



Minutes of the Meeting of the Newtown Residents' Association, 7.30pm Monday 20th August 2018 at the Newtown Hall, 71 Daniell St.

Present - Rhona Carson (chair), Steve Cosgrove (minutes), Steve Dunn, Don McDonald, Jan Gould, Graeme Carroll, Warwick Taylor, Athena Cotidis, Jamie Tane, Sam Somers, Ann Randin, Caleb Bensemann, Cheryl Robilliard, Debbie Burgone, Jane Patterson, Leonie Walker, Alison Borbely, Peter Kichenman, Robin Payne, Tolis Papazoglou, Effie Rankin, Tim Tovey, Clara Choi, Kylie Cox, MP Paul Eagle, Cr David Lee, Cr Fleur Fitzsimons, GWRC Councillors - Sue Kedgley, Ian McKinnon, Daran Ponter

Apologies Kevin Lethbridge, Martin Hanley.

Welcome - Rhona welcomed the attendees and the guests: the GWRC Councillors - to discuss the bus service changes, and Clara Choi, to speak about her thesis about community gardens.

Notices - Fleur Fitzsimons reported on

- Newtown School Pool - School and Council have been working on modernising and upgrading the pool. Council funding is looking likely for this.
- Liquor ban - WCC has approved consultation on the continuation of the ban. Fleur took messages back to WCC from our previous meeting. It was pointed to the meeting that alcohol problems are costing about 7.8 billion dollars - Dominion Post on Saturday: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/106343048/alcohol-harm-more-than-triple-the-cost-of-all-treaty-claims-so-far--economist>

The Bus Service Changes

Rhona introduced the topic by noting the amount of negative feedback the Councillors had received since the changes, and the need to talk about solutions. Summarised major Newtown Issues:

- The number 3 bus is unreliable, and often full by the time it gets to Newtown.
- There used to be a choice of bus routes between Constable St and the CBD, now there is just #3, via Taranaki St - no direct route to the Cambridge Tce end of Courtenay Pl.
- Loss of number 10 means no direct route to and from CBD and the Zoo outside peak hours.
- 23e which provides the peak hour direct connection is also unreliable and insufficient for the demand.
- Changing buses is problematic for many people - eg reduced mobility, carrying bags, managing small children, baby buggies etc.

People were invited to report on any positive experiences.

- Bike racks and Snapper from Johnsonville to Porirua a positive.
- Number 23 route works well for travel to Newtown from Vogelmoorn.
- Fewer buses is better for the CBD.

Issues from the floor

- Loss of a route to the airport affects many.
- Connections often don't work.

- GWRC listened to Karori and will change number 18e to all day service. How will those who are less able to participate in this discussion (eg people in social housing) be consulted?
- Losing service from Roy Street/Zoo directly to the city affects people in Newtown Park Flats and other similar housing. This also affects tourists - problematic to have major tourist attraction with no direct bus service.
- Changes to a service should only add value, not take away what was working well.
- Warwick - Suggests 1) ask all the GW to come and listen. 2) Bring back all old routes. Bring back number 11 to aid capacity 3) Light Rail needs to get moving. 4) There are problems with the legislation surrounding contracting, needs Government to change this.
- Sam suggests renegotiation of number 83 [from Eastbourne] to go from Courtney Place to the Zoo. Perhaps a 23v to Vogeltown and Kingston?
- There are issues getting to University from Newtown
- Getting to and from Newtown to Courtney Place is difficult.

Responses

Iain McKinnon:

- Acknowledged City Councillors and MP Paul Eagle
- GWRC is accountable, despite the decisions being made by external consultants, and external suppliers providing the service.
- Very disappointed that we need to face such problems. Any big project has issues. Good features are being lost. Fare concessions are good, planned electrification, other aspects. Overall network hasn't landed where it should have landed.
- Hubbing - needed because we can't fund a bus to each street. Need to have good shelters, need to have timetables working together. Council officers are working very hard to find solutions.

Sue Kedgley:

- System development started about 2009 - advice sought from Seattle transport consultants. There were about 80 public meetings, about eight years ago. Current councillors inherited a fait accompli. First change in about 40 years or so.
- Not enough capacity in previous system - intended to increase capacity, concerned that in practice that seems to have decreased.
- Complications getting to the Zoo is a significant issue.

