

By email

8 April 2026

Hon Nicola Willis
Minister for Finance
N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Transport
C.Bishop@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Shane Jones
Associate Minister for Energy
S.Jones@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou Ministers,

Further to a letter from myself and the Chairs of Environment Canterbury and Auckland Transport dated 19 March 2026, and in reflection of a non-response to that letter, I am writing to lay out some of the practical measures the government can take to promote public transport, and thereby reduce fuel use and mitigate the inflationary costs that New Zealanders are facing.

The first thing to say is that Metlink has available capacity to accommodate more patronage. While some bus and train services are getting crowded, most are not running to full capacity. There is certainly capacity on most off-peak services. The government could support off-peak use by allowing and encouraging employees to start or finish earlier or later than normal so we can all 'spread the peak'.

Our main ask is for financial support for the increased diesel prices we are experiencing. The increases are costing Greater Wellington an additional \$130,000 per week. Without support, we will soon have to look at either reducing services or further increasing fares beyond the planned increase on 15 May. I believe we would all agree neither would be a good outcome given the additional cost of living pressures the fuel crisis is causing and the increased demand for our services.

The Government can also support public transport use by:

- a. applying and funding modest fare discounts – in the order of 20-25% - on the Metlink network;
- b. targeting and funding fare discounts – e.g. higher discounts for off-peak use, which public transport providers will generally have more capacity to deliver;
- c. relax the private share requirements that this government has imposed and provide a temporary higher FAR (Funding Assistance Rate) for public transport to assist with the increased fuel costs;
- d. actively promoting public transport (including spreading the peak by encouraging more people to travel off-peak) through mainstream and social media channels – something the government and councils can do in tandem; and
- e. actively promoting schemes like *Extraordinary*, which provides significant tax benefits to employees using public transport, including promoting government departments and agencies to sign-on.

Longer-term we look forward to the government:

- a. providing further funding support to electrify the Metlink and national public transport fleet; and
- b. providing a concerted longer-term commitment to rail renewals and upgrades laid out on the Wellington Regional Rail Plan.

Note that if the government moves to implement measures to reduce fares, then public transport providers will need time to recalibrate ticketing machines. An announcement from the Government relating to fare changes cannot be given immediate effect.

For its part, Greater Wellington/Metlink is:

- a. working to ensure that existing public transport services are reliable and punctual (overall reliability is tracking at 97% on buses and 96.2% on trains);
- b. working to deploy the maximum fleet of buses and trains at our disposal;
- c. optimising the use of our electric bus, train and ferry fleet;
- d. from 12 April introducing EMV¹ on all modes (buses, trains and ferries) ahead of full integrated ticketing; and
- e. promoting public transport use through an active publicity campaign to be rolled out shortly.

Please note that Metlink does not advocate for free fares or higher fare discounts. These could add too much demand to the current system which has a finite number of vehicles and drivers.

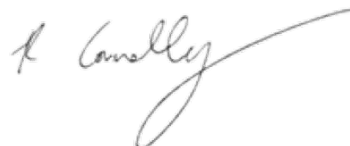
Also note that Greater Wellington does not support the promotion of work from home measures. It is concerned that many people still need to present in-person at work and that a WFH mandate would have a stultifying impact on business.

Happy to engage on these proposals, but if you are going to take action, please recognise that we need time to put measures in place.

Ngā mihi



Cr Daran Ponter
Heamana | Chair
Greater Wellington



Cr Ros Connelly
Heamana | Chair
Public Transport Committee, Greater Wellington

CC: Members of Parliament, Mayors, Chairs of Iwi Authorities - Wellington Region
Chair - Wellington NZ
Chair - Wellington Stadium Trust
Chairs - Wellington Region Chambers of Commerce
Chief Executives - Wellington Hurricanes, Wellington Phoenix and Central Pulse
Chairs/Mayors - Regional and Unitary Councils
Chair - Auckland Transport

¹ Europay, Mastercard, and Visa.