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Report to the Passenger Transport Committee
By Barry Leonard, Manager Customer Services

Monitoring of Contracted Public Transport Services

1. Purpose

To appraise councillors of the method and extent of monitoring carried out on contracted public transport services

2. Background

Cr Bonner asked at the 9th February 2001 Committee meeting about the Council's service monitoring role. This report is a response to that request. With over 21,000 services a week operated within the Region it is not possible nor economic to check each service to ensure compliance with the timetable and/or the contract conditions. However with Council investing around \$35 million of ratepayer and taxpayers funds some monitoring is required to ensure compliance. The present level of monitoring has been consistent for a number of years and there has been no suggestion of significant undetected breaches of contract conditions by current operators.

3. Comment

3.1 Current Monitoring Practices

Information regarding services which fail to run are received from three predominant sources.

- In many cases the bus company will advise Ridewell that services have been cancelled so that this information can be passed to calling passengers

- The Ridewell Inspectors. The Inspectors concentrate their monitoring on peak services and will generally be carrying out random inspections during peak periods. While they undertake other duties throughout the balance of the day these often require them to move around the region so they are able to observe services. The Department has a performance indicator within its Business Plan, which requires at least 95% of peak services to be checked twice within the financial year. It is anticipated that this requirement will be met for the current year.
- The complaints system. Ridewell receives approximately 90 complaints per month and these will invariably include claims that selected services did not run.

When the inspectors detect a breach of contract conditions or the registered timetable, they prepare an incident report which is forwarded to the company concerned for comment. Similarly all complaints received from passengers through the Ridewell Service Centre are referred to the operators. These forms are uniquely numbered and registered to ensure that responses are received from the operators. Where operators dispute a complaint that a particular service did not run they will usually provide a copy of the ticketing machine printout to substantiate their claim.

With these three sources services which fail to run can be identified and payment for the contracted services among them is withheld at the variable rate specified in the contract. The only exception is for Tranz Metro services where the company normally arranges replacement buses at its own cost.

Cancelled services generally arise from breakdowns, traffic disruptions, bus shortage or driver shortage. Little can be done to cope with the first two causes as generally they cannot be predicted, however both bus shortages and the level of driver relief are in the hands of the company. If these problems continue management of the company concerned is approached and requested to resolve the problem. The ultimate sanction available to Council is to take action for breach of contract but this has not been necessary in recent times.

Complaints and Inspector reports are also perused for trends of overloading, late running and other operating issues. The Ridewell Inspectors are used to confirm these trends and if necessary the problem is represented directly to the management of the company.

3.2 **Future Options**

Council has invited tenders for the provision of a real time information system. These tenders close on 30 April 2001. Although the base tender is centred on Wellington City it includes a provision to extend the scope of the operation to the other cities up to a maximum of 500 on street displays. Although the system is primarily intended to provide roadside information for passengers, a side benefit is that as it tracks the buses as they move through the city it can produce a daily report of timetabled services which were not detected by the tracking system and those which ran late. The services not detected will then be the basis for withholding contract payments.

The funding for this project is included in the LTFS for 2003/04. It is mentioned in the proposed annual plan 2001/02 as a project that can be brought forward and qualify for kick start funding if the community supports it.

4. **Communication**

Contract compliance is a technical issue and any publicity would be better deferred until a decision is made on the Real Time Information Project.

5. **Recommendation**

That the report be received

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