Greater Wellington Regional Council Briefing

To	Angus Gabara	**Date**	4 June 2016
CC	Daniel Pou		
From	David Shepherd		

SUBJECT: JOHNSONVILLE LINE PUNCTUALITY

Action	Agree on customer messaging and communications tactics

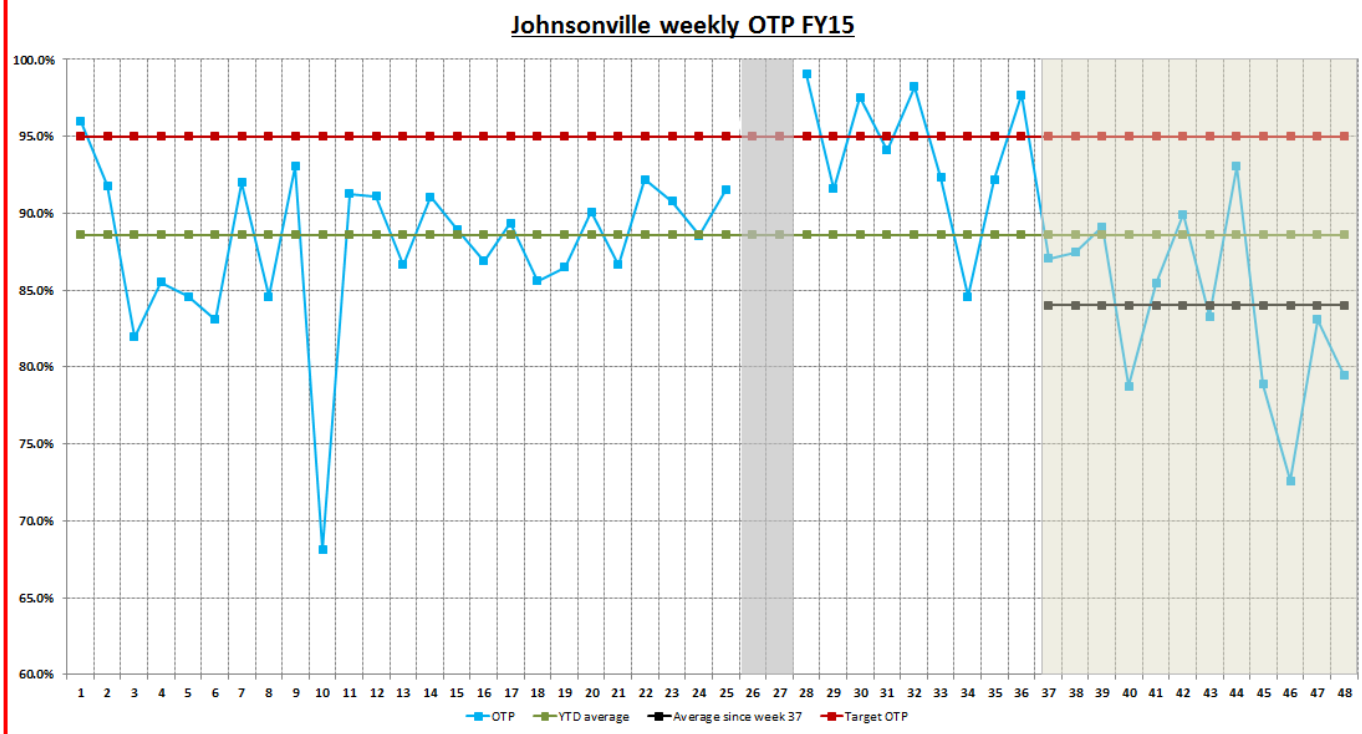
Purpose

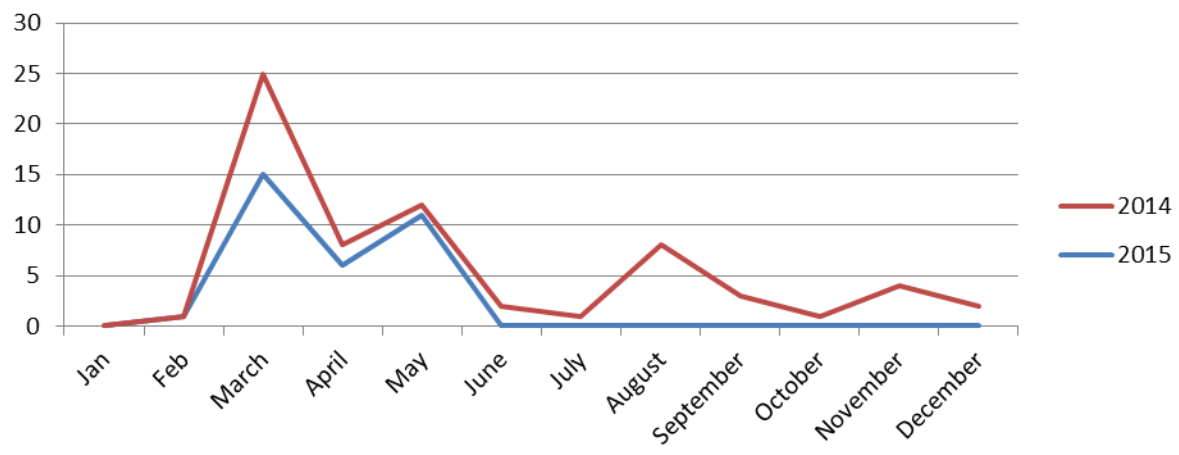
Provide an explanation of the delays currently being experienced on the Johnsonville Line.

Background

Over the last few weeks we have had a lot of delays on the Johnsonville line, with slippery track a major contributor. Over the last 62 days, 32 of these have been affected by disruption to the timetable requiring customer communications (text alerts) to go out. This has led to a major spike in Johnsonville Line complaints relating to delay and the timetable, with an average of one per day.

Punctuality on the Johnsonville line has been dropping over recent months, with April getting down to 86%:





Monthly customer complaints regarding timetable and delay on the Johnsonville line

Recommendations and actions

1. Customer Communications

These delays will continue throughout winter so we recommend proactively communicating with the Johnsonville line customers to outline we are aware of the inconvenience, what causes the issues and what is being done to find a solution.

Key Messages

- We are aware of the regular delays on the Johnsonville Line and the frustration it is causing for customers.
- The Johnsonville timetable is very tight with little opportunity to regain time when a train runs late.
- Winter weather conditions such as ice, frost and leaves on the tracks all contribute to slippery track conditions which are causing the moist recent delays on the Johnsonville Line.
- Any issues experienced on the Johnsonville line have an impact on delays to subsequent services because it's a short line with a large number of stops and a tight turn-around time.
- There are seven stops between Wellington and Johnsonville and peak services can run ten or 15 minutes apart.
- Geographically the Johnsonville line is our most challenging in terms of curves and gradient, this means there is little opportunity for a train to make up time on a journey.
- There are also a limited number of places where a northbound train can pass a southbound, so a late train can cause the next train to wait at one of the crossing points which in turn delays that train and any following.
- There are a number of factors that need to be considered with any timetable change such as connecting buses, access to platforms at Wellington Station and passenger demand.
- Timetable options have been reviewed and a new timetable was tested in October 2014 as part of a trial aimed at making peak hour services more reliable by running them every 15 minutes.

- This trial was successful and a new peak hour timetable for Johnsonville will be introduced once more Matangi are in service, which will be in late 2015.
- We apologise for the inconvenience that our customers are experiencing.

Immediate action

- Post a website story – draft in appendix 1.
- Send a text message directing Johnsonville customers to the website the next time we have an issue
- Draft a reactive media holding statement in the event of media interest – appendix 2.

Appendix 1 – Website Posting

Johnsonville Line update: June 2015

We are aware of the regular delays on the Johnsonville Line and the frustration it is causing for customers. The Johnsonville timetable is very tight with little opportunity to regain time when a train runs late. Winter weather conditions such as ice, frost and leaves on the tracks all contribute to slippery track conditions which are causing delays on the Johnsonville Line.

Any issues experienced on the Johnsonville line have a big impact on delays to subsequent services because it's a short line with a large number of stops and a tight turn-around time. There are seven stops between Wellington and Johnsonville and peak services can run ten or 15 minutes apart.

Geographically the Johnsonville line is our most challenging in terms of curves and gradient, this means there is little opportunity for a train to make up time on a journey. There are also a limited number of places where a northbound train can pass a southbound, so a late train can cause the next train to wait at one of the crossing points which in turn delays that train and any following.

There are a number of factors that need to be considered with any timetable change such as connecting buses, access to platforms at Wellington Station and passenger demand. Timetable options have been reviewed by Kiwirail and the Greater Wellington Regional Council and a new timetable was tested in October 2014 as part of a trial aimed at making peak hour services more reliable by running them every 15 minutes.

This trial was successful and a new peak hour timetable for Johnsonville will be introduced once more Matangi are in service, which will be in late 2015.

Winter Conditions

Ice or severe frost on the overheard lines can cause electrical arcs which result in a surge of power to the pantograph (the device on an electric train that collects the electric current from the overhead lines to power the trains).

This sudden surge in electrical current can affect the power going to the train and cause technical issues. The Matangi trains are programmed to be more susceptible to this than the Ganz Mavags and the English Electrics, because of their more sophisticated software which protects the trains from severe fluctuations in power by temporarily blocking power to the unit with an electrical trip.

Matangi engineers are looking into the issues caused by the icy conditions, with a view to making some software adjustments. It's a matter of balancing the need to minimise service disruption with the need to prevent any damage caused by the icy overhead wires.

Any material on the top surface of the rail can reduce the friction between the train wheels and the track. The train then has to travel at a slower speed to accommodate the lack of traction. This is a common issue on railway networks around the world.

On the Wellington Network we experience heavy rain, dew, sea spray, wet leaves, and frost; all of these have the potential to cause delays particularly on the morning peak services. While sea spray is not an issue on the Johnsonville line some of the other causes occur regularly and when delays are experienced on the Johnsonville line they are difficult to recover from and have a flow on effect on subsequent services.

We believe that as we progress with further network and fleet improvements, our customers will experience a more reliable and effective service.

Appendix 2

MEDIA RELEASE

XX June 2015

Slippery track conditions on the Johnsonville Line

The recent spate of winter weather is a significant contributor to the delays being experienced on the Johnsonville line.

General Manager Metro, David Shepherd acknowledges the frustration currently being experienced due to an increase in slippery track conditions, causing services to be delayed.

Mr Shepherd says that heavy rain, dew, wet leaves and frost on the rail can reduce the friction between the train wheels and the track. The train then has to travel at a slower speed to accommodate the lack of traction. He says this is a common issue on railway networks around the world.

"The Johnsonville Line is also a short line, challenging in terms of curves and gradient, and with seven stops along the route. This makes for a tight turn-around time for service, and peak services can run ten or 15 minutes apart, so there is little opportunity to regain time when a train runs late.

"Timetable options have been reviewed and a timetable trial was carried out in October 2014 aimed at making peak hour services more reliable by running them every 15 minutes.

"The trial was successful and a new peak hour timetable for the Johnsonville Line will be introduced in late 2015 once more Matangi are in service.

"We apologise for the inconvenience that our customers are experiencing and assure them that achieving on-time performance is very important to us along with providing a first-class rail passenger service," says Mr Shepherd.

More Information is available at www.tranzmetro.co.nz

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