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Freepost 178  
Our Community Plan  
Christchurch City Council  
PO Box 237  
Christchurch

### **Red Bus Submission on Christchurch City Council's 2006\_09 LTCCP**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The following is a submission on Councils' 2006 – 2009 LTCCP (full version) from Red Bus Ltd.

Red Bus is a long-standing and significant service provider of urban passenger transport to Environment Canterbury (ECan) and to the Christchurch and Canterbury communities. Red Bus has 460 staff, 210 urban and charter buses with a demonstrated and continuing commitment to service excellence and environmental sustainability within this industry.

#### **Introduction**

The timing is now right for public transport to begin displacing the motor car as the preferred mode of transport within Christchurch City.

The key influencers for increased public transport use today are:

- The rising cost of fuel.
- An acceptance that fuel reserves are finite and will diminish in the near future.
- Fuel supply may be an issue in the foreseeable future.
- Traffic congestion is constantly growing
- Long term parking costs are rising
- The general population is becoming more sensitive to environmental issues and are increasingly aware of their personal impact on the world.
- An increasing proportion of the population have a desire to do the right thing environmentally as long as it is easy and still allows them to meet their travel needs.
- Council's commitment to infrastructural improvements for passenger transport services. The Bus Exchange, bus shelter specification improvements and bus priority measures are but a few of these important commitments.

Today is the best time to begin building a world class and user friendly public transport system that will support the Council vision for Christchurch.

### ***Submission content***

Red Bus has reviewed Council's draft LTCCP for the next ten years and submits its view on areas of the community plan including observations of where adjustments could be made to ensure the integration and implementation of a first world public transport system in Christchurch over the next decade and beyond.

#### **Healthy Environment - Page 53**

Both Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury have important roles and responsibilities in achieving a healthy environment and yet it appears to the reader that the level of this partnership is being played down by not distinguishing Ecan's more significant role from other local authorities in the region. Political machinations and ambitions aside, we submit that Ecan should feature within this section as a full partner that Christchurch City Council will work with in achieving these environmental outcomes. At a local level this relationship is, in our view, more important than those with government departments (i.e., the "who we need to work with section on page 53 should lead off with Environment Canterbury as the primary partner).

#### **Bus Exchange Development and Expansion - Pages 71 & 154**

The Bus Exchange has a pivotal role within the central city for passenger transport terminations, interchanges and bus flow.

While recognising that the exchange is "already inadequate to meet the growth in public transport use", Red Bus thinks that the proposed 3 to 5 year time expansion period for the bus exchange is too distant to meet reasonable growth expectations.

Bus patronage in Christchurch as a percentage of population is relatively low, around 3.5%. This is likely to rise rapidly due to a number of key factors:

1. City traffic congestion is rapidly growing.
2. Fuel prices have escalated by 24% since October 2005 and fuel price rises are expected to continue.
3. Long term parking costs are up.

Given these factors and the successful introduction of bus priority measures it is not unreasonable to predict a 20% to 40% increase in bus patronage within the next two years at which point the current bus exchange will be unable to meet these demands.

In February bus movements in the exchange came to a stand still as a result of a student prank (a group of students paying fares on buses with 5 cents pieces) combined with a student's orientation programme that generated unprecedented demand for bus services. The bus exchange overload also caused severe traffic

congestion in Lichfield and Colombo streets over this period. This event provided a valuable wake up call with regard to the bus exchange's current operating capacity.

In our view the bus exchange planning process should begin immediately with a view to beginning the build programme during 2006/07 year and budgeting accordingly. A failure to meet increased demand has the effect of permanently discouraging new potential bus users. In any case an alternative transport plan for the CBD needs to be prepared to cope for a potential 20% to 40% passenger increase in the event that the increase occurs before the expanded bus exchange is ready for use.

We think that Central City is the best location for the bus exchange due to the foot traffic concentrations here from inner city workers, shoppers and visitors. Feedback from bus users shows a strong preference for not having to transfer between services if this can be avoided (i.e., a bus exchange out of the city centre would tend to generate additional transfers and additional "dead running" for buses).

We encourage the Council to review traffic flows associated with the bus exchange to minimise recirculation of bus traffic and potential traffic blockages that occur now around the existing bus exchange. Red Bus offers operational advice during this review process.

#### **Capital Works Programme - Page 76**

Following on from the above, a significant rise in urban passengers is highly likely. Passenger transport is a key strategy for Council and service inadequacies in the infrastructure are known to be major barriers to attracting and subsequently retaining new users. Red Bus requests the reinstating of the Passenger Transport Infrastructure project onto the main capital works programme. Without the detailed support from this project the major capital projects will not deliver the results otherwise possible and satisfaction levels with the public transport network can be expected to fall as the demand for more capacity, and service standards increase.

