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To: Mailroom Mailbox
Subject: LTP SUBMISSION

My submission is specifically about the changes planned to public transport.

- I oppose the termination of six routs
- I prefer option 2 for covering the shortfall of funds

Currently the status of public transport in Christchurch is a downward spiral, caused by reduced and increasing fares. A publicly funded intervention is the investment required in order to turn this spiral upwards by providing more frequent and better services for lower fares – in order to make public transport a viable option and increase patronage to the level where public funding can start to be reduced. The benefits of this public investment will translate over time to better health, higher productivity and better communities.

I used to be a bus commuter on route to work at Lincoln. This was a conscience choice – it was more expensive and took twice as long as by car. Having moved to another part of Christchurch, I now live the same distance from the same work place – still only 17 km, but I no longer have a viable bus route to take me there. I would happily abandon the car and go back to bussing if there was a sensible route.

By removing six routs, bus patronage is likely to drop from remaining routs, because bussing will become a less viable option to current users.

Removal of routs also tends to hurt the already marginalised populations, making it more difficult for these people to participate in society (getting to work, taking children to the library, etc.). The social cost of removal of routs can be increased crime by more marginalised members of our community.

For these reasons I also prefer to avoid increasing bus fares – a move that hurts the have-nots. Us, rate-payers can afford to pay a bit more to keep services for those who have less – we will all benefit from this in the long run – better engaged people, less crime, happier communities and lower insurance premium.

A couple of years back, Wellington city council (or was it Greater Wellington Regional Council) did the right thing to increase public transport patronage: for a whole month they charged \$1 for the use of any public transport. It was done during February, when the weather is good and when people are back at work and at school after the summer holiday – a perfect timing to adopt a new habit. Being so cheap makes it a no-brainer for people to prefer this transport over cars, and going on for one month is long enough to make people get used to it and make this habit and a first choice.

Sure, this costs a lot in the short term, but the long term benefits of breaking the downward spiral and forcing it upwards are greater.

We need more routes, not less. We need higher frequency of public transport. We need well-paid drivers who have job security and manageable shifts (not the broken shifts they currently have!). and then we need a period of very cheap fares to increase patronage very quickly.

The long term benefits will be greater than the rates increase we will experience in the short term.

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