

Transport systems - a local body perspective

Public transport emissions are slowly tracking down in Wellington region as cleaner diesel technology progresses but there is more scope for emission reductions as we shift away from diesel to electric

GW has resolved to transform the regional bus fleet into fully electric and prepare the Ngauranga to airport corridor for electric light rail.

Background – Funding public transport is subsidised from central and local gov't and delivered via bus and rail contracts by regional councils.

Regional decisionmaking is via regional land transport committees- but NZTA has final say on what gets funded and what doesn't.

Complex ownership arrangements - GW owns the trains except for locomotives (Kiwirail)

Rail services are not yet all electrified Otaki-Waikanae and Upper Hutt to Masterton remain diesel driven. NZTA won't shift on this - uses diesel locos from its fleet and envisages 10-20 more years life from these. Little prospect of reduced rail emissions without policy change by government.

GW doesn't own the buses. Series of contracts round region with bus companies.

GW has set itself a target to transform the regional bus fleet from largely diesel to electric via the contract system.

Bus companies are very cautious about moving beyond diesel – efficient, tried and true and the new Euro 6 buses have far less emissions –thus, as bus diesel fleets are upgraded emissions are declining – but fast enough?

NZ Bus (biggest operator) anxious to exit trolleys – unreliable, inflexible and maintaining infrastructure is hugely expensive. their removal will help speed up the transformation and GW has decided to end trolleys mid 2017.

Contracts are due for renegotiation beginning April. New provisions – at least 10 buses must be hybrids and the expectation is that these will be a transitional stage as fully electric technology becomes more available. For the first time emissions are an explicit factor in contracts.

Bus contracts are an exercise in the art of the possible. To impose too many limits runs risk of having no tenders. New contracts will reduce emissions as number of low emission Euro 6 buses replace the old dirty diesels. But this is really only the beginning.

– timing of the transformation is going to depend on several factors - electric bus technology – frustratingly slow. But its accelerating rapidly.

We plan to deploy a demonstrator electric bus in Wellington as soon as one is available and use this as a signal of things to come and to generate public enthusiasm.

There are weight issues – limits – negotiating with gov't over exemptions but road strengthening will probably cost ratepayers.

There are signs that the gov't, if not NZTA, are warming to the idea of backing the transformation. Minister is notably enthusiastic. We're working with the gov't on several fronts – EV charging infrastructure; asking, with other regional councils, for centrally imposed emission limits.

In mid-2016 GW and WCC will host a symposium on electric vehicle technology with particular focus on factors around introduction of electric buses.

There is urgent need to have the national policy settings reflect the future. A national policy statement on transport emissions is urgently required.

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