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## **Report 01.551**

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Report to the Passenger Transport Committee  
By Tony Brennand, Manager, Transport Policy

### **Bus Priority: Wellington City**

#### **1. Purpose**

To present to the Committee further attractive bus priority schemes for the Wellington CBD and to raise the issue of the limited progress by Wellington City Council in implementing bus priority schemes.

#### **2. Background**

For some years now it has been recognised that bus travel in Wellington City has become detrimentally impeded by other traffic. Recent Regional Land Transport Strategies have acknowledged that if bus travel is to be attractive in Wellington City then bus priority measures would need to be introduced.

Under policy 4.1.2 of the 1993-1998 Regional Land Transport Strategy the following statement is made,

*“ A series of bus lanes, bus priority measures at signal controlled intersections and bus only streets will be developed in key locations.”*

In the discussion that follows Wellington City Council is identified as the key implementing agent.

Policy A3 of the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy 1996-2001 states,

*“ Develop bus priority measures.”*

The current Regional Land Transport Strategy 1999-2004 says in policy 1.1.4

*“Enhance the quality, reliability and priority of public transport facilities and services.”*

Also in the section on the Ngauranga to Wellington CBD corridor plan of the current Regional Land Transport Strategy,

*“Bus services caught up in road congestion”* is identified as an issue.

*“ Improve bus priority through CBD traffic”* is identified as a project into the up to 2004 period.

Wellington City Council, Wellington Regional Council and Stagecoach Wellington Ltd are signatories to the Quality Partnership agreement 1998-2002. In section 6.2 *“Priority for Public Transport”* of the Quality Partnership agreement the following statement is made,

*“Wellington City Council undertakes to institute measures, which will reduce average bus journey times over the term of this Quality Partnership and to monitor their effectiveness. This will mean the implementation of bus priority measures such as bus only lanes, traffic light pre-emption for buses and the construction of more in lane bus stops.”*

### 3. **Comment**

Tim Kelly Transportation Planning Limited have produced a report *“Bus Priority Wellington CBD”*. A presentation of the findings of this report will be provided at the Committee meeting. In particular a number of worthwhile schemes have been identified that should be implemented.

A copy of the report’s conclusions and recommendations are provided in **Attachment 1**. A copy of a letter of support for the report’s findings from Stagecoach New Zealand Ltd is provided in **Attachment 2**.

The greatest concern with all these projects is the track record of Wellington City Council in implementing such worthwhile projects. Over several years many worthwhile bus priority and other projects have been generated that Wellington City Council has been unable to implement. These projects include the Karori bus lane proposal, the Manners Street bus lane proposal, the Lambton Quay bus lane extension and a selection of bus priority projects shown in **Attachment 3** which were presented to the Committee at its November 1999 meeting. Wellington City Council have not

managed to implement any of these projects despite agreeing to and despite Wellington Regional Council offering to fund the local authority share of their cost.

This problem was the subject of a submission to the Wellington City Council's Annual Plan 2001/02 written on behalf of Wellington Regional Council by Councillor McDavitt. A copy of this submission is provided in **Attachment 4**.

This submission suggested that the City Council's inability to implement bus priority measures is indicative of a wider problem of the City Council meeting its responsibilities as an implementing agency. Councillor McDavitt's conclusion is that there is *"a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of City Council performance in transport planning and public transport support in particular."*

It is useful to consider the statutory obligations of Wellington City Council in respect to the Regional Land Transport Strategy given that successive Regional Land Transport Strategies have given strong and clear expression of the need to institute bus priority measures in Wellington City.

The relevant legislation is section 42H of the Transit New Zealand Act which deals with District Rooding Programmes. Without compliance with this section it would be illegal for Transfund New Zealand to fund a District Rooding Programme.

The most frequently cited is subsection (6),

*" A district rooding programme shall not be inconsistent with any national land transport strategy, or any relevant regional land transport strategy that is in force at the time of preparation of the programme."*

Unless there is any conflict with a Regional Land Transport Strategy this requirement is reasonable easy to satisfy.

However sub sections (2)(d) and (7) of section 42 H put more onerous requirements on District Rooding Programmes.

Sub section (2)(d) requires of a District Rooding Programme,

*"State how each output and capital project complies with the relevant regional land transport strategy."*

and subsection (7) says,

*"A district rooding programme shall implement any regional land transport strategy having effect in respect of that district, unless the implementing of that strategy is clearly impracticable."*

These subsections send strong signals of demonstrable compliance with the Regional Land Transport Strategy and a requirement to implement the strategy unless it is impracticable to do so.

In the case of the number of bus priority schemes that have not been implemented by Wellington City Council there appears to be no evidence that the schemes are clearly impracticable.

The Committee needs to consider the additional bus priority projects set out in the Tim Kelly proposals. If the Committee adopts these projects then it would be appropriate to seek their inclusion in Wellington City Councils' future district roading programmes. This might best be achieved through a meeting between officers of each Council. At that meeting the City Council would also be asked for some rational why existing bus priority projects are not being progressed. Any response would need to be reported to the Regional Land Transport Committee as that Committee has sought an explanation of the limited introduction of bus priority measures in Wellington City. Unfortunately, continued lack of progress on these bus priority projects could test the meaning of section 42 H (7) of the Transport Act as failure to meet these requirements could invalidate the City's Roding Programme which could mean Transfund New Zealand might not be permitted to fund the programme. This possibility needs to be raised with Transfund New Zealand and Wellington City Council officials. Wellington City might rightfully respond by declaring the projects impractical or seeking a change to the Regional Land Transport Strategy.

#### 4. **Communication**

A press release could be issued expressing Wellington Regional Council's concern at the lack of progress by Wellington City Council in implementing bus priority measures as required by the Regional Land Transport Strategy.

#### 5. **Recommendation**

- (i) *That the Committee adopt the recommendations of the Tim Kelly report for additional bus priority measures in Wellington City;*
- (ii) *That the Committee recommend to Wellington City Council the implementation of these bus priority measures through their district roading programme to fulfil the policy objectives of the RLTS;*
- (iii) *That the Chairman of the Passenger Transport Committee raise the issue of lack of Progress in implementing bus priority measures with the chairman of the Wellington City Council Infrastructure Committee.*

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Attachment 1: Wellington CBD; Bus Priority Review

Attachment 2: Stagecoach New Zealand Bus Priorities, Wellington CBD

Attachment 3: New Projects for the Minor Passenger Transport Infrastructure List

Attachment 4: Submission on Wellington City Council Draft Annual Plan 2001/02