

5. BUS XCHANGE OPERATIONAL REVIEW

Officer responsible Property Manager	Author Rob Dally, Property Manager, DDI 371-1500
--	--

The purpose of this report is to apprise Councillors of the issues that have led to a decision to undertake an operational review of the Bus Xchange.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The \$10m Christchurch Bus Xchange commenced operations in November 2000 (with 60% of city bus movements directed through the Xchange) becoming fully operational in April 2001 when the balance 40% of city bus movements were rerouted through the Xchange.

Since November 2000, there has been a marked increase in bus patronage beyond original expectations. This increased usage has however, led to a number of operational issues, some of which have been dealt with, and some which are yet to be resolved.

The Bus Xchange is owned by the Christchurch City Council. Livingstone & Co, who manage many shopping malls, including the Crossing, have been contracted to manage the building on behalf of the Council and employ cleaning/security personnel as necessary. Environment Canterbury (ECan) manage Bus Xchange movements, operating out of a "control" room in the Xchange building.

The Bus Xchange comprises nine off-street stops within the building catering for east/west bus movements and six on-street stops (three on either side of Colombo Street), catering for north/south bus movements.

The Xchange operates between the hours of 5.30am and midnight, 7 days a week, ie 129.5 hours per week.

During week days, there are currently 2188 total bus movements through the Bus Xchange. After initial teething problems, Real Time Information (RTI) equipment is achieving 99.8% accuracy.

ECan advise that there are approximately 20,000 passenger movements per week day through the Bus Xchange.

Patronage on the buses has increased 9.5% over the last 12 months with December 2001 patronage being 17.5% higher than December 2000. There are also many non passenger movements through the Xchange, both on street and off street.

When ECan did their initial planning for the Bus Xchange, they allowed for one FTE in the control room 7am to 9am and 3pm to 6pm, to cater for peak hour traffic only over the seven day period. There are now 4.5 FTE ECan staff rostered over the seven day period.

There is an ECan person in the control room at all times when the bus Xchange is open. ECan's responsibility is primarily to manage traffic movements with the assistance of 11 video cameras/screens: an incidental task (for ECan) which is not part of their formal brief, is to monitor people movements including security incidents.

ISSUES

Issues that we are aware of (some being currently dealt with) include:

- The higher than anticipated use of the Bus Xchange – people who have shifted from external bus stops is 30% higher than anticipated.
- Higher levels of cleaning/maintenance/property management costs than initially budgeted – due to higher patronage.
- Public safety signage/lighting on the Lichfield Street frontage – difficulties with heritage façade.
- Conflict between car park (entry) vehicles and buses in Lichfield Street.
- Footpath/pedestrian safety and management.
- The perceived benefits of two-way traffic in Lichfield Street.
- Noise/diesel pollution/congestion (traffic and pedestrian) concerns of neighbours.
- Controllable lighting inside the building.
- Public nuisance/security issues being reported at the Xchange.
- Public perception of safety exacerbated by media interest.
- A legal obligation to the owner of the "Crossing", to manage the Xchange so that a safe environment exists for bus/retail customers.

Some of the issues have been dealt with; some actions taken, and some initiatives are under way.

Security and Public Nuisance

One of the more high profile issues (listed above) from a community perspective or perception, is the issue of security. This needs to be considered in the context of a public place which is heavily utilised (20,000 plus people per day).

Late last year at a Council Committee meeting, the Police advised that the number of incidents in the vicinity of the Bus Xchange were no greater than the number of incidents previously in the Square/nearby areas - there has been a shift of incidents. Incidents that occur in the Bus Xchange are recorded in a daily log. The log for the last six months shows 127 incidents. With 2.6m passenger movements through the Bus Xchange over this period, this equates to 1 incident per 18,978 passenger movements:

These incidents have been varied as follows:

Trespass notices	38	30%
Police calls	38	30%
Physical assaults	31	24%
Vandalism	13	10%
Assaults with a weapon	4	3%
Verbal assaults	3	3%
	<hr/>	
	127	100%

NB: it should be noted that the majority of incidents occur during off peak periods.

It is interesting to note that the frequency of 'incidents' has been at a reasonably consistent level over the last 6 months, whilst at the same time, bus patronage/Bus Xchange use has increased significantly. Whilst some initiatives (including additional security presence during school holidays and Friday/Saturday evenings) have already been put in place, officers are currently discussing with Livingstones/ECan/Police, a number of options which have the potential to further mitigate/deter incidents – the costs/benefits of the various options are being explored. Options include:

- Additional security personnel.
- Extra surveillance cameras.
- Additional resourcing to monitor the surveillance camera screens in house.
- Surveillance camera screens monitored by volunteers at the Central Police Station.
- Targeted police operators linked to youth worker roles.
- Linking with other possible partnerships -
Maori Wardens
Sulafaiga

SUMMARY

The Bus Xchange has now been operating for a little over 12 months with excellent results from a public passenger transport perspective. During that time, bus patronage has increased by 9.5% whilst real time information equipment is achieving 99.8% accuracy. The unexpected high volume of public/passenger movements through the Bus Xchange has resulted in higher property management costs than anticipated. The budget requirement for 2002/03 has yet to be fully quantified. There have also been 127 security or public nuisance incidents recorded over the past 6 months which equates to 1 incident per 18,978 passenger movements.

A number of other issues including footpath/pedestrian management and traffic safety, noise, diesel pollution, have been identified and require further consultation/investigation/action.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That a Subcommittee comprising the Chairs of Property & Major Projects, Strategy & Finance, Community & Leisure and Sustainable Transport & Utilities be established to assist officers in dealing with the issues identified.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.