



Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2012

Wellington Regional Council  
142 Wakefield Street  
Te Aro, Wellington

### **Wellington City Bus Review Submission**

1. This submission on the Wellington City Bus Review is made on behalf of the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA). VUWSA is a non-for-profit organisation that represents the interests of students at the Victoria University of Wellington and has been advocating on their behalf since 1899.
2. This submission is based on feedback gathered from 208 student responses on an online survey on the proposed changes, received emails and conversations with students.
3. There are currently over 22,000 students studying at Victoria University, 46% of whom use public transport as the primary mode of commuting to University. Of the students who completed the online survey 82.4% use the bus service to commute to the University.
4. The changes proposed by the Regional Council will have a significant impact on the students commuting to and inbetween Victoria University campuses. This will result in a significant number of students having to re-plan their travel options or find new modes of transport to get to University. This submission will focus on the impact for students travelling to or between the University, rather than the wider Wellington proposal.
5. There is quite some diversity of opinion for Vic students about the proposed changes – however the sway of opinion is towards these changes having a negative impact on students travel to and between VUW campuses. These wil discussed in further detail in the following paragraphs.

### **Positive Aspects of the proposed changes**

6. 73.8% of students who answered the online survey supported the extra evening and weekend services that would operate under the current proposal. This change would allow students to study at VUW campuses later to study and allow easier access to the University on the weekend

7. The increased frequency of buses between Pipitea, Kelburn and Te Aro campuses has also been highlighted as a benefit by several students

*"[The] changes will be positive. Really excited about Pipitea to Te Aro bus, later times and increased frequency"*

*"Very good as I need to go from Karori to Pipitea everyday"*

### **Negative Aspects of the proposed changes**

#### ***Proposed Route C***

8. Students are extremely concerned about the C Route proposal, which would see the creation of a bus stop near the Terrace/Salamanca intersection. This is concerning to students for a number of reasons
9. Firstly, on a basic level, there are safety concerns given the high volume of traffic on the Terrace. Having a bus service that requires students to disembark their buses on the Terrace and cross the road could increase the rate of traffic incidents on the Terrace. Through feedback received from Victoria House, a VUW student hostel located on the Terrace, VUWSA is already aware that crossing the Terrace is a safety risk for students. VUWSA is concerned that having buses regularly offloading high volumes of students onto the Terrace will put their safety at risk
10. There is also a concern that there is not enough space on the Terrace to cater for a significantly higher volume of students, causing pedestrian congestion. Given this limited space, there would be inadequate shelter for students in various weather conditions. Kelburn Parade has ample bus shelter space for waiting commuters – the Terrace does not have the space for the construction of dry shelters. It is even questionable as to whether lee-ways for buses can be added so that an already congested road doesn't become more congested.
11. A second concern is ease of access for students. While this will affect several routes, the biggest concern is the Route C proposal which will require students to walk up the narrow and steep Mt Street. This walk becomes even more challenging when students will be required to walk the route when there is bad weather or while carrying many materials (e.g. gym gear, prototypes, musical equipment, teaching materials, laptops and technical equipment.) 60% of students who filled out the VUWSA survey did not consider it a desirable option to have to extend their time walking up Mt Street to fully access their educational opportunities.
12. Furthermore, for many the walk up Mt St doesn't stop at the Student Union Building. Students may have to walk to the Faculty of Science (closer to Fairlie Terrace) FHSS (closer to Kelburn Parade) and the NZSM or Film School (Fairlie Terrace).

*"I catch bus when it rains (like lots of others) what's the point of catching the bus if you still have to get wet walking the last distance"*

*"The proposed changes will result in me never using public transport to commute to and from uni, because there's no point in walking half the way, getting a bus halfway up the hill and walking the rest"*

13. This proposal does not correspond with the WRC logic that bus users should have a reasonably good bus service if they are able to arrive at their final destination within 5 minutes walk from getting off the bus. As Victoria's Kelburn campus is spread over a large land area it often takes five minutes to get to a lecture theatre from the current main stop on Kelburn Parade. Students are pushed for time to get to lectures as it currently stands without adding in extra time. It is not sufficient to suggest that students would be able to arrive at their final destination within 5 minutes under the new Route C proposal.
14. There are equity issues for students with disabilities when requiring them to walk up Mt Street or unnecessarily extend the length of their traveling. There are over 800 students at Victoria with registered disabilities – 54% of these disabilities are physical and 20% of these students have significant mobility disabilities. These changes would disproportionately affect these students and would be a violation of their rights<sup>1</sup>. The Council has an obligation to ensure these students have access to transport which ensures them that they are valued and can participate fully in Wellington's cultural and educational opportunities.
15. This is also an equity issue for students with children. The crèche service located at Kelburn campus is on Fairlie Terrace. This would be 900 meters from the proposed Terrace/Salamanca bus stop to the crèche, which is clearly outside the WRC's ideal 5 minute walking time from bus stops, and particularly difficult for most toddlers. VUWSA places a high priority on supporting students with children to access barrier-free education.
16. Furthermore, the walk up Mt Street is not an easy one. For even a highly fit person, the hill would take approximately 5 minutes to walk. But this timing would be increased more so for any other students that do not have the same amount of fitness. Add in the materials required for study, specialist equipment and laptops, the already challenging walk becomes exacerbated and undesired by the student population.
17. It almost seems that this proposal for Route C to has been written without recognizing the weather conditions Wellington can and has experienced. It is possible that in winter and on wet days students are simply forced into private transport to campuses with no parking simply to keep themselves and their study equipment dry.

