

6. DRAFT PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment, DDI 941-8656
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval to undertake citywide public consultation on the draft of a new Public Passenger Transport Strategy (attached – to be termed “metro strategy”). This is a full review of the current strategy document entitled ‘Our Future – Our Choice’, first produced by the City and Regional Councils in 1998, and updated in 2003.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The City Council and Regional Council first adopted a joint Christchurch public passenger transport strategy in June 1998. The strategy (entitled “Our Future – Our Choice”) set a new direction for public transport at a time when it was only just beginning to recover from a sustained decline in use, in part as a result of deregulation of public transport and a fragmentation of services, combined with major public sector employment changes and a cheaper imported vehicle market. The development of this strategy involved extensive public engagement, and through the analysis of submissions and the work of an advisory group made up of key stakeholders from across the community, formed a vision with goals and targets, improvements and investigations to be undertaken by each Council. The key focus for the strategy was developing a public transport system to tackle the growing threat of traffic growth and congestion. Short and long term targets were set including:
 - 100% patronage growth in 10 years (by 2008 17 million trips), 400% patronage growth in 20 years (by 2018 at least 42.5 million trips)
 - Proportion of trips made by public transport increases from 3% to 10-15% in 20 years
 - Per capita use of public transport increases from 26 to over 50 in 10 years, and to over 100 in 20 years.
3. The list of improvements and investigations was extensive, reflecting ambitions at the time but also the quality gap that existed between what was provided at the time and passenger expectations. With greater investment in public transport by both Councils following adoption of the strategy, a number of improvements came about including improved bus stop infrastructure, improved service coverage and frequency (including the introduction of the Orbiter), newer vehicles and improved fare structures, the central city shuttle and of course the Bus Xchange.
4. In 2002/03, the strategy was reviewed to confirm that the vision, goals and targets were still valid with the community, and to renew the list of improvements and investigations. The focus again of this strategy was the growth in traffic volumes and congestion and the need to combat this through improvements to public transport. Since adoption by the Councils of that update to the strategy, a number of further improvements to the system have come about including introduction of the metrocard, greater roll out of real time information at bus stops, more passenger shelters, service frequency improvements, the metrostar and the soon to be introduced bus priority corridors.
5. In the seven financial years to June 2005, patronage has increased from about 8.5 million passenger trips in 1997/98 to over 15 million trips in 2004/05, or about 70%. By June 2008 it is expected that the 17 million trip target will have been surpassed.
6. In December 2005 the Council approved a four stage process and a timeline for a full review of the Public Passenger Transport Strategy in line with the expiry date of the current strategy (June 2006). The structure of the review is identical to the way the first public transport strategy was developed so as to maintain the strong community buy-in and support and robust development process. This review process and its structure is contained within the report to Council made in December 2005.

7. Stages one and two of the review (issue identification and draft strategy development) are now complete. The issue identification stage was undertaken in a number of ways, comprising:
- Focus groups (including a teenagers group formed with the assistance of the Community Support Unit) to explore thoughts, feelings and attitudes to the present and future of public transport
 - In-depth interviews with passenger segments not best suited to the focus group environment, including recent migrants and intellectually and physically disabled users
 - Telephone interviews with 400 randomly selected respondents
 - Community Board meetings
 - Attendance at community group meetings
 - Distribution of 15,000 citywide public consultation brochures
 - Advertising on the inside of buses and other public locations
 - Development of the website www.metrostrategy.org.nz
8. In the 800 or so submissions received on the citywide consultation, over 2,000 comments were made on various topic areas as outlined below. These topics also came through in the focus groups, in-depth interviews and telephone interviews:
- Bus Priority Measures / Reliability (18.9%)
 Improved Frequency (12.9%)
 Marketing / Information Provision (9.4%)
 Reduced Fares (6.6%)
 Interchange Capacity (6.2%)
 Improved Vehicles (6.0%)
 Driver Training (5.5%)
 Improve Coverage (4.5%)
 Improved Shelters/Seats (3.7%)
 Longer Transfer Time (2.6%)
 Parking / Pricing Schemes (2.6%)
 Park n Ride (1.7%)
 Rail (1.6%)
 Safety (1.0%)
 Bikes on Buses (0.7%)
9. To initiate stage 2 of the review, these issues were presented to the reformed Passenger Transport Advisory Group¹ (PTAG) that was briefed to shape the draft strategy using all the feedback received from the consultation. The PTAG met on five occasions, at approximately fortnightly intervals between early February and late April to discuss current transport issues and trends, review the feedback from consultation and form the draft strategy text that is now presented for approval to consult further on.
10. The draft vision and goals remain valid today and are largely unchanged as the PTAG felt the current statements in the strategy articulated very accurately the themes coming through from the consultation. PTAG did request a minor addition that safety of the system (for users, drivers, other road users) be explicitly identified as a goal.
11. In keeping with the precedent set in the 1998 strategy for tough targets, more challenges are proposed. The PTAG discussed at length what had been achieved so far, what still had to be achieved and what future issues may come along to influence the transport sector. The main focus for discussions was on the patronage gains that would possibly come from achieving greater reliability (through improvements including greater roll out of bus priority measures) and through a greater focus on effective marketing of the system. Recent fuel price rises and the availability of fossil fuels and alternative fuels in the future also sparked debate. It was agreed that even with technology improvements and alternative fuels for cars, public transport had a major role to play in providing the community with a convenient and reliable alternative transport option as vehicle operating costs and congestion continue to rise.

