



**Meeting:** Regional Council

**Meeting Date:** 18 May 2022

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## Item under Separate Cover

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As noted on the Regional Council Agenda for the meeting on Wednesday 18 May 2022, the following item is included under separate cover:

### Reports

#### Decisions Required

**Agenda Item 8.2 AP 2022/23 Deliberations: Improving Safety and Security of Bus Services**

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- Report To:** Regional Council
- Meeting Date:** 18 May 2022
- Report Writer:** James Llewellyn, Transport & Urban Planning Manager; Graeme Howard, Corporate Planning Lead; Mereana Toroa, Finance Support Team Lead and Em Rampling, Management Accountant
- Report Authoriser:** Namouta Poutasi, General Manager, Strategy & Science
- Purpose:** This paper seeks Council direction on options to improve the safety and security of bus services operating in Tauranga and the Western Bay of Plenty.

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## AP 2022/23 Deliberations: Improving Safety and Security of Bus Services

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## Executive Summary

Over the past few months there has been an increased safety and security risk (including assault, criminal damage, substance misuse and threatening behaviour) to bus drivers, passengers and security guards in Tauranga, particularly around the CBD Willow Street interchange. This is due to the behaviour of a core group of youths who engage in anti-social activity on a regular basis.

Safety for bus users, drivers, security staff, business operators, and the community is paramount. To address these risks actions are being implemented by key agencies including NZ Police, Tauranga City Council, NZ Bus and Waka Kotahi.

Immediate actions are also being taken by BOPRC. The package of actions taken by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council are as follows:

- Immediate review of security needs, providing increased security at Willow Street and at Bayfair from 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022.
- Working to relocate the CBD bus interchange from Willow Street to Durham Street as soon as possible.
- Seeking consideration by Council to restrict the scope of free fare trial for children in Tauranga to prior and after school. To limit the movement of youths undertaking antisocial behaviour.
- Adding Code of Conduct information on all buses to ensure bus passengers are clear about how people should act on buses.

This report seeks approval and gives notice of changes to:

- Security costs in the draft Annual Plan 2022/23 budget.
- The costs associated with the move of the CBD bus interchange from Willow Street to Durham Street of \$343,000 in 2022/23.
- Reducing operating hours of the free fares for school children trial in Tauranga.

Discussions regarding funding support for the CBD interchange move and security are ongoing with both Tauranga City Council and Waka Kotahi. It is expected that the BOPRC share of these increased costs will be confirmed for approval of the 2022/2023 Annual Plan on 23 June.

It is recommended that the BOPRC share of these increased costs be funded through the Regional Fund Reserve in 2022/23, to be consistent with LTP reserve funding decisions to limit the impact on targeted rates in the Western Bay.

## Recommendations

### That the Regional Council:

- 1 Receives the report, AP 2022/23 Deliberations: Improving Safety and Security of Bus Services.**
- 2 Approve the inclusion of additional Security Costs in the draft Annual Plan budget for 2022/23, to be funded through the Regional Fund Reserve.**

- 3 **Note the additional cost of bus services in 2022/23 relating to the temporary Tauranga CBD interchange of \$343,000, to be included in the Draft Annual Plan 2022/23 Budget.**
- 4 **Approve the change to the free fare trial to Morning: 7.00am to 9.00am; and afternoon: 3.30pm to 4.30pm, noting that the is expected to be implemented following the school holiday period in July 2022.**

## 1. Introduction

Safety for bus users, drivers, security staff, business operators and the community is paramount. This report provides an overview of activities Regional Council to address the increasing safety and security risks. Other agencies are also taking complementary actions, and representatives will be present at the 18 May Council meeting to highlight actions in response to these issues and increasing risks.

### 1.1.1 Increasing Safety and Security Risks

Since March 2022 there has been a significant increase in anti-social behaviour/criminal activities across Tauranga affecting the bus network, particularly at the Willow Street interchange.

The problems are being caused by a core group of youths - and issues have included assault, damage, substance misuse and threatening behaviour. Bus drivers and passengers have reported intimidating and an unsafe atmosphere as a result of this behaviour.

This situation has arisen in spite of significant investment by Regional Council and Waka Kotahi in security guards at the key interchange sites.

