

## **7. SINGLE COIN FARES RECOMMENDATION – SPEEDING OUR TICKETING SYSTEM**

The Council is interested in speeding up its relatively slow ticketing system, to enable faster bus services in urban Christchurch. To meet the objectives of speeding up our ticketing system, an overview study has been conducted by PPK Consultants and recommends that to meet a significant reduction in loading time, a package of new ticket technology and the adoption of single coin fares will be required.

At this point the staff are reviewing next steps on possible ticket technologies, to meet the general objective of reducing average loading time from 7.5 seconds per passenger to around 4 seconds per passenger. The target of 4 seconds per passenger relates to the use of the new Bus Interchange at The Crossing development, and the need for significantly more efficient passenger loading. The introduction of a single coin fares package now will provide some indication of loading time reductions toward meeting the 4 second objective.

In addition, there is a general need to speed bus travel times and slow ticketing can account for a significant amount of total travel time. Thus improving ticket loading speed can make the entire bus system more efficient.

The Council has adopted for public consultation a single coin fares policy for public transport trips in Christchurch (focusing on adult and child section 1, section 2 and zone 1 fares only). This includes keeping the existing multi-trip concession cards (12 rides for the price of 10) and monthly pass prices the same. The intended single coin fare is to provide a number of speed loading benefits:

- Reducing transaction times for cash sales
- Providing incentive to passengers to use the multi-trip and monthly pass tickets which provide faster boarding
- Simplifying change handling by drivers
- Simplifying the overall ticket system

A series of focus groups have been conducted which indicate that existing and potential passengers believe that a single coin fare system would speed loading, with some comments suggesting that it would reduce the “hassle of 10 cent or 20 cent change”. In addition, feedback from these focus groups has indicated that the existing fare system is generally viewed as “cheap” or “inexpensive”; thus a small fares increase would not create the perception that overall fares are expensive.

Increasing the cash fares for section 1, 2 and zone 1 fares to single coins would increase the average fare by 5-7%. In terms of relative cost increases, the public transport system has not seen a fares change since 1991; in contrast general inflation for the costs of public transport services has increased by 10.23% since 1991. Thus, the proposed single coin fare increase would still be well below inflation increases over the same period.

In addition, there have been significant system improvements with increasing investment made by the Council and its ratepayers over the past couple of years. These system improvements have resulted in increases in patronage, as well as increases in system costs. In general, the increased cash fares while keeping other ticket options at existing prices will send a balanced signal to passengers: the Council and operators want to provide a faster service, and a move to faster ticketing is part of that package.

It should be noted that following a request made by this Council and bus operators, recent traffic management changes proposed by the City Council are also part of a general intention to improve the speed of urban bus passenger services in Christchurch.

The specifics of the recommendation are outlined below, and would be a change to the Canterbury Regional Passenger Transport Plan (Appendix B: maximum fares for Christchurch bus services).

The proposed changes are:

1&2 Section fare	Adult	\$1.00 (currently \$0.90)
	Child	\$0.50 (currently \$0.45)
1 Zone fare	Adult	\$2.00 (currently \$1.80)
	Child	\$1.00 (currently \$0.90)

There are **no** changes proposed for all other cash fares, 12 ride Multi-trip, and monthly pass tickets. Free transfer/return tickets will also be unchanged.

However, moving to single coin fares now should not be seen as removing the possibility of some other changes to fares in the near future. For example, work being carried out on the review of the Passenger Transport Plan has also been examining other fare options, such as a tertiary student fare.

In accordance with the Transport Services Licensing Act (cl 47), the Council is obligated to consult with the public and constituent authorities on changes to the Passenger Transport Plan.

Report prepared by Mark Bachels, Strategic Analyst (Energy and Transport).

### ***Recommendation***

*That the Joint Committee receive the report and make comments on the proposed single coin fare.*