Darren Ponter:

- Paul Bruce and Darran ran 60 public meetings in 2011 and 2012 to discuss consultants' recommendations. Hubbing was proposed for 30% of journeys, now down to 5% because of public feedback - 6000 submissions received.
- Previous network was built around ad-hoc demand and growth.
- Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) - says Regional Councils must tender and find efficiency in contracts. 25% of subsidy from NZTA dependent on following model.
- Old system had many people who needed to change buses - 'hubbing' by another name - eg 40,000 people in Northern suburbs previously had no direct route to Hospital. Previously had to pay twice, transferring between buses without extra cost is an improvement. [Side discussion - this is only available if people use snapper - discouraging people from using cash.]
- Number 18 was called for by Miramar North, Karori, and VUW Students Association. The change benefits Newtown as well as Karori. Was easy to extend because it doesn't go on Golden Mile.
- Acknowledges there are particular issues with capacity with 3, 7, 37, 22.

- Timetable on numbers 1 and 7 was problematic. Timetables have been suspended and being reset - spacing buses at workable intervals.
- Driver orientation seems to have been fixed, as drivers have learned their routes. New operator had a problem with bringing in a lot of people from outside the region, who didn't know the way. Also NZ Bus drivers had to get used to changes in previously familiar routes.
- Hubs - GWRC's most spectacular failure - not ready in time. Kilbirnie, Hutcheson Road, +another will be ready in two weeks.
- More buses are being added on the number 3. Number 23 is filling every available space (if there is one). From January this will be largely double-decker route.
- Not enough drivers. [Concern from floor about the drivers' rosters]. GWRC dealt with 14 hour shifts as soon as they heard about them. Contracts can be inspected under the terms of the contracts. Some Regional Councillors tried to get contract to require carrying over terms, but Hutt Valley and Wairarapa don't understand the importance of that issue in Wellington.

Responses from floor

- Point made that some people don't care about details of cost. Convenience is more important, and changing buses is very inconvenient. People are switching to Uber instead.
- Democracy appears to have failed. Regional Council system seems to have failed, doesn't reflect Wellington-specific needs. Wellington doesn't have wide streets, and never will, big buses struggle with terrain. Decisions have been made by people who don't understand the local conditions.
- Walking is unpleasant because of the diesel buses and their emissions. Darren - First 20 ex trolleys should be in service on batteries by Christmas.
- How long are the contracts for? A: Contracts are nine to twelve years. 32 electric DDs (Single back axle) - ten so far. Trolley busses are under negotiation. There will be 50 electrified - largely on numbers 2 and 3. Total 82 electric buses in the current plan. Higher proportion than any other city in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Also asking for officers to report back to how replacements can be electric. Maybe by new contracts requiring electric. Also good Diesel buses might be moved to other cities, to allow more electrics here.
- Q - what about the blue lights? A- they are being phased out. White lights are being phased back on.
- Real Time Information system not reliable - acknowledged this has broken down, being worked on.
- A call for the provision of the Wellington bus service to be returned to the control of our local Council instead of the GWRC.

Rhona summarised the Newtown specific requests: restoring a direct service between the Zoo and the CBD, a direct service through Constable St to the CBD via the Cambridge Tc end of Courtenay Place, more frequent #3 buses. Also expressed concern if the PTOM hampering the efforts of the GWRC to provide a good service - a challenge for the Government if so, as public transport is meant to be a priority.

Darren responded with what the GWRC can do.

- More #3 buses has been agreed and they have already started, but need to find more drivers.
- Direct service to the Zoo and a direct service to Courtenay Place - will need to go to full Council for consideration. Changes to the planned routes are a complex process.
- Any changes will take time. GWRC needs to negotiate with operators, who need to negotiate with unions.

- The Councillors encourage people to email with specific concerns, that can then be passed on to Council Officers.

The Councillors were thanked for their attendance and willingness to listen to our concerns.

Clara Choi, 5th year landscape architecture student from Victoria University of Wellington, addressed the meeting and showed photos to illustrate the work she is doing in the community and for her Master thesis, which is about creating inclusive spaces for multicultural society through community gardens in Newtown. The idea is that food can play a significant role in promoting cultural and social well-being, and that community gardens have potential as a venue for integrating people from various ethnic backgrounds.

Clara is focussing on the community garden on Carrara Park, and is proposing a new garden in Hanson St. This is a theoretical exercise. She is developing plans for these gardens as part of her project, and would welcome the involvement of people in the community to help her with these. She had a meeting at the Newtown Community Centre on August 12th to get feedback, which was well attended, and is planning another meeting in October to present what she has developed.

Meeting finished 9:05pm