

8 September 2011

David Warburton
Chief Executive
Auckland Transport
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Auckland 1142

Public Transport Benchmark Study

Dear David

At the Transport Committee meeting on Tuesday 6 September 2011 a transport monitoring report included information about the recently completed Public Transport Benchmark Study. The study was originally commissioned by the Auckland Regional Council and carried out by Ian Wallis Associates in conjunction with McCormick Rankin Cagney.

I attach a copy of the report on that study for your information. The study compared the performance of Auckland's public transport system with Wellington and 12 other comparator cities in Australia, Canada and the United States. The study report makes sobering reading. It makes clear that despite the major improvements in public transport that have been achieved in Auckland over recent years, Auckland's relative performance in the area of public transport remains poor.

The report found , that despite the considerable amount of operational subsidies expended on public transport in Auckland in recent years :

- Auckland's PT patronage (passenger boardings-per-population) is the **lowest** of all comparator cities, including lower than the six cities with significantly lower populations.
- Auckland's PT patronage rate is between 25% and 40% **below** the rates for three medium-size Australian cities.
- Auckland's bus mode quality of service rates the **worst** of all the comparator cities.
- Auckland's train services rated **lower** than those for Wellington
- Auckland's average fare levels (per passenger boarding or per passenger km) were **highest** of the NZ cities, with Auckland's average fare around **50% higher** than average fares in Canada/USA and around **double** that of Australian cities.
- Auckland is one of the few cities that does not have an integrated fares/ticketing system for at least a large proportion of, if not all PT trips.
- The cost rate of Auckland's rail mode was towards the **top end** of the range of seven Australasian cities and **80% above** the Wellington rate. The cost rate of the bus mode for Auckland was around the middle of the range for Australasian cities. But **significantly above** the rates for commensurate diesel bus services in Wellington and other NZ cities.

These and other quite damning revelations make for uncomfortable reading but it is essential we resist the temptation to brush them off. We need to reflect carefully on the report and its implications. Clearly there is need for a transformational shift in Auckland's public transport

performance – especially in terms of lifting patronage and quality of service. Both these factors inter-relate as does the price-sensitive factor of PT fares.

In response to the report Transport Committee passed the following resolutions:

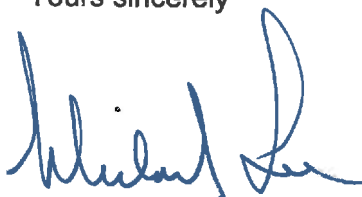
- a) *That the Transport Monitoring Update report be received.*
- b) *That the Committee fully recognises the major inherent problems with the Auckland public transport system which have arisen for historical reasons and because of past decisions – some of which go back 60 years.*
- c) *That the Committee urges Auckland Transport and Auckland Council to take an integrated 'task force' approach to tackle these problems – especially in prioritising steps to achieve measurable improvements in relative patronage levels and improvements in quality of service to enable Auckland public transport to match or surpass comparator cities as quickly as possible.*
- d) *Given Auckland's high fare levels (higher than other comparator cities) and the co-relationship of fares to patronage levels, the Committee urges Auckland Transport to exercise restraint in dealing with future pressure for fare increases on all modes of public transport.*

I believe that a task force approach is essential to ensure that the Auckland Council and Auckland Transport work together to achieve this transformational shift. Auckland Council needs to confirm this goal in the Auckland Plan, provide sufficient funding in the Long Term Plan, provide the regulatory and other support for intensive land use that would use improved public transport services and work with central government for its continued support. Auckland Transport is encouraged to develop a public transport programme that is designed to enable Auckland public transport to match or surpass comparator cities as quickly as possible.

I would be grateful if you could make this letter and the report (attached) available to all the Directors of Auckland Transport.

I am happy to meet with you and Mr Ford to discuss the matters raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely



Michael Lee
Chairman
Transport Committee

CC: Mr Mark Ford, Chairman Auckland Transport

CC: Dr Roger Blakeley, Chief Planning Officer