### 1.1.2 Views from Police

Whilst the causes of the criminal behaviour are complex and multi-faceted, NZ Police have raised a concern that the current policy of free fares at all times is enabling the youths to move about the network easily and at no financial cost.

Observations from Council staff, bus drivers and security guards confirm that the bus network is being used on a daily basis for travel to/from Willow Street and Farm Street by these youths. In a number of instances, it appears that buses have been used for travel to organised fights between youths.

Police representatives will be present at this meeting to discuss in more detail their concerns.

## 1.2 Legislative Framework

Bus services are provided by Council in accordance with the Land Transport Management Act (LTMA) 2003. Under section 116, any public transport service operated in a region must be provided under contract with a regional council as part of a unit unless it is an exempt service.

## 1.3 Alignment with Strategic Framework

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### A Vibrant Region

We lead regional transport strategy and system planning, working with others to deliver a safe and reliable public transport system.

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1.3.1 Community Well-beings Assessment

Dominant Well-Beings Affected

- Environmental
- Cultural
- Social
- Economic

Activities to improve the safety and security of the Tauranga community and businesses are critical.

Free fares can contribute to social well-being by making travel cheaper, especially for people from poorer families.

2. Actions to address increasing safety and security risks - increased security

Since December 2020 Regional Council, along with Waka Kotahi, have funded security guards at key bus interchanges in Tauranga including the CBD Willow Street site, Farm Street (Bayfair) and Greerton.

The total cost for security is currently circa \$660,000 per annum, based on 305 person-hours per week. Waka Kotahi currently fund 51% of this sum.

Since March 2022, there has been a significant increase in anti-social / criminal behaviour by a group of youths at Willow Street in particular. The performance of the contracted security firm in responding to this change in circumstances has not matched performance expectations; and a different approach is now needed.

To address the increased risk, security at the Willow Street Regional Council have:

- a) contracted a new security contractor as an interim measure; and
- b) increased security guards at Willow Street interchange and reinstated security guards at the Bayfair interchange.

Increased security will be in place until at least the end of October 2022 to allow time to review what is required, and to undertake a procurement process to appoint on-going security providers.

The cost of increased security is expected be \$200,000 in a full year. We are seeking to share costs with Waka Kotahi and have again requested a contribution from Tauranga City Council. It is recommended that any residual BOPRC costs will be funded through the Regional Reserve, to be consistent with the LTP arrange to limit the impact on targeted rates.

The Regional Council has also introduced a clear message with a 'Code of Conduct' being displayed on all Tauranga Urban services (Figure 1) to ensure bus passengers are clear about how people should act on buses.

Figure 1. Tauranga Bus Code of Conduct Posters

# Code of Conduct

We want all of our buses to be friendly, safe, and inclusive for everyone. To achieve this, we ask you to take responsibility for your own behaviour.

## You have the right to:

- Be treated with respect
- Receive friendly and courteous service
- A safe, clean and comfortable travelling environment

## This means that you will not:

- Threaten, bully or harass other people on the bus
- Swear or use bad language
- Eat, drink, vape or smoke on the bus
- Tag, graffiti or damage the bus in any way
- Exhibit anti-social or disorderly behaviour

## You are responsible for:

- Respecting other peoples' rights
- Paying the correct fare
- Following any reasonable instructions from the driver and/or another company representative
- Good behaviour
- Telling us if you see anyone damaging the bus

**Please follow this Code of Conduct so everyone can have a pleasant journey. If you don't comply with the Code of Conduct, it may result in removal of your right to use the bus and/or prosecution for unlawful behaviour.**



Additional measures to address the increased safety and security risk include working with partners to explore other options including liquor bans, using Māori Wardens/Community safety wardens.

Partners organisations will be attending the Annual Plan Deliberations meeting for this report and will explain safety initiatives further.

### 3. **Actions to address increasing safety and security risks – rapidly moving CBD Interchange**

Most safety incidents are occurring at the Willow Street bus interchange, so a rapid move to the interim Tauranga City Council CBD Bus interchange at Durham Street has been progressed. This change will occur on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and extensive joint communications with TCC have commenced.

We note the disruption to customers as a result of moving an interchange, however, this will be time limited and the following additional actions are being progressed:

- organising 'Ambassadors' - people to help guide and support bus users to new bus stop locations.
- establishing a dedicated call centre.

### 3.1.1 Tauranga Temporary CBD Bus Interchange

At its meeting on 06 December 2021, Tauranga City Council (TCC) determined that the Tauranga CBD Bus Interchange would be moving to a temporary site on Durham Street to enable demolition of the Civic Centre. The temporary bus interchange is expected to lead to additional costs of approximately \$343,000 per annum for bus services in Tauranga.

Increased operating costs of \$343,000 are primarily due to the loss of space in the CBD for drivers to safely park buses whilst taking legally mandated breaks. The Bus contractor (NZ Bus) has carried out analysis on the impact of these changes and have calculated that annual kilometres travelled and bus driver hours will increase by approximately 138,000 kms and 5,800 hours respectively. The number of vehicles required is forecast to remain the same. The additional contract costs have a set formula set out in the contract, and details are as follows:

Table 1. NZBus Contract Calculation Details Impact of CBD Interchange move

Impact of CBD Bus Stop Move					
Difference	Weekday	Holidays	Weekend	Public Holidays	Annual
Kilometres	260.14	821.97	376.71	376.71	138,250.21
Hours	13.80	7.93	22.82	22.82	5,772.21
Rates					
Kilometres	\$1.25				
Hours					
Ordinary	\$26.97				
Holidays	\$80.91				
Cost					
Kilometres	\$172,812.76				
Hours	\$170,447.43				
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$343,260.20</b>				

We are seeking to share costs of this move with Waka Kotahi and Tauranga City Council.

### 3.1.2 Transition to Temporary Interchange

Transitioning to a new interim CBD site is likely to be challenging for customers while they adjust to locations of new bus stops, and how to get to and from their destinations. To enable the transition for bus passengers to occur more smoothly, we will be implementing with Tauranga City Council a comprehensive joint communications plan (media and social media).

## 4. Actions to address increasing safety and security risks - limiting Tauranga fare free bus services for school children

### 4.1 Background

Fare free travel for school children in Tauranga was introduced in January 2020 and was limited to peak times, before 9am and from 2:30pm - 6:30pm in the afternoon on school days only. Following public consultation on the Long Term Plan 2021-2031 (LTP), it was decided to extend the free fares trial to **all times of the day** that the bus network operated and to include weekends. This extended trial started in January 2022.

Since the introduction of the expanded trial, increases in anti-social behaviour by school children at various locations have been observed, and access to free bus travel has been identified as a potential contributory factor. Those involved in anti-social behaviour have been observed as daily users of the buses. The Police has requested consideration of limiting Tauranga fare free bus services for school age children.

One other region in New Zealand has also experienced similar concerns. Waikato Regional Council (WRC) has decided to withdraw their free fare scheme for school children, following an increase in anti-social behaviour across the network.

At WRC matters have stabilised since free fares were withdrawn in favour of a capping scheme using the Bee Card.

### 4.2 Trial performance to date

The table below shows child patronage data from the January-April 2021 compared with the equivalent period in April 2022. Peak hours are weekdays before 9:00am and between 3:00pm and 6:30pm in the afternoon on. Off peak means outside those hours.

**Table 1: Off-peak & Weekend Child Patronage, Tauranga Network August 2020 - March 2022**

Year	Month	Peak	Off peak	Weekend	Grand Total
2021	January	6,045	10,526	4,790	21,361
	February	98,249	7,361	5,514	111,124
	March	143,387	8,290	5,430	157,107
	April	58,358	11,633	4,356	74,347
<b>Total</b>		<b>306,039</b>	<b>37,810</b>	<b>20,090</b>	<b>363,939</b>
2022	January	6,605	10,273	4,804	21,682
	February	96,332	8,252	4,734	109,318
	March	108,963	8,494	4,629	122,086
	April	58,229	10,596	6,642	75,467
<b>Total</b>		<b>270,129</b>	<b>37,615</b>	<b>20,809</b>	<b>328,553</b>

#### 4.2.1 Analysis

Three months of data (January-April 2022) is available following the extension of the fare free trial to include off peak times. This data shows that child patronage at peak

times is down 12% compared to the same period in 2021 with off peak (during the week) down slightly by 1% and weekend patronage up by 4%.

Based on this limited data, the overall patronage for children on the regular bus network is reducing, however it does appear that a greater proportion of school age children are using the off-peak services now that free fares are available.

