



Report 07.749
Date 8 November 2007
File TM/07/03/21

Committee Transport and Access
Author Karen Richardson Manager, Metlink

Metlink rail improvements communications plan

1. Purpose

To advise councillors of the development of a communication plan to inform the public and other audiences about the five year programme of improvements to the Metlink rail network.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Over the next five years there will be a major programme of investment in the region's rail network which is focused on increasing its capacity for growth and improving the reliability of services.

This will be a high profile programme for the region, which will generate interest from a wide variety of audiences. Greater Wellington, ONTRACK and Tranz Metro are working together to coordinate the individual projects that are part of the programme and also developing a joint communications plan to inform the public and other audiences. This is to ensure that all communications about the programme are planned, coordinated and consistent, and responsibilities are clear.

4. The programme

The aim of the programme is to introduce more modern, reliable, comfortable and frequent Metlink rail services over the next five years. Key projects include:

- A fleet of 35 new two-car commuter trains
- Double tracking from MacKays to Waikanae

- Extension of electrification and suburban services to Waikanae
- Upgrade of existing Kapiti stations and possible new Kapiti stations
- Lowering of tunnels and track modifications on the Johnsonville Line tunnels
- Alterations to selected station platforms to prepare for the new EMUs
- Signalling, electricity supply and track upgrades
- Additional and improved storage for trains to improve operational efficiency
- Improvement of Wellington Station's entry capacity to reduce delays and allow increased train frequency on all Lines.

5. Communications plan

As this is a joint programme involving Greater Wellington, ONTRACK and Tranz Metro we need to work together to agree a strategic and coordinated communications plan. This will include the types of information to be communicated, the various audiences, key messages, who is responsible for what aspects of the plan, the communication channels that will be used, timing and costs. We also need to agree how communications will flow between ONTRACK, Tranz Metro and Greater Wellington so that information is shared and made available to the public in a timely and efficient manner.

As a result, a working group has been established which includes representatives from Greater Wellington, ONTRACK and Tranz Metro. This group met recently to scope the project and the attached matrix shows what was agreed at our meeting.

As you can see from the matrix, six types of information have been identified that will need to be communicated:

1. Strategic vision – This will include why we are making the improvements, what the changes are, when they will happen and the resulting benefits. This should prepare people for disruptions to services while upgrades are taking place and direct people to where more detailed information can be obtained. This information will be aimed at all of the primary and secondary audiences. It will be the responsibility of Metlink/Greater Wellington to lead this.
2. Planned disruptions to services (customers) – This will include details of individual projects, affected services, alternative arrangements (if appropriate) and how to obtain more information. This information will be aimed at Metlink rail customers and provided by Metlink and Tranz Metro.

3. Planned disruptions to services (other stakeholders) – This will include information about specific works that will affect local residents, motorists or utility companies. This information will be provided by ONTRACK.
4. Unplanned disruptions to services – This will include any last minute changes to schedules and projects that will mean that we urgently need to communicate with customers to let them know what is happening. This information will be aimed at Metlink rail customers and will be provided by Metlink and Tranz Metro.
5. Project and programme milestones – This will include promotional activities, such as an event, to celebrate and support the completion of projects or major programme milestones. This could be led by Metlink or ONTRACK, as appropriate, and will involve the other parties.
6. Specific programme or project details – This information will be aimed at interested parties that want greater detail about the individual projects. The easiest way to provide this information is via a website, either ONTRACK, Metlink/Greater Wellington, or possibly on a separate project website.

The matrix will be further developed over time and will form part of the communications plan.

The working group will meet regularly on an ongoing basis to develop the plan and ensure there is regular and open communication between the parties.

6. Programme name

The working group agreed that the programme should be given a distinctive name so that it is easily recognisable and to link the individual rail projects that will make up the programme.

For instance, the Auckland rail project is called ‘DART’, which stands for ‘Developing Auckland’s Rail Transport network’, while in Perth their rail project is called ‘New MetroRail – developing TransPerth’s rail network’.

A name is currently being developed and, once this has been agreed, a logo and design templates will be produced for communications material to visibly link communications about the programme.

7. Communication channels

There are a number of existing means of communicating with rail customers and the public, such as Metlink News (distributed to public transport users), Elements (Greater Wellington’s newsletter delivered to every household in the region), posters on trains and at train stations, etc, and these will be used to target relevant audiences and minimise costs. Other methods have also been proposed, such as a billboard or display at Wellington Station, and these will be used as appropriate.

8. Timing

A communications plan and name will need to be agreed by all the parties by early 2008 and the plan will start to be implemented after that.

9. Communication

On-going communications will be part of the communications plan once this is implemented.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Karen Richardson
Manager, Metlink

Wayne Hastie
Divisional Manager, Public
Transport

Attachment 1: Rail improvements communications plan – information types and communication channels matrix