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Let's Get Wellington Moving

Private Bag 6995

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Who we are:

1. The Bus and Coach Association NZ (BCA) is a membership organisation representing the interests of the bus and coach industry. We provide industry leadership, advocacy, networking, and services for more than 300 members (and their 6,000 buses and coaches). The BCA represents the majority of New Zealand's bus and coach operators and domestic and international bus manufacturers.

Introduction:

2. Public transport (PT) is the most efficient use of limited transport corridor space. We support LGWM's efforts to re-develop a transport system that has, historically, wilfully sacrificed all other modes at the altar of the car for decades.
3. We welcome the opportunity to submit our industry perspective on the four proposed options to improve Wellington's transport network and increase PT patronage.
4. We have responded to each of the four proposed plans individually.

Options Review:

Option 1 – South coast light rail + new public transport tunnel

5. We support this option, if the tunnel is four lanes – with two lanes separated for designated bus use only.
6. We support shifting the priority to public transport along the corridor towards Wellington Hospital, and further on to Island Bay. The multi-lane roads around the basin and towards the hospital are currently massively underutilised, and encourage car dependency.

7. We support the proposal to introduce bus priority towards Wellington Airport. However, we also recommend including the section of State Highway 1 (SH1) from the second roundabout to Kilbirnie Crescent – at least at peak hour. This could be used for high-frequency express buses from Miramar.
8. We support making the two ‘Bus Route Extensions’ peak hour bus priority lanes. We would recommend utilising direct, quieter thoroughfares such as Tauhinu Road and Park Road for active transport priority.

Option 2 – Bus Rapid Transit to the sea and skies

9. This is our preferred option – we particularly support the inclusion of bus priority to Seatoun, Miramar North, and Island Bay. This should be included in all options.
10. Buses have the advantage of servicing suburbs and continuing current PT routes. Light rail will require the introduction of new hubs and transfers. This may discourage PT use, as there would not be capacity for parking along most of the light rail corridor in the same way that there is along heavy rail routes.
11. Our above points regarding SH1 and ensuring that the new tunnel has bus lanes still apply.
12. This option does not provide for active transport improvement. Provision of active transport alternatives is key to overall mode-shift.
13. It is not immediately clear why bus rapid transport (BRT) would be more expensive than light-rail. Although we support investment in PT infrastructure, proposing ‘top-spec’ plans may reduce the ability to get projects approved and completed. This is especially pertinent given the entrenched car-dependent mindset that pervades New Zealand as a whole.

Option 3 – South coast light rail

14. This is our least favoured option.
15. We support the introduction of bus priority along ` Avenue and Pirie Street. However, these roads are not suitable for BRT, even with parking removed at peak times. This is because:
 - 15.1. They are busy, winding suburbs that are not designed to be key thoroughfares.
 - 15.2. There will be considerable pushback from residents regarding the removal of parking and increase in noise. If resident opposition results in it being unable to get over the line, buses will have to share a relatively narrow space with parked vehicles.
 - 15.3. The Hataitai bus tunnel is only one lane. This is inadequate for a large increase in services.
16. The parallel/widened tunnel for active transport is extremely unlikely to get built. Examples such as the Auckland harbour bridge highlight that there is very little appetite from both politicians, and the public to invest in active modes. This is why we have proposed alternative tunnel options.
17. Taranaki Street is more suitable for light rail, as it is closer to key urban areas and has considerable capacity. At present it is a six-lane, mixed-traffic road cutting through a city with no recourse for public transport, and no pedestrian-priority.

Option 4 – South coast light rail via Taranaki Street

18. This is preferred to Option 3. We would recommend removing parking and introducing further bus and active lanes along Kent/Cambridge Terrace, as much of this is still underutilised. This would then create two key PT corridors – one for buses, one for light rail to share with buses.
19. The points above regarding the Hataitai bus tunnel and active transport tunnel remain.

Recommendations

20. Of the four choices, our preference is Option 2. However, they are all an improvement on the status quo. Wellington is currently extremely inefficient with its land and transport corridor use. This will continue to get worse as the population increases.
21. We recommend some alternative options for consideration:
 - 21.1. Making Mt Victoria the new public transport tunnel. This is because it has capacity for buses to travel in alternate directions at the same time – as well as pedestrians.
22. Re-purpose the Hataitai bus tunnel as a cycling tunnel. This is the most practical use of the tunnel, as cyclists would be able to travel in alternative directions concurrently.
 - 22.1. This may have a mild impact on patronage in the immediate Hataitai area but would have an overall benefit on PT uptake.
 - 22.2. Although it is up a mild incline, the benefits of separate infrastructure and massive recent uptake of e-bikes will more than neutralise this.

The BCA strongly recommends implementing some more immediate PT improvements

23. Although we support the intention of these proposals, they require immense investment, planning and consultation. We believe that some shorter-term wins could be achieved within 12-24 months to drastically increase the reliability of Wellington's public transport network. These would amount to not much more than putting down some paint.
24. Wellington currently suffers from a desperate lack of bus lanes, reducing PT reliability and patronage.
25. Given that the car is generally seen as the 'default' mode of transport, this often drives many individuals back to private transport.
26. Implementing priority lanes and improving PT reliability in the short to medium term will help smooth the transition to whichever option is selected. It will normalise superior travel times and separated lanes.
27. We therefore recommend placing bus lanes at the follow pinch points. They would ideally operate all-day, or at least during (mostly morning) peaks:
 - Along the Quay's would provide huge capacity and reliability improvements. These are not considered under the City Streets proposals but are crucial to PT improvement.
 - Miramar Avenue to Rongotai Road.


- Cobham Drive. This also includes building a pedestrian bridge rather than a crossing, to limit disruptions.
- Ira Street, Calabar Road, Park Road and Broadway.
- Taranaki Street.
- Featherston Street to Manners Mall.

28. Other quick improvements outside of this area include:

- Ngauranga Gorge SH1 but lane. Peak hour traffic has a huge impact on bus reliability.
- Wainuiomata Road bus priority.
- Hutt Road – Thorndon Quay bus priority.
- Active transport links to and from Tawa-Glenside.
- Connecting up and improving the Hutt River Trail to suit both recreational users and commuters.
- The central city traffic light timings are deliberately anti-pedestrian, often turning red after a second or two to get cars moving. In combination with wide, high speed roads the central city is inhospitable to those on foot. This has negative flow-on effects to PT-users, as they are more likely to need to walk the last-mile to their destination. These should be amended, but have sensors to still change quickly for buses.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a submission on these proposed options. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any other queries.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben McFadgen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben McFadgen
Chief Executive Officer