

Wellington Region Rail Passenger Transport System
Presentation to Wellington Regional Council
13 May 2003

Since its inception in 1981 the Wellington Civic Trust has had an involvement with transport matters. The Trust has held two public seminars on transport issues, and has more recently been involved in the Northern Gateway and Railyards projects.

The Trust recently wrote to the Council on the subject of rail transport with a copy to all regional Mayors and Members of Parliament and the presentation this morning is a follow up to that letter.

The Trust believes there is no viable alternative to a cost effective regional rail passenger system. The social, economic and environmental costs, of transferring the current rail users to the road system would greatly exceed the costs associated with maintenance of the rail system. The Trust also believes that this is not a matter that can be left to the regional local authorities to resolve with Tranzrail and that government involvement and funding in some form is essential. To date Government appears to be focused on the big picture with regard to Tranzrail. Unless however all the regional local authorities speak as one on all facets of the matter and use their collective influence accordingly it is possible that in attempting to solve the national issues, the government will neglect the Wellington regional need.

The Trust believes that while it is reasonable for regional authorities to subsidise the operating cost of the regional passenger rail system on the basis of the regional public benefit so gained, it is not reasonable for regional ratepayers to fund the backlog of capital work required to bring the system up to an acceptable standard.

The Trust believes that the future of the Region's commuter rail service is the most critical issue currently facing the region. The Trust believes it is essential that the Regional Council gives the highest priority to efforts to reach a solution. In this the Trust believes the following to be the baseline to which all the local authorities in the region need to speak with one voice and unequivocally state that:

- a). The suburban rail system must be retained and improved so that it at least keeps pace with projected demand.
- b). All local authorities in the region fully support the legislation that would allow Greater Wellington Regional Council to acquire the service.

Central government has to be involved to ensure continuation and development of the service at a level that is regionally affordable.