¹ Membership – Councillor Shearing, Councillor Buck, Councillor Wagner, Councillor Carroll (both ECan), representative for secondary students, representative for Age Concern Canterbury, 6 bus user/non-user representatives, representative for taxi federation, representative for AA, 3 representatives for bus companies, representative for IHC, representative for Chamber of Commerce, representative for University of Canterbury, representative for Spokes, representative for Burwood Spinal Unit.

12. It was determined that provided the improvements were achieved for the system as outlined in the strategy to give people a quality alternative, a target to double current patronage by June 2012 (to 32 million trips) was a challenging but realistic target given the expected continued rise in fuel prices. This would represent the early achievement of current targets, to the extent that the 2015 target would be achieved by 2012.
13. A comparison of patronage achievements to date, along with current strategy targets and those proposed in the draft are outlined below. The 2005/06 patronage total in italics is a reliable estimate and is used as the base for the new 100% patronage gain target for 2012.

Financial year	Current targets – million trips (actuals in brackets)	Draft targets – million trips
97/98 base	(8.50)	-
98/99	8.87	-
99/00	9.53 (9.58)	-
00/01	10.25 (10.49)	-
01/02	11.02 (12.89)	-
02/03	11.84 (14.73)	-
03/04	12.73 (14.59)	-
04/05	13.69 (15.20)	-
Now - 05/06	14.71 (16.00)	16.00
06/07	15.82	17.96
2007/08	17.00 – 100% growth	20.16
08/09	18.63	22.63
09/10	20.42	25.40
10/11	22.38	28.51
11/12	24.53	32.00 – 100% growth since 2006
12/13	26.88	-
13/14	29.47	-
14/15	32.29	-
15/16	35.39	-
16/17	38.79	-
2017/18	42.5 – 400% growth	-

14. The proposed draft strategy targets require average annual patronage growth of 12.25%. Since 1998 the average annual rate of patronage growth has been 8.6%. The PTAG believed vehicle operating cost increases (including fuel prices, parking charges, etc) accompanied by ongoing infrastructure and service improvements (such as bus priority roll out, frequency improvements, etc) would be sufficient to accelerate the rate of patronage growth.
15. Once approved, the draft strategy text will be included in a consultation document taking the form and style of the current strategy booklet. The current strategy has good market recall (albeit with some important lessons learnt from recent market research) which will be valuable if a good level of response is to be made to the consultation. The formal consultation period will last six weeks. During this time each Community Board will be invited to submit its views on the draft strategy, with staff in attendance at meetings as necessary to provide advice. All other usual channels of communication with the general public and stakeholders will be used. As with previous strategies and in line with the primary theme of the community's feedback, the strategy wording will be framed around the continued threat of traffic congestion and the need to tackle it by attracting more people onto public transport through continued level of service improvements.

16. PTAG has recommended that the next strategy review take place in 2011/12 to set a course beyond June 2012.
17. The Regional Council approved this draft strategy for public consultation on 26 April 2006.
18. It is anticipated that following public consultation, feedback review and some final strategising sessions by the PTAG, a final draft strategy for adoption by the Council will be presented in September 2006.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

19. The final strategy will set out the community's vision and goals for public transport, identifying where improvements are necessary from both Councils. The MCTS identifies additional funding for passenger transport (and in other areas) in the current draft LTCCP 2006/16 (the bus xchange expansion is identified separately). It is believed at this time that the investment signalled by the City Council in the draft LTCCP is sufficient to meet its obligations under the new strategy once adopted. If medium to longer term changes are required, these can be incorporated into planning processes for the 2009/19 Community Plan preparation.
20. The Canterbury Regional Council's current draft LTCCP outlines a 65% growth in operating expenditure between now and 2011/12. This growth represents more investment in levels of service but also a rise in operating costs expected through higher tendered prices for services.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Thank the Passenger Transport Advisory Group (PTAG) members for their work on developing the strategy to date.
- (b) Agree to formal public consultation being undertaken on the attached draft metro strategy.