comments to make on the Christchurch public transport system and will use such media as appropriate to ensure a high level of engagement and feedback from the community. Reports will be made to each Community Board, allowing them to express their views on local and citywide aspects of the system. Focus groups will also be undertaken at this stage in sufficient numbers to reflect the Christchurch community. These focus groups will allow a more in depth exploration of issues and expectations surrounding public transport and will cover a wide range of age groups and community sectors.

The PTAG will also be convened a number of times at this stage, primarily to build capacity where necessary and to appraise them of the history and progress made in public transport over recent years and to prepare them for the development process ahead.

Stage 2 – draft strategy development

Once the feedback from the first stage has been analysed, this will be presented to PTAG, and over the course of a number of sessions, be used to identify the vision, goals, targets and potential improvements necessary to the system. Once this is complete a joint Council seminar is proposed to present all the issues identified and the features of the draft Strategy developed in conjunction with PTAG. This seminar will provide an opportunity for both Councils and Community Board members to review the direction signalled by the community and suggest amendments it thinks necessary. This will then be followed by a report to Community Boards and both Councils seeking the adoption of a draft Strategy for public consultation purposes.

Consultation documentation will then be developed and printed for circulation to each household in Christchurch.

Stage 3 – draft Strategy consultation

This will be undertaken over a 6-8 week period and will involve the delivery of the draft Strategy consultation document to each household. This will be accompanied by city-wide promotion of the Strategy, encouraging people to comment on the draft. Submissions will also be possible via the usual means, including the Councils' internet pages and staffed public displays will also be arranged.

Stage 4 – Strategy adoption

All feedback to the draft Strategy will be collated and used to form a final version of the Strategy. This final draft will then be reported to PTAG and Community Boards for their comment and to both Councils for adoption.

In addition to Councillors Buck and Shearing (and ECan Councillors Wagner and Carol) attending each PTAG meeting, the Liveable City Portfolio Group will be updated of progress and invited to provide feedback at each stage outlined above. The Joint CCC Liveable City/ECan Public Passenger Transport portfolio committee also will receive quarterly updates, as will the full CCC/ECan meetings.

8. It is proposed that the following groups be invited to participate in the PTAG :

CCC Councillors (Councillors Buck and Shearing)
ECan Councillors (Councillors Wagner and Carol)
Bus users (selected from the ECan bus users database)
Bus non-users (invited to renew their membership from the 2003 strategy development)
Bus operators
Bus drivers
Spokes
Automobile Association
Taxi Federation
Chamber of Commerce
Age Concern
Disabled Persons Association
IHC
Tertiary students
Secondary students

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. Once development of the Strategy is complete, adoption of the final document by both Councils will infer certain capital and operational expenditure commitments. The extent of those potential commitments cannot be estimated at this stage as these will be developed by the community during the development process. However, previously identified sums signalled by the MCTS Stage 1 document adopted by the Council in December 2003 are considered likely to be appropriate to meet the current long term vision for public transport in Christchurch.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Agree to the initiation of a full review of the Christchurch Public Passenger Transport Strategy.
- (b) Agree to the proposed development process for the strategy.
- (c) Appoint Councillors Buck and Shearing as the Councillor representatives on the PTAG and Strategy steering groups, as identified in this report.