

24 November 2022

File Ref: OIAP-7-26318

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2022-195

I refer to your request for information dated 29 October 2022, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 29 October 2022. You have requested the following:

“Under the LGOIMA, I would like to request information regarding bus size allocation.

I understand that Metlink sets a minimum capacity for buses used on all routes. I understand the classification of each size to be: SV - Small vehicle with a capacity of 30-53 passengers; MV - Medium Vehicle with a capacity of 54-74 Passengers; LV - Large Vehicle with a capacity of at least 75 passengers and 36 seats; DD - Double Decker with a capacity of at least 95 Passengers and 80 seats.

Provided my above definitions are correct, I would like to request the following information under the LGOIMA:

Minimum Capacity Set by Metlink for the Following Metlink Services (Both Morning and Night): 627, 633, 634, 635;

How the minimum capacity is decided for each of the above routes, and what criteria is taken into account when making this decision;

The penalty the operator of each service incurs when they operate a service with below minimum size bus.

Under the LGOIMA, I understand I am eligible for a response within 20 working days.

Please note this request is separate and does not replace the other request for information sent on the 28th of October.”

Greater Wellington's response follows:

Minimum capacity set by Metlink for each route as specified and criteria

You are correct regarding the vehicle sizes as they are specified in Waka Kotahi's Requirements for Urban Buses. However, these national requirements (the legal maximum capacity of a bus) do not necessarily align with the practical maximum (adult) capacity of that same vehicle. The thresholds we use for vehicle size allocation are as follows:

- Small Vehicle (SV) – up to 53 passengers
- Medium Vehicle (MV) – up to 54 passengers
- Large Vehicle (LV) – up to 68 passengers
- Electric Double Decker Vehicle, 2 axles (ELVDD) – up to 84 passengers
- Double Decker Vehicle, 3 axles (DD) – up to 100 passengers

These are either the maximum legal load able to be carried on the bus, or its practical maximum capacity – whichever is the lower of the two. Please note that Tranzurban, the operator of the services you have requested information on, are the only operator who currently use ELVDD buses.

The routes you requested information for are:

- 627: Johnsonville West – Paparangi – Newlands College & Intermediate School
- 633: Churton Park - Newlands College & Intermediate School (via Erlestoke Crescent & Middleton Road)
- 634: Churton Park - Grenada Village - Newlands College & Intermediate School (via Furlong Crescent & Mark Avenue)
- 635: Churton Park - Newlands College & Intermediate School (via Melksham Drive & Bassett Road)

The Route 635 afternoon service is required to be operated by a DD and has been since 25 July 2021. Metlink required this change because we became aware of specific overloading concerns on this service. The other seven services in question are all required to be operated by LVs. Metlink determined that LVs were sufficient for these routes when a capacity review on these services was undertaken in May 2021. This capacity review was based on February and March 2021 loading data.

Metlink reviews school bus loadings when either we are alerted to a capacity concern; or when we are conducting a service review for other reasons such as a need to optimise network efficiency.

Vehicle size allocations for school services are set by reviewing maximum load data from the most recent February and March, which is when school buses experience their highest loads. We aim to achieve loadings within the thresholds outlined above at least 95% of the time. On school services we tolerate a slightly higher loading than public services. This is because:

- school students generally know each other, and so are happy to stand a little closer together than strangers on a public bus
- school bus routes are usually quite short (serving that school's zone only), and so these crush loads are usually only in effect for the few stops closest to the school

Metlink have not received loading-related customer comments or complaints about these services since our May 2021 capacity review.

In responding to this request, we have reviewed the loadings on these services and determined that some of these routes may carry high enough loadings to warrant an increase in vehicle size from LV to ELVDD. These are the 627 (morning and afternoon), 633 morning and the 635 morning services. The data we used for this review can be found in **Attachment 1** which contains the loading data on the number of passengers for these routes between 1 February 2022 and 31 March 2022.

Our evaluation of this will be confirmed through a further capacity review in February/March 2023. We will raise this issue with Tranzurban and if current loading levels continue our Service Design team will work with the operator to change vehicles sizes on the relevant routes for the 2023 school year.

Penalty applied to operators for incorrect vehicle size

Operators are required to run services using a vehicle with sufficient capacity to meet the passenger requirements, as determined by Metlink. In the Partnering Contract, there is a Performance Indicator for Reliability of Vehicle Size (using the correct size bus) with a monthly threshold of 98%. If this threshold is not achieved, there is no financial penalty. When the monthly threshold is not achieved, we work with the Operator at both management and operational levels to improve performance. To incentivise Operators to use the correct size bus, they may be entitled to a bonus payment for consistently meeting the Performance Indicator achieve threshold.

If you have any concerns with the decisions referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Samantha Gain
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