



Submission
by the
Victoria University of Wellington
Students' Association
on the
GWRC Regional Public Transport Plan 2021

Prepared by

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VUWSA also wishes to make an oral submission.

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To	Greater Wellington Regional Council
From	Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA)
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Subject	Regional Public Transport Plan

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1. Introduction

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) advocate for and represent the 22,000 students of Te Herenga Waka– Victoria University of Wellington. Students make up a large percentage of users of public and active transport, with only 5% of students driving to campus. Our students travel from throughout the Wellington region to get to our three campuses. From locations such as Levin, Berhampore, Porirua, Mt Victoria, Miramar, Thorndon all the way to our three campuses in Kelburn, Te Aro, and Pipitea. Students rely on public transport to get us to our place of study, back home, and to our places of work. It is an essential aspect to the functioning of our daily lives.

But public transport in Wellington has been letting students down. Busses not showing up, poor communication, timetables that do not run late enough or frequent enough and unsafe bus stops. Often resulting in students missing classes, coming late to work, and safety being jeopardised.

VUWSA feels this plan is a step in the right direction for increasing usage of public transport, improving customer experience, and reducing carbon emissions, but believe it is not ambitious enough. The plan does not create a public transport system that is affordable, accessible, safe, easy to use, nor reduces enough emissions. To build a future where everyone is able to use public transport- and the system of public transport should serve the needs of the community- this plan needs to take further steps to ensure this.

As students, we are asking for:

- A. Free public transport for both full and part-time tertiary students for both on and off-peak hours.
- B. Full electrification of bus, train, and ferry services by 2030.
- C. Increase the frequency, capacity, affordability, and reliability of bus and train routes, especially the 18e, 22, and 21.
- D. Affordable and frequent bus service to Wellington Airport.
- E. Ensure, promote, and improve upon disability access.

- F. Create a safe environment for pedestrians to get to and from bus and train services.
- G. Implement mechanisms to provide and ensure safe shelter.
- H. Ensure a living wage for all.
- I. Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi by giving Māori decision and governance power and creating accessible and meaningful consultation on projects and plans.
- J. Improve upon communication and outreach of websites, apps, and social media.
- K. Create better, accessible, meaningful, and engaging consultation processes and documents.

This submission outlines students lived experiences with public transport in Wellington, what our vision is for public transport in Wellington, and how the plan should be amended to create meaningful change for the student community.

2. Student Experiences

These experiences have been collated from consultation with the student community through measures VUWSA channels such as Instagram, Twitter, email and Facebook.

2.1 Unaffordable

Wellington is a city that is becoming increasingly unaffordable, especially for students. The maximum Student allowance is \$237.90 after tax, meaning for most students it does not cover the cost of rent. Students have been forced to move out of the central city into inner and outer suburbs in order to study in Wellington, increasing our reliance on public transport. This also means the amount of money spent on public transport has substantially increased.

The amount we spend on public transport is too high. There are no student discounts on monthly train passes, and the 25% discount is not enough and only applies to full time students. Students are already struggling to make ends meet due to the well-publicised high cost of living in Wellington - students should not have to forgo access to university because they cannot afford the unreasonable cost of public transport.

2.2 Unreliable and infrequent services

Most students rely on public transport to get between places of study, places of work, places of socialisation, to home and more. Students use public transport from late at night to early in the morning, however, public transport has proved itself to be unreliable, to be infrequent and to come at times that do not make sense given the timetable structures of university. The main experiences we have as students are:

1. No show busses and cancelled services. Busses that appear on the live signs often never come, known as ghost busses. For busses that come every hour, such as the 18e, this

leaves no other option for transport. This accompanied with poor communication leaves many students stranded or missing out on class or work.

2. Unsafe environments. Bus timetables do not go late enough into the night, bus shelters have no mechanisms for ensuring safety, especially for women, and the cancellation of busses create unsafe environments. Many women recall being harassed or forced to take unsafe or more expensive options to get home at night.
3. Poor timetabling. When lectures finish at 2:00pm but the hourly bus comes at 1:58pm, this is incredibly inconvenient.

2.3 Inaccessible

A substantial portion of the student community have disabilities. VUWSA believes there is a lack of support and options provided by public transport services for our students with disabilities, leaving many to feel excluded, and disincentivising the use of public transport.

3. Student Priorities

3.1 Free public transport for full and part time tertiary students.

We are calling for free public transportation for full and part time tertiary students during on and off-peak hours.

