



Briefing Note: Feedback on the Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	5 March 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1250835
Key Contact:	Sharyn Pilbrow	DDI:	04 463 8707
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose

This paper provides you with the feedback we intend to share on your behalf, with Metlink as part of the consultation on their draft Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP).

Summary

- [Section 125\(1\)\(e\)](#) of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 requires that when preparing a draft regional public transport plan, a regional council must consult with the Minister of Education.¹
- On 12 November 2020, the General Manager of Metlink wrote to the Secretary of Education to advise that a draft Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan had been produced, and to seek feedback on it from the Minister of Education.
- In working with Metlink on the draft, we are recommending feedback (on your behalf) in two areas of content:
 - improving the clarity of demarcation between Regional Council and Ministry-funded school bus services; and
 - exploring the possibilities for cooperation on *broader outcomes* including regional economies, employment conditions, decarbonisation, access or mode shift.
- Attached is the draft feedback we intend to provide on your behalf to Metlink unless you instruct us otherwise (prior to Friday 12 March).

Proactive Release

- **agree** that this briefing can be proactively released to support other regional councils in the development of future regional public transport plans.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**



Kim Shannon
Head of Education Infrastructure

5/3/21



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

12/3/21

¹ [Land Transport Management Act 2003 No 118 \(as at 01 September 2020\), Public Act 125 Consultation requirements for regional public transport plans – New Zealand Legislation](#)



[Proposed 15 March 2021]

Scott Gallacher
General Manager Metlink

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Kia ora Scott,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November 2020, providing the Minister of Education the opportunity to give feedback on the draft *Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan* (RPTP) as required in Section 125(1)(e) of the Land Transport Management Act 2003.² The Minister has agreed that we convey to you the following comments.

Background

The Secretary for Education has the power to assist in the provision of transport to and from school under the Education and Training Act 2020, which states:³

Section 559 School Transport

The Secretary for Education may assist in the provision of school transport by doing any of the following:

- a) paying schools to provide school transport to their students;
- b) arranging transport providers to provide school transport;
- c) contributing to the cost of parents providing school transport.

While the ultimate responsibility for transporting students to and from school sits with the caregiver, the Ministry can offer assistance to students in cases where distance, mobility or other issues create barriers to accessing an appropriate learning environment.

Demarcation of Regional Council and Ministry-funded school bus services

The Ministry has a specific focus on reducing barriers to educational access and offers transport assistance as an enabling service in support of this objective. School Transport services traverse the whole country but largely consist of low-volume services in rural and peri-urban areas. Despite significant differences in their funding models, legislative mandate and geographic distribution, Ministry-funded services can interlace and overlap with Public Transport (PT) operations delivered by regional councils.

The focus of the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) policy on school bus services (as outlined in the RPTP) is on easing the pressure on PT services. According to the draft

² [Land Transport Management Act 2003 No 118 \(as at 01 September 2020\), Public Act 125 Consultation requirements for regional public transport plans – New Zealand Legislation](#)

³ [Education and Training Act 2020 No 38 \(as at 25 September 2020\), Public Act 559 School transport – New Zealand Legislation](#)

RPTP, the Council provides targeted school bus services only when these are required to supplement travel by students on the PT network:

Provider	GWRC provides school bus services in urban areas where:	The Ministry provides daily school bus services where:
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is no restriction on who can use the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students meet pre-defined eligibility criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school must be the closest state or state integrated school the student can enrol at; students must live more than a certain distance from the school (3.2 km for years 1-8 and 4.8 km for years 9-13); and there must be no suitable public transport options the route carries 8 or more eligible students it satisfies an economic impact assessment
Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is sufficient demand 	
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is more cost-effective to provide such a service than a regular public service 	
Outcome	Service offerings tend to be localised around urban centres	Service offerings compensate for the absence of PT options, usually further out from urban centres where there is low demand

While there are informal mechanisms in place to avoid duplication or gaps in service, there are no strict guidelines governing the demarcation of PT and Ministry-funded School Transport services. The Ministry have previously met with NZTA and the Ministry of Transport to explore the possibility of greater cooperation with regional councils on school transport planning and delivery. We also note that the draft RPTP proposes to develop clear guidelines on the provision of school bus services by GWRC. However, the demarcation between regional council-funded and Ministry-funded services remains an area for further exploration.

We believe that **there may be further opportunities** for the Ministry and GWRC to work collaboratively to develop, clarify and refine operational policies governing the provision of school bus services. A strategic and collaborative approach would allow both agencies to ensure that services are aligned for optimal public value and remain responsive to the changing needs of students, communities and the wider region. Such an approach could provide a model for future engagement between the Ministry and other regional councils.

Broader outcomes

In addition to ensuring optimised service planning and delivery, there are opportunities for greater alignment or cooperation between the Ministry and GWRC around shared policy and strategic priorities outlined throughout the draft RPTP, including decarbonisation, improving employment conditions for drivers, supporting strong and resilient regional economies, improving access for transport disadvantaged groups and encouraging mode shift. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these priorities further and explore **possibilities for ongoing cooperation** in one or more of these areas.

Kim Shannon

Te Tumu Waihanga

Head of Education Infrastructure Service

Ministry of Education