

Tranz Metro Communications



Customer Communications review for the Johnsonville Line

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is

2. Background

“-Services on the JVL are experiencing delays of approximately 10 minutes due to slippery track conditions. Updates to follow.”

This is an all too familiar text to Johnsonville Line passengers over the past year and a half.

Slippery track conditions are the most common reason for disruptions on the Johnsonville Line, particularly during the winter months. The grade of 1 in 36 on the steepest part of the line makes the Johnsonville Line one of the steepest commuter lines in Australasia. When dew or overnight frost settles on the tracks, this causes adhesion issues for the trains, which means that services often struggle to keep up to the current timetable.

The fact that the Johnsonville Line is predominantly single line track compounds delays to services, meaning that any small delay has a knock on effect, especially during the peak travel periods. These small delays haven't been factored into the current timetable

There are other factors that contribute to disruptions on the Johnsonville Line, such as operational reasons, points and signal faults, land slips and mechanical faults just to name a few.

The key numbers:

- Between April and July, there were 58 days of service disruptions on the Johnsonville Line.
- Of those 58 days, slippery track conditions accounted for 34 days.
- The YTD on time performance of the Johnsonville Line is currently sitting at 84 per cent.

Whilst overall customer satisfaction for our communications is still reasonably high, 72.4 per cent as of May 2015, there has been a decrease in satisfaction when it comes to informed reasons of delay. Just 53.5 per cent of customers surveyed believe that informed reasons of delay is at a level of good, very good or excellent. Previously, customer satisfaction in this area was at 77.6 per cent.

In all likelihood, many passengers are tired of hearing the same reason for delays for so long, and some may think that slippery track conditions are no longer a valid reason. Also, some people are being told by on board staff that the delays are caused by one thing (for example, slippery tracks) and yet our text, emails and VIX messages are saying that it's due to operational reasons. This is obviously confusing for passengers and is frustrating many of them.

It is hoped that the new timetable that is scheduled to be implemented in late October will alleviate delays caused by slippery track conditions, and other reasons for delays. However, we believe that with some of the feedback and suggestions that we have received from passengers, we can better communicate delays and disruptions on the Johnsonville Line

3. Customer feedback and suggestions

Below is some of the feedback that we have received from Johnsonville Line passengers over the last year.

- Text for cancelled services sent too late or not being sent out at all when delays reach the threshold.
- Bus replacements often late with no communications, so passengers think it's not coming.
- Operational reasons in text and on-board are saying slippery track.
- Shipley's making wrong announcements (e.g. announces the 5.24pm at 5.05pm)
- RTI boards showing trains 11 minutes away then arrives in a lot earlier or later.
- RTI boards showing wrong information, such as the scheduled train changing when the previous had not been through yet.

- During a slip disruption, RTI boards said shuttle between Ngaio and Johnsonville and buses between Ngaio and Wellington. The word shuttle is confusing. Also, RTI boards not clear on whether or not buses or trains are running.

Below are some of the suggestions we have received from passengers about how we can communicate to them better and more efficiently.

- It could be grateful if you could run an audit to ensure that all delays are going into the system.
- Many of the delays were put on the Tranz Metro text system as "operational reasons", but when he asked train staff why they were late, the answer was slippery tracks. In our view, the information given to passengers needs to be as accurate and consistent as possible.
- Surely if the system temporarily cannot show the correct information it would be better switched off.
- It would be better if you said "train" instead of "shuttle", because it is not clear whether a "shuttle" means a bus or a train, In fact, everybody went to wait at the bus stop and we only made it because the driver saw us and happened to pick us up.

4. Proposal

To try and minimise the effect that delays have on the on time performance of the Johnsonville Line, KiwiRail and Greater Wellington Regional Council trialled a new morning and afternoon peak timetable last October that proved successful. The hope now is to have this timetable implemented as soon as practicable, taking into account the roster changes and associated notice periods, plus the availability of additional rolling stock.

Attached is a copy of the proposed new timetable for the Johnsonville Line. The main features are:

- Morning Peak - An increase in journey time from 21 minutes to 23 minutes for services travelling from Johnsonville to Wellington. Services from Wellington to Johnsonville will now be scheduled to take 28 minutes. (the additional time is designed to allow recovery in the timetable on services with lower patronage)
- Evening Peak - The timetable will reverse in the afternoon. Services from Wellington to Johnsonville taking 23 minutes and services from Johnsonville to Wellington taking 28 minutes.
- Providing more regularity for passengers travelling during peak travel periods, with services departing every 15 minutes from Johnsonville during morning peak, and every 15 minutes from Wellington during afternoon peak.
- An extra Friday night service (9.32pm), which would bring the Johnsonville Line into line with both the Kapiti Line and Hutt Valley Line in terms of Friday night service coverage.
- To run this timetable we require a minimum of eight two car Matangi trains, which would run as four, 4-car Matangi services. It is preferable that Matangi Mark 2 trains that have wheel dampeners are used.

The graphic below displays the service pattern based on a 15 minute departure timetable for the Morning Peak from 7.00am until 8.00am.

5. Timeframe

Rolling stock and staffing

We have a proposed implantation date of Sunday 25 October. Below is a schedule of key dates

for tasks to be completed or implemented by our Operations and Service Support Team.

Operations tasks	Start date	Lead in time	Completion date
Have the time table agreed with GWRC	Monday, 3 August	1 weeks	Friday, 7 August
Start writing new roster	Monday, 10 August	3 weeks	Friday, 28 August
Consultation with roster representatives	Monday, 31 August	2 weeks	Sunday, 13 September
Consultation with staff	Sunday, 13 September	6 weeks	Saturday, 24 October
Implementation of new timetable	Sunday, 25 October	N/A	N/A

Tasks to be done in parallel with time table introduction

Operations tasks	Start date	Lead in time	Completion date
New berthing/rolling stock arrangements	Thursday, 1 October	2 weeks	Wednesday, 14 October

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If we were to implement the new timetable on Sunday, October 25, KiwiRail would require a minimum of four weeks to ensure that passengers are informed of the timetable change (Monday, 28 September). A further three weeks would be required from the implementation date to make changes to both OMS and VIX Horizon, so that the Real Time Information system is able to track services operating to the new timetable.

5. Costs

Whilst this proposal offers additional services, adding to customer satisfaction and potential patronage growth, the costs of implementation are expected to be small. From the initial assessment of the proposed timetable there are minimal impacts on staff numbers and the additional vehicle km should not translate to extra maintenance costs due to the time based maintenance limits prescribed by the Unit Maintenance Plan.

6. Conclusion

It is expected that with a more realistic timetable, delays to services on the Johnsonville Line will be minimised and our passengers will see improvement in the reliability of services. The new timetable should alleviate the pressure that small delays cause to services and eliminate the knock on effect that they have.

The different journey times, depending on the time and direction of the service, prioritises the majority of passengers travelling during the peak travel periods, which makes this timetable commuter friendly.

Providing Johnsonville Line passengers with services that depart on a clock face timetable will create better certainty for passengers and falls into line with other commuter rail systems throughout the world.