*"I catch bus when it rains (like lots of others) what's the point of catching the bus if you still have to get wet walking the last distance"*

18. There is also a wider concern around student safety. The extra distance that students will have to walk to accesses public transport and the waiting times at connections, especially at night, may put students at risk of unwanted attention. For example the main walkway from the VUW Central Library to the Terrace is currently poorly lit. The WRC should take all necessary measures in ensuring that all students feel safe accessing public transport afterhours.
19. Taking all of this into consideration VUWSA proposes that the WRC consider the impacts on women, students with children, people with disabilities with regards to their safety and the ability to participate fully in society.
20. Taking all of this into consideration VUWSA proposes that the proposed C Route could continue up Kelburn Parade and turn around at the Cable Car to continue it's route down the Terrace to the Railway Station.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=280>

## **Removal of the #18 service**

21. The vast majority of students are also opposed to removing the Number 18 bus, which currently provides access to 4 (including the Massey New Zealand School of Music) VUW campuses. This is not only a key connecting route between campuses, but it is a highly accessed route by student (and staff) living in the Eastern suburbs. This is a well-used bus service during VUW term time and therefore VUWSA considers it to be an odd choice for removal under the proposals.

*“The impact is crushing. the number 18 bus is an absolute necessity given where i live (we can't all afford to live close to the university)”*

*“I need to be able to get from Kelburn to Wellington Hospital for one of my classes, and I can't do that directly (via the 18 Bus) under this proposal. This means more hassle taking me away from my studies as I need to spend more time travelling to walk to (and from) the bus stop that will take me to the hospital”*

*“I depend on the route 18 bus to get to class, a dedicated connection between campuses is surely a must in a university town”*

22. Taking this into consideration VUWSA proposes that the WRC Retain and increase the number 18 bus as a vital campus connection service but also a valued service for local residents in the Eastern Suburbs and Karori area.

## **Other concerns**

23. The proposed changes would lead to an increase in required connections for some students. Students already find that the cost of transport within Wellington is too high, so these changes would further impact them financially.

*“Will be more time consuming and probably more expensive for me to get to uni because I will have to catch two buses rather than one. Buses are already expensive enough for students without the addition of a pointless connection”*

24. Making the Number 47 route a peak-only service has also caused concern amongst students. This is a lifeline service for the students travelling from Johnsonville and other outer suburbs to access their tertiary education.

25. Two other concerns have been raised by some students relate to the Number 19 bus service from Aro Valley which will not stop at the Kelburn Campus, and reduced services to the already infrequent bus services to Northland.

## **Impacts for students**

26. There will be an increase in use for the Cable Car by students in their daily travel. This will impose an increased cost for students who currently use bus services which take them directly to Kelburn Campus but will discontinue under these proposals. It will also lead to a loss of bus patronage as students opt to use the Cable Car as it is a more direct and cost-effective mode of transportation than under some of these proposals.
27. The proposed changes will make travel for some students to University more complicated, less convenient, and more expensive. VUWSA is concerned that students will be unfairly impacted through these changes and that the proposals have not adequately addressed the needs of most students, nor the particular impacts on various subsets of the student community like students with disabilities and students with children.

## **Recommendations**

- a. That the WRC consider the impacts on women, students with children, people with disabilities with regards to their safety and the ability to participate fully in society.
- b. That the proposed C Route could continue up Kelburn Parade and turn around at the Cable Car to continue it's route down the Terrace to the Railway Station.
- c. Retain and increase the number 18 bus as a vital campus connection service but also a valued service for local residents in the Eastern Suburbs and Karori area.

## **Conclusions**

We believe that the bus route changes do not fully consider the implications for all members of society based on their personal needs. Although there are some services that are welcomed by students, overwhelmingly most of those students who take the bus and participated in our survey are opposed to the WRC proposal. These changes will inhibit their ability to travel to University with ease and fully participate in their education.

We would like the opportunity to speak to our submission if this option is available to us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridie Hood', with a period at the end.

Bridie Hood

**President**

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association