

# A HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC TRANSPORT SPINE FOR WELLINGTON



## It's agreed – Bus Rapid Transit is best for Wellington!

Bus Rapid Transit has been agreed by the Regional Transport Committee as the public transport solution for central Wellington. It's now up to the three partners – Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington City Council and the NZ Transport Agency – to make it happen.

Introduced progressively over the next eight years beginning with better Bus Priority, BRT will mean faster journey times through the Golden Mile and out to the suburbs, and a modern, comfortable, first class travel experience.

The BRT spine will underpin a transformed public transport network for Wellington City, with more consistent routes that are easier to understand and more frequent services for more people. The spine will run on a dedicated corridor, along the Golden Mile, Kent and Cambridge Terraces, then around the Basin Reserve, along Adelaide Road to Wellington Hospital. Another branch will run through the future duplicated Mt Victoria tunnel, along Ruahine Street and Wellington Road to Kilbirnie town centre. We'll also future proof an extension to Wellington Airport.

### Flexible mode

A major benefit of BRT is that the vehicles can travel off the end of the dedicated spine without passengers having to change mode. So if you work on Lambton Quay and live in Island Bay or Miramar or Karori you'll continue on the same vehicle all the way home. We anticipate progressively introducing new vehicles into the bus fleet as older vehicles are retired and will explore all options for the types of vehicles that would best meet Wellington's needs. A low emission vehicle solution is essential for the health of people living, working and visiting the city – and for our natural environment – and BRT is an opportunity to access the exciting sustainable technology now being developed, including new sorts of electric and hybrid engines. BRT vehicles will be high quality and comfortable, able to easily accommodate prams and wheelchairs and with level access to improved bus stops. They'll also have high quality on-board passenger displays and audio announcements.

### Making it happen

There are many different forms of BRT around the world from Adelaide to Bogata to San Francisco, each with a different combination of dedicated lanes, priority at intersections, high capacity vehicles and ticketing systems. No two cities are the same. A customised solution will be developed for Wellington that reflects the unique characteristics of our city.

Of course, there's a huge amount of work needed to prepare for a high quality, high frequency public transport spine through central Wellington. The next step is to get down to the nitty gritty of design for each of the road corridors. We'll look at where the dedicated lanes should be placed and how they fit with the needs of other road users, including cyclists and pedestrians. We'll also resolve 'pinch points' that have been identified such as around the Old Bank building on the corner of Willis Street and Lambton Quay. It's the ability to get around Wellington easily that helps make the city so vibrant and dynamic and gives it that truly metropolitan feel.

As Wellington's population grows over the next 20 years, the BRT spine will be a key factor in enabling the step change that's needed to meet demand and ensure people get to where they want to go.

### Capacity to meet future needs

BRT will provide more than enough capacity to meet forecast growth in passenger numbers out to 2041. The narrow Golden Mile corridor means that the capacity of BRT in Wellington is around 6,000 passengers per hour in each direction, using 100-person vehicles. This is almost double current peak demand levels and is more than sufficient to meet the long-term target we've set for public transport mode share in the region. If public transport passenger numbers grow even more, we can increase capacity such as passing lanes at major bottlenecks and split stops where the front half of a bus stop is used for services on some routes and the back half is used for others.

### What happens next?

Now that the Regional Transport Committee has decided on the BRT spine, the next steps are:

- The BRT Spine corridor will be protected from impacts of future development
- Funding for the design and implementation of the BRT spine will be included in the Regional Land Transport Plan 2015
- Wellington City Council, Wellington Regional Council and the Transport Agency are setting up a joint project team to work on the detailed design and planning of the Spine. This work, expected to take one to two years, will include:
  - the design of bus lanes within the street environment and parts of the state highway
  - the design of stop and interchange facilities along the spine corridor
  - completion of the design of the future bus network
  - consideration of the future modern, high capacity, low emission BRT vehicles that will be used
  - consideration of supporting infrastructure - such as traffic signal priorities and speeding up boarding through fare and ticketing systems
- Implementation will involve a progression from Bus Priority to BRT through the construction of dedicated bus lanes, the introduction of a new bus network for Wellington City bus services and roll out of the new vehicles as the bus fleet is renewed.

Defining a core public transport spine corridor and committing to bus rapid transit are exciting milestones which will make a significant difference to how we get around. Crucially, it will help make public transport the first choice for many people.



Public transport does not, however, operate in isolation. This spine corridor will create faster, more reliable journey times for its routes, and in turn is a key element of a wider, integrated network of road, bus and rail, walking and cycling facilities and even ports and airports.

The Transport Agency, WCC and GWRC are planning, investing, delivering and operating this transport system to give you choice about how you travel and how you move your goods and services around. This will enable us to meet our aspirations for growth, economic productivity, and to create the spaces we all want to live in.

And there's a lot going on right now. We have major highway upgrades both proposed and under construction to improve traffic flow, freight productivity, safety, and to unlock benefits for public transport. We're boosting our walking and cycling routes, and with GWRC, investing in new Matangi trains, park and ride facilities and getting an integrated fares and ticketing system in place. We're also working together to make the daily real time operation of the network more seamless.

Travelling on public transport needs to be appealing, and we can achieve this by making bus travel reliable, safe, affordable and part of a well planned and optimised transport network.

**Jenny Chetwynd, Regional Director Central, NZTA.**

Modern, progressive cities expect good public transport. The Regional Transport Committee's support for BRT is a step in the right direction.



Progressing Bus Priority to Bus Rapid Transit through Wellington's central city will boost capacity, reduce congestion and increase the use of public transport.

On the evidence we've examined, including some excellent public submissions, we conclude Bus Rapid Transit provides a good transport choice that's affordable and adaptable to the needs of our growing city and region.

BRT has benefits approaching light rail, at a more affordable cost and with added flexibility. High-quality, high-capacity, low-floor vehicles that can service destinations including Miramar, Kilbirnie, Island Bay and Karori will provide far-reaching benefits beyond the dedicated CBD spine. We will future proof the spine and critical corridors so light rail is not precluded as an option in the longer term.

By improving capacity, reducing "bus-jams" along the Golden Mile, and making the public transport system more reliable, we're making the best choice for Wellington for now and keeping options open for the longer-term.

Our approach includes better cycle facilities and a more attractive walking experience. Public transport, private cars and active modes like cycling and walking must be comprehensive and complementary.

Wellington City Council will continue to align residential and economic growth with planned public transport investment.

**Celia Wade-Brown, Mayor of Wellington.**

The BRT spine is an important part of a new integrated public transport network that we are designing for Wellington. Basically we want better connections and quicker trips through Wellington City and into it from all parts of the region.



The metro rail upgrade was the first part of this big programme, with passengers now experiencing huge benefits from the rebuilt network and new trains. Now the focus is on the bus network. Wellington City is the daily destination for many thousands of commuters and others going to the hospital and the airport. BRT will move them rapidly through the Golden Mile, as well as enabling residents in the growth areas of the southern and eastern suburbs to commute more directly and quickly.

Other projects necessary for a successful integrated public transport network are real time information (now getting the bugs sorted), better timetabling and, importantly, integrated fares and ticketing. The latter is critical because together with the timetabling it will allow seamless and fast transfer between services. It's a complex and costly project and we're aiming to introduce the new system from 2017.

**Fran Wilde, Chair, Greater Wellington Regional Council.**

## Find out more

The report of the Public Transport Spine Options hearing subcommittee and all reports relating to the 18-month Spine Study are at [www.gw.govt.nz/ptspinstudy](http://www.gw.govt.nz/ptspinstudy)