To combat the climate crisis, we need to create a system that is affordable and accessible for students to be able to shift their behaviour towards using public transport, rather than asking us to change our behaviour towards systems that do not serve us. The current 25% discount for full time tertiary students at peak times is inadequate given the key role students play in this city and the increasing unaffordability of the city. This discount does not create equitable outcomes, as many of those in part time study are there because of the unaffordability. Students deserve to access their study without barriers, and the current inadequacy of the discount is a major barrier.

Students need a public transport system that is affordable and meets the needs and demands of students. Free public transport for full and part time student during on and off-peak hours is sorely needed, and what we are demanding.

Implementing free public transport for students is a key step in increasing uptake, creating a transport system that is affordable and equitable, mitigating carbon emissions and doing right by the student community.

3.2 More ambitious

We need this plan to be more ambitious. The plan should be aiming for full electrification of bus, train, and ferry services by 2030. This is essential in order to take action on the climate crisis and reduce our emissions.

Frequency, capacity, affordability and reliability of bus and train services are needing to be increased, especially busses such as the 18e, 22, and 21, in order to increase the uptake of public transport.

Students genuinely rely on public transport to get them where they need to be safely and on time. The plan needs to ensure affordable and frequent bus services to Wellington Airport.

This plan needs to implement and adopt living wage for all. Our bus, train, and ferry services rely on bus drivers, they deserve at a minimum the living wage for providing this essential service.

This plan also needs to do better to ensure it will uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi by giving Māori decision and governance power and creating accessible and meaningful consultation on projects and plans.

3.3 Accessible, safer public transport, and communication

Public transport should be accessible, safe for pedestrians and have safe shelter. This plan needs to be more ambitious in implementing plans to make public transport available to everyone by ensuring, promoting, and improving upon disability access, create a safe environment for pedestrians to get to and from bus services, provide good information and communication to bus users, and provide adequate safe shelter with mechanism and ensure safety, especially for women.

The app and new website are not user-friendly and are poor at communicating cancellations or service changes. These platforms need serious upgrades to improve communication. Additionally, there is little outreach and communication about the existence of these apps and websites. More needs to be done to improve knowledge about the current platforms in place, particularly through social media.

Lastly, there needs to be more means to report issues with public transport through. When there is a bus no show or an issue with a service, the options for reporting are not easily available.

3.4 Better consultation

This consultation process and document is abysmal, especially given students make up a significant percentage of users of public transport and have a heavy reliance on using it. It does not enable young people, especially students, to engage in this consultation. The document and consultation process are not engaging, accessible, or meaningful. The Greater Wellington Regional Council needs to take more active and meaningful steps to consult on the matter of public transport. It needs to go out to the community and engage on their terms, instead of asking the community to come to you on your inaccessible, unengaging terms.

4. Key asks

For the Greater Wellington Regional Council to achieve its goals, and to create a better public transport system for students and the wider community, the following are our key asks to achieve their goals of equitable outcomes, increasing uptake of public transport, and to mitigate the effects of climate change.

- A. Free public transport for both full and part-time tertiary students for both on and off-peak hours.
- B. Full electrification of bus, train, and ferry services by 2030.
- C. Increase the frequency, capacity, affordability, and reliability of bus and train routes, especially the 18e, 22, and 21.
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- K. Create better, accessible, meaningful, and engaging consultation processes and documents.

5. Conclusion

Public transport is an essential part of a student life. Students make up a key demographic of users and rely on public transport daily. Public transport has not been serving students for years, but this is an opportunity for the Greater Wellington Regional Council to change the system to serve our needs. This plan is a step in the right direction, but it is not ambitious enough.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council needs to improve the plan to increase affordability by ensuring free busses for full and part time tertiary students, increase the capacity and frequency of services, do more to ensure safety and accessibility, be more ambitious in the electrification of services.

Not only does it need to improve the plan, but it must also improve the way it interacts with the community it serves. Having unreadable, un-engaging documents and consultation processes is not good enough. The Greater Wellington Regional Council needs to get out into the community more and hear about public transport on our terms.

This plan is a chance to create a system that allows for us to change our behaviour and reduce our emissions, but we need it to be affordable, accessible, and safe to do so. This is all possible if the Greater Wellington Regional Council reassess their priorities to align with the demands and needs of students at Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington.