

By email

2 August 2019

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Andrew Crow

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Dear Mr Crow

Request for information 2019-231

I refer to your request for information dated 5 July 2019, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) on 5 July 2019. You have requested the following information:

“I am keen to know why services do not run, what happens if a service is not run, how you ensure rate payers are getting value.

I request under OIA:

- 1. How many train services have not run over last few months? Detailed data for cancellations for at least three months. (Full year if possible)*
- 2. Cause of cancellation. Either as cause per cancellation or other relevant data that show why services did not run.*
- 3. Any penalties for not running a service. This must include what penalties are in any contract and COULD have been enforced. Also must include what penalty WAS enforced per incident of a service not running.*
- 4. Any other documents that show how WRC is ensuring the public get value for the costs of subsidising the services.”*

GWRC’s response follows:

Metlink rail service reliability

We began publishing monthly performance data for Metlink bus and rail services by route/line, including performance against the Reliability measure (whether a trip ran or not), on the Metlink website from February 2019 onwards. Performance reports covering February, March, April, May and June of this year are currently available at the following address: <https://www.metlink.org.nz/on-our-way/performance-of-our-network/> (in the ‘Metlink Monthly Performance Report’ drop-down section.)



Rail service Reliability KPI failures including cancellations

Attachment 1 contains a workbook summarising Wellington-region rail services that failed to meet the ‘Reliability’ key performance indicators between July 2017 - June 2018.

Data in each worksheet may be filtered according to interest or relevance.

To aid understanding of the data, please note the following column definitions:

- Journey: trip ID of each individual service.
- Line: HVL (Hutt Valley line), JVL (Johnsonville line), KPL (Kāpiti line), MEL (Melling line), WRL (Wairarapa line).
- Peak/Off-peak: Metlink defines the ‘Peak’ period as before 9am and between 3pm and 6:30pm on weekdays. The ‘Off-peak’ period is defined as all other times, including all day on weekends and public holidays.
- Direction: ‘Inbound’ = southbound services to Wellington. ‘Outbound’ = northbound services to various destinations.
- Attribution Group(s): ‘BOL’ abbreviation = Block of Line, or planned schedule of bus replacements.

Rail cancellations due to mechanical or track maintenance issues

Metlink is in the middle of a programme of deferred maintenance and service enhancements being delivered by network owner, Kiwirail to improve the capacity and resilience of the rail network. Planned and unplanned service disruptions may occur while this work is underway. More information is available on the Metlink website via the following link: <https://www.metlink.org.nz/on-our-way/making-your-train-journeys-better/>

Rail cancellations due to staff shortage

Many of the cancelled services across the Wellington public transport network in the last few months have been due to staff and driver shortages. As you may be aware, the current shortage of bus and train drivers in the Wellington region is part of a wider national shortage affecting other regions’ public transport networks and associated transport industries such as trucking.

Transdev made a presentation to the Council’s Sustainable Transport Committee on 20 March 2019 on its driver shortage issues. The minutes of this meeting are available at: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/committee-meetings-calendar/detail/7546>.

Since then, Transdev has run a successful staff recruitment campaign that has generated significant public interest in becoming a Metlink train driver, with 205 applicants in 18 days following

campaign commencement. However, it takes around 12 months to train a train driver; the effects of staff shortages on Metlink rail network performance are likely to be felt for some time.

Performance deductions

Metlink operators are subject to contracted performance measures, and failure to meet these measures may result in deductions to the contract payment for that service. The Reliability measure is one of the measures whose failure triggers a deduction (barring any extenuating circumstances out of the operator's control).

GWRC withholds the monetary value of the performance deductions applied to its contractors, on the grounds that making it available would be likely to unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of the operator, and that withholding the monetary value of the performance deductions is necessary to enable GWRC to conduct commercial negotiations without prejudice or disadvantage.

The relevant sections of the Act applicable in this case is section 7(2)(b)(ii).

In GWRC's opinion the release of the performance deductions could unreasonably:

- Prejudice the commercial position of the operator; and
- Prejudice the commercial position of the operator in relation to any current or future tenders.

We have considered whether the public interest in the information withheld outweighs GWRC's need to withhold the requested information. As a result, we do not consider that the public interest outweighs GWRC's reason for withholding the information under the grounds identified above.

Documents that show how GWRC is ensuring the public get value for the costs of subsidising Metlink services

The Wellington region's public transport funding policies are set out in the following statutory documents:

- Long Term Plan (LTP) available at: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/long-term-plan/>
- Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) available at: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/RLTPlan>
- Regional Public Transport Plan (PT Plan) available at: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/rptp/>

Subsidies for public transport are partly funded by regional rates and the National Land Transport Fund. When evaluating programmes and projects, the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport requires all regional councils and the NZ Transport Agency to consider best value for money.

Consistent with national policies, Section 3 of the LTP includes value for money as one of the key principles to ensure expenditure on any activity provides maximum impact and effectiveness.

To ensure value for money for users, ratepayers and taxpayers, the LTP takes an integrated approach to the planning, funding and operation of the public transport network, and requires regular reviews of the network and services to make sure they continue meeting the needs of the community.

The current funding approach in the LTP also sets targets for allocation of funding in a way that enables equitable distribution of costs among users, rate payers and national funding while recognising the various benefits that users and rate payers get from the network.

The strategic approach in the RLTP and the PT Plan is to continually improve Wellington's public transport network to ensure that public transport services provide value for money for users and tax payers.

Policy 8.a of the PT Plan specifically intends to improve value for money from existing public transport funding by procuring performance-based operating contracts, implementing network improvements and service reviews, and promoting existing services.

The PT Plan also aims to deliver an integrated fares and ticketing system that is simple and easy to use and provides better value for money for customers. The changes to fares and ticketing in 2018 offered significant improvements for users through more consistent and affordable fares and provided greater value for public funding through a significant growth in patronage.

Through independent annual surveys, GWRC also collects information on how satisfied or dissatisfied Metlink public transport users are with the value for money of the fares they pay. This information identifies where major improvements are required. The survey reports are available on the following page: <https://www.metlink.org.nz/on-our-way/performance-of-our-network/> , under the 'Customer Satisfaction Survey' drop-down menu.

Information about national public transport funding policies are available on NZTA's website at: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/planning-and-investment/planning-and-investment-knowledge-base/>

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Yours sincerely



Greg Pollock
General Manager, Public Transport