

Living Streets Hamilton

Speaker: Judy McDonald

Oral submission to Environment Waikato regarding public transport options

As stated in our brief written submission, **Living Streets Hamilton strongly supports the adoption of option 1** – the most expensive but the quickest implementation of necessary measures to improve public transport.

We believe this is necessary for the following reasons:

- It supports the whole idea of active transport (use of foot and cycle travel, linked to the use of public transport, rather than private vehicle use), which is encouraged in the Update to the New Zealand Transport Strategy and which must increasingly be the way of the future.
- The increased services would encourage more people to walk or cycle to and from bus stops without huge and unacceptable delays waiting for interconnecting buses
- It helps us to future-proof our communities against the ever-increasing financial costs of private transport and the environmental effects of continued fossil fuel consumption.

It is important to look at the increased costs associated with the options in a realistic manner rather than allowing a knee-jerk reflex response that automatically rejects the apparently more expensive option.

The costs proposed are rate increases of \$4.25 per \$100,000 capital value for option 1, \$3.17 per \$100,000 for option 2 and \$1.97 per \$100,000 for option 3. Assuming the average house valuation of around \$340,000 in Hamilton, the actual rate increase likely to apply to the average householder is as follows:

\$14.45 annually for option 1, \$10.78 annually for option 2 and \$6.70 annually for option 3.

Considering that even the worst case scenario, with delays of up to 2 years in implementation of some aspects of the plan, costs an extra \$6.70 per year, **we are looking at an annual rate increase for the average household of \$7.75 to get the best possible implementation plan for bus services.**

While we fully appreciate that in today's economic climate, increases are not what anyone wants, **most households will face much more than that on a weekly basis to cope with ongoing rises in fuel costs to keep private vehicles running.**

Being able to catch the bus in a reliable and timely manner twelve months sooner than in the cheaper options is likely to save the average household an awful lot more than \$7.75 annually when compared to the cost of having to run a private car because there is no adequate bus service.

Do us all a favour – present the figures to the public with both costs and benefits. Show what the service can save in vehicle running costs, not to mention the cost to the planet. For example, how might the maximum EW rate increase compare with the potential savings per household in using the bus 10% more because it has become a genuinely practical alternative to the car?

Regard the prompt provision of the best bus service we can manage as a form of civil defence. There is the possibility that when fuel shortages really hit, they will hit quite suddenly. Trying to establish a public transport system to replace the non-viable private car approach under those conditions would be very difficult, and the economic mayhem in the Waikato region as a result could be interesting. By getting the alternative system up and running now, before we hit crisis point, EW could be avoiding a great deal of hardship in the long run.