#### 4.3 Options assessment and staff recommendation

##### 4.3.1 Option 1: No change to existing fare free trial for Tauranga School children trial

This option would retain the current free fare policy in Tauranga at all times.

**Financial implications:** None

##### 4.3.2 Option 2: Reduce hours of operation of fare free trial to school arrival and departure times in Tauranga and Western Bay

This option would reduce the hours of operation for the free fares trial as follows:

- **Morning:** 7.00am to 9.00am; and
- **Afternoon:** 3.00pm to 4.30pm.

**Staff recommend this option**

Outside of these times, all children would need to pay the standard fare \$1.60 Bee Card or \$2 cash.

This option would reduce the hours of operation of fare free travel for school children in Tauranga to provide services primarily for travel to and from school, and not necessarily support travel to and from after school activities.

**Financial Implications:**

Should Council decide on this option, additional annual revenue of around \$400,000 could be expected, based on current 4.30-6.30pm, off peak and weekend patronage trends.

##### 4.3.3 Option 3: Reduce hours of operation of fare free trial to school arrival and departure times in Tauranga and Western Bay to be consistent with other trials.

This option would reduce the hours of operation for the free fares trial as follows:

- **Morning:** 7.00am to 9.00am; and
- **Afternoon:** 3.00pm to 6.30pm.

Outside of these times, all children would need to pay the standard fare \$1.60 Bee Card or \$2 cash.

This option would align the hours of fare free travel for school age children in Tauranga with the hours under the previous Tauranga trial that operated in 2020 and 2021, and also consistent with trials currently underway in Rotorua and in Whakatāne. However, much of the increase in antisocial/criminal activity is

occurring between 4.30pm and 6.00pm, and so this approach is unlikely to have as much impact as Option 2 above.

**Financial Implications:**

Should Council decide on this option, additional revenue of around \$310,000 could be expected, based on current off peak and weekend patronage trends.

#### 4.4 Staff Recommendation

Staff recommendation is Option 2.

The impact of reducing the period for fare free travel for school age children will have adverse impacts in particular:

- A reduction in patronage on the bus network outside of school hours, including at weekends; and
- Financial impacts on families who will now have to pay a fare for children outside of 'before and after' school hours.

However, safety for bus users, drivers, security staff, business operators and the community is paramount given these escalating safety and security risks. This option strikes an appropriate balance between tackling the issue of anti-social behaviour and maintaining free transport for the purposes of education.

##### 4.4.1 Implementation of Recommended Option 2

There are several steps involved in operationalising any changes to the bus fares system. This includes updating the Fares and Tariffs document and providing the update to INIT who manage the Regional Integrated Ticketing System (RITS) and allowing time for that change to be implemented and tested.

Implementation of any change to the existing trial would be expected to be implemented after the school holiday period in July.

## 5. Considerations

### 5.1 Risks and Mitigations

Safety and security for our bus users and drivers are a priority. Actions to mitigate risks and make the community a safer place are recommended in this report.

### 5.2 Climate Change

Well-patronised bus services are an essential ingredient in the ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change. This is because buses can transport significantly more people per unit of fuel, compared with the private car.

### 5.3 Implications for Māori

Improvements to safety and security of bus services has a benefit for all those within the community including Māori.

## 5.4 Community Engagement



### INFORM Whakamōhio

To provide affected communities with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.

As above

## 5.5 Financial Implications

Financial implications are set out under the various options outlined in this report.

In addition, NZBus continue to operate a weekend service due to a national shortage of bus drivers. Five other Regional Councils are continuing to run reduced timetables. Negotiations are currently underway with NZBus on a Service Level Variation given the reduction in service.

As funding support is being sought from Tauranga City Council and Waka Kotahi, it is expected that the BOPRC share of these increased costs will be confirmed for approval of the 2022/23 Annual Plan on 23 June.

It is recommended that the BOPRC share of these increased costs will be funded through the Regional Fund Reserve, which is consistent with the LTP where reserve funding was set aside for increased transport costs in the Western Bay to limit the impact on targeted rate payers.

## 6. Next Steps

Staff will incorporate Council direction into the final draft Annual Plan 2022/23 that is due to be presented to Council for adoption in June 2022.