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Report to the Passenger Transport Committee
By Dr D J Watson, Divisional Manager Transport

Divisional Manager's Report – August 2001

1. Financial and Annual Plan Performance Indicators

The end of financial year Divisional report is being written and will feature as part of a future Policy and Finance Committee meeting along with all other Divisional reports. The introduction of patronage funding and Kick Start funding in the middle of the financial year has meant that the expenditure and revenue budgets for the year have been exceeded. It is expected that the Division's accountant will be in a position to give an accurate statement on the financial health of the Division at the meeting.

2. Meeting with Kapiti Coast District Council

Councillor Turver, Mr Maguire and myself met with the Kapiti Coast District Council on 17 May 2001, at their request, to talk about the Regional Council general and transport rates. It was a very constructive meeting. The District Councillors gave their support for our efforts to improve public transport to/from and within the Kapiti Coast. The only transport issue raised was the transport rate split in the Otaki area between urban and rural. This was the subject of a letter from their General Manager to the annual plan process which was dealt with during that process.

3. **Visitors**

The only overseas visit over this period was that of Mr Brian Souter, Chairman of the Stagecoach Group, on one of his regular trips to this part of the world. We discussed the Tranz Rail situation, the future of trolley buses and patronage funding.

Stagecoach are considering rebuilding the current trolley bus fleet using only the electric traction equipment, axles and suspensions out of the existing buses. The new buses will use these recycled components but will have completely new chassis and super low floor bodies. Clearly they will only go down this path if the Regional Council continues to support the retention of trolley buses. This issue I am sure will be one that the next Committee will find interesting.

Most of the Auckland Regional Councillors made a visit here on 7 May 2001. The transport part of their visit appears to have been of great assistance to them.

4. **Regional Transport Officers Meeting**

A meeting of the Regional Transport Officers group was held on 22 June 2001. Besides the group's discussion of in-house matters they held sessions with Councillor Terry McDavitt, Researcher, looking at the performance of all Councils regarding strategies, Transfund New Zealand, the Urban Committee of the Bus and Coach Association and Mr John Hutchings of LGNZ.

Mr Hutchings kept the group up to date with proposed legislative changes in the land transport sector. Transfund New Zealand came to discuss the progress of the patronage funding scheme and answer any questions. Bus and Coach had some concerns over patronage data collection.

5. **National Roding Programme 2001/02**

The National Roding Programme (NRP) 2001/02 was launched at a function held on Thursday 21 June by the Minister of Transport, Mark Gosche, and Mr Michael Gross, the Chairman of Transfund New Zealand.

Attachment 1 is the pages of the programme relating to public transport. After the Minister's proposed speech he made some comments focused on the local situation. He congratulated the Wellington Regional Council for taking up Kick Start funding and the work being done on solving the Tranz Metro Wellington Sale issue. He also mentioned a visit he had had from representatives of Mana Coachlines that had made him understand some of the practical difficulties being faced by operators in trying to increase services.

6. **Bus and Coach Conference 8-11 July 2001**

I attended the Bus and coach conference held in Hamilton from the 8th to the 11th of July 2001. This continues to be the cheapest and best industry conference held each year. The total cost for three days and nights (including all meals and accommodation) was \$695. **Attachment 2** is the conference programme. I did not stay for the 'great bus auction'.

Hans Rat, the President of the UITP (Information Union of Passenger Transport) reminded delegates of the need for good quality information, publicity, infrastructure to support services. All these had the potential to greatly increase patronage.

I believe we need to place more effort in these areas over the next few years.

John Collyns introduced us to the CiViS operating successfully in Rouen, France. This is a guided bus network using video technology to guide the bus. The system operates like light rail on its own right of way but the buses can also be used conventionally on city streets. The costs are much less than light rail.

Hon Mark Gosche indicated that the government's patronage funding project would be reviewed and may be extended. The government is encouraged by the way Regional Councils are working with the scheme and is committed to further support for passenger transport.

7. **Seatoun Ferry Service Proposal**

A kick start application for a Seatoun Ferry Service has been received from the East by West Company Ltd (**attachment 3**). This has been sent on to Transfund New Zealand for consideration by them.

The committee needs to take the opportunity to review the kick start projects at the half year review in January 2002. Some projects have been delayed, for example the urban rail improvements. The level of patronage, growth and hence patronage funding is now becoming known. These elements need to be brought together to enable consideration of all kick start projects, new and existing. Currently kick start projects receive a 60% subsidy together with any patronage growth funding.

As a consequence they may be almost self funding. This will not be the case in future years once the kick start funding is reduced to zero.

8. **Last meeting**

As this is the last scheduled meeting of this Committee in this triennium I would like to take the opportunity to say how great it has been, most of the time, to work with each and every one of you. I look forward to working with many of you again later in the year. To those who have announced that they will not be returning please accept a very special thank you from me for all your support over the year. I look forward to joining with many others nearer the election date, in thanking you more fully.

To these standing for election I give you my best wishes.

9. Recommendation

That the report be received.

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: National Roothing Programme 2001/02
Attachment 2: Bus and Coach Conference Programme
Attachment 3: Seatoun Ferry Kick Start Proposal