#### **Bus Priority Measures**

Not explicitly included within the LTCCP is the development of bus priority measures on congested traffic corridors. Red Bus very strongly supports bus priority measures such as clearways, bus only lanes and, traffic light phasing triggered by approaching buses on all roads where traffic congestion adversely affects bus services. Bus priority measures are considered the essential next step in achieving consistent on time performance and rapid transit times throughout the city for bus users.

The three traffic corridors that Council is considering for bus priority measures are Main North Road/Papanui Road, Colombo Street/Cashmere Road and Queenspark. There are a number of other traffic corridors<sup>1</sup> that would benefit from this attention once priority mechanisms are in place on these routes (e.g., Riccarton Road, Cranford Street, Ferry Road and Pages Road; in short all the major arterial public transport routes).

As the most congested road in the city, Riccarton Road needs to be added to the primary list of traffic corridors for bus priority measures. Riccarton Road passenger transport corridor accounts for 30% of the city's total passenger trips. Having said that we recognise that the unsuccessful consultation on Riccarton Road clearway implementation of some years ago left battle scars with some retailers in this area and this may be a barrier to further progress without clear evidence of successful bus priority implementation elsewhere in the city.

An additional bus priority measure that Red Bus recommends is that Council in conjunction with ECan seek a change to the New Zealand road rules so that buses and other public transport modes have pre-emptive traffic rights. Australia has similar rights where other traffic is legally required to give way to buses indicating in all situations i.e. leaving bus stops and right or left hand turning at intersections. Red Bus offers to advocate for this change through the Bus & Coach Association to ensure regulators recognise the universality of support for this change.

#### **Bus Infrastructure - Terminus.**

Not mentioned explicitly in the LTCCP is the resolution of long-standing bus terminus issues particularly at New Brighton and Southshore. The obvious solution in both cases is to create an aesthetically appealing terminus area that will provide passenger shelter and service facilities (e.g., toilets) with adequate bus parking to accommodate concentrations of passengers, buses and their drivers at the beginning/end points of public transport routes.

#### **Parking Fee increase – Page 87**

Red Bus supports the raising of hourly parking fees across all parking areas (on and off road parking) but particularly those in the CBD to align with zone 1 adult bus fares. Zone 1 adult fares are currently \$2.50. The present parking building policy with the first parking hour being free encourages cars into the central city which is entirely at odds with supporting the development of public transport.

Council's proposal to continue with a reduced off street parking fee structure also creates a misleading message when the capital cost and ongoing management costs for parking building spaces are higher than those for on-road parking spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Environment Canterbury's Real Time Information system is able to provide graphic evidence of the congestion points on each arterial for buses.

### **Economic Development – Page 116**

Transport services are an integral component in achieving economic development in Christchurch and Canterbury so Red Bus believes the inclusion of the Regional Land transport Strategy, Metropolitan Christchurch Transport Statement and the Christchurch Public Transport Strategy should be included in the list of strategies that support the Economic Development objective.

### **Streets & Transport – Page 150**

Red Bus would like the third paragraph down in the “What Council is already doing” column amended to include *bus exchange, terminus and interchanges* within “passenger transport infrastructure such as bus stops and shelters”.

### **Measures & Targets – Page 152**

Given that the Bus Exchange is a central hub for passenger transport we think the exchange warrants its own measurement and target. The proposed additional measurement is the % satisfaction with Bus Exchange with a target of 90%. As future terminus buildings and bus interchange facilities are added over time this measure could be expanded to incorporate these facilities.

Similarly if the intention is to support public transport as stated then the satisfaction target for bus sign, shelters and seats should also be at the 90% satisfaction level. By comparison the road surface satisfaction target is 87% and because it is other road users who are in direct competition with public transport then the public transport infrastructure satisfaction targets should be at least the same level.

### **Strategic Asset definition – Page 294**

Red Bus strongly agrees with the Council determination that “The public transport infrastructure system as a whole including the Bus Exchange, bus shelters and other related bus facilities” is a strategic asset of Council.

We would also like to see an explicit linkage between these assets and the Christchurch City roading network as a whole because the specific public transport assets are not able to successfully provide full service functionality without integration with the roading network. Bus priority measures are a clear example of how the roading network and bus services need to be integrated.

It seems to us that passenger transport is an essential component part of enabling an efficient transport system to achieve the vibrant economy and world class environment espoused in the vision for future Christchurch.

There is an anonymous quote that goes something like “The problem with good ideas is that they rapidly deteriorate into hard work”. There are a lot of good ideas in this LTCCP and while hard work will inevitably flow from the execution of these ideas it is vital that the major projects (e.g. Bus exchange) have the resources (infrastructure supported by skilled and motivated people) to allow these good ideas to become great ideas through successful implementation.

Congratulations on the production of an excellent document that is easy to read and to respond to. We look forward to the next phase which is refining and then breathing life into the commitments it contains.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We wish to talk to the main points in our submission at the hearings to be held between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

If you require any clarification you would like to raise I would be happy to discuss these at an appropriate time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul McNoe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul McNoe  
**Chief Executive**

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