

Public Transport Committee, 15 October 2026

Source: <https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Documents/2026/10/Public-Transport-Committee-15-October-2026-Order-Paper.pdf>

1. What's tracking or delivered

- Bus reliability for August 2026 was 99.2%, above the 98% daily target, and has continued to sit above target across the network overall, though the North, South, Khandallah and Brooklyn sub-network declined 2.3 percentage points year-on-year to 97.3% (item 10, p.92).
- Bus punctuality reached exactly the 95% target in August 2026, recovering from the previous month, though the year-to-date total of 94.8% remains marginally below target (item 10, p.93–94).
- Bus patronage for August 2026 was 2,287,061 boardings, 1.0% higher than August 2025 (2,264,994), though 4.1% below the annual budget estimate of 2,386,014 for the month; year-to-date patronage is 99.1% of 2025/26 levels (item 10, p.81).
- Bus patronage is now at 113% of the 2023 baseline level, with January–June 2026 boardings 13% higher than the same period in 2023, including growth across all times of day (item 6, p.21).
- Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) contactless payment, introduced 12 April 2026, reached approximately one million trips by mid-September 2026, indicating rapid adoption (item 6, p.22).
- The Extraordinary Pay pre-tax salary sacrifice benefit grew from 673 unique riders across 52 employers in May 2026 to 1,431 unique riders across 125 employers in August 2026, with monthly spend rising from \$62,000 in May to \$174,000 in August and tracking to approximately \$200,000 in September (item 6, p.25).
- The Harbour Quays Bus Prioritisation Business Case was endorsed by the Public Transport Committee on 10 September 2026 and subsequently endorsed by Wellington City Council's (WCC) Te Hoe Matua | City Strategy and Delivery Committee on 17 September 2026, enabling the project to proceed to implementation (item 8, p.70).
- The Masterton Maintenance Depot Design and Construction contract was signed with Calder-Stewart on 20 April 2026; the second stage of design has been completed and resource consent applications submitted, with construction expected to commence in early 2027 (item 8, p.65).  *Record-stated Annual Plan 2026/27 commitment is to complete design and begin construction of a new depot in Masterton in 2026/27; the brief reports the contract was signed in April 2026, second-stage design is complete, resource consent applications have been submitted, and construction is expected to commence in early 2027, consistent with that commitment. — GW Annual Plan 2026/27*
- Motu Move (the National Ticketing Solution (NTS) brand) launched in Christchurch on 23 September 2026, a major programme milestone; Wellington region roll-out is planned for mid-2027 (item 8, p.66).  *Record-stated Annual Plan 2026/27 commitment is to continue planning for the National Ticketing Solution rollout with rollout expected to begin in early 2027; the brief reports the Wellington region rollout is planned for mid-2027, which is later than the early 2027 timeframe stated in the record. — GW Annual Plan 2026/27*
- Kauri Street Stage 1 bus stabling is complete; charging equipment and underground electricity cables have been physically installed, with connection and commissioning expected by 30 November 2026 (item 8, p.69).  *Record-stated Annual Plan 2026/27 commitment is to complete construction and commissioning of Stage one of the Kauri Street, Miramar depot in 2026/27; the brief reports that connection and*

commissioning is expected by 30 November 2026, indicating this milestone is on track to be met within the record-stated 2026/27 timeframe. — GW Annual Plan 2026/27

- The action item on reinstating Seatoun in the Wellington Harbour ferry service (requested 13 August 2026) is recorded as completed: information was sent to Committee members and a letter was sent by the Chair to the public submitters (item 5, p.18).
- Ferry staffing (skippers and deckhands) was at target — 13 out of 13 — as of August 2026 (item 10, p.98).
- The 12-month rolling average of passenger treatment injuries has shown a sustained downward trend since January 2026 (item 10, p.88).
- The Public Transport Advisory Group (PTAG) meeting on 24 September 2026 was attended by 28 of 30 members; 19 members also visited the Tūhono carriage mock-up between 14–18 September 2026, generating over 26 pages of detailed feedback for the Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility (LNIRIM) programme (item 9, p.74–75).

2. What's at risk

- Rail punctuality for August 2026 was 78.5% overall against a 95% target — significantly below target — and was worse on the Kāpiti Line (71.7%) and Wairarapa Line (44.0%); year-to-date total punctuality is 77.6%, down 3.4 percentage points on 2025/26. Staff report that the contracted KPI result does not mirror customer experience because Temporary Speed Restrictions (TSRs) and planned works are excluded from the KPI calculation (item 10, p.83–86).
- Rail reliability for August 2026 was 94.8% against a 99.5% target (classified as 'Unsatisfactory' under the reporting framework), with year-to-date reliability at 93.3%, down 3.5 percentage points on 2025/26; Kāpiti Line was the worst performer at 92.7% for the month (item 10, p.82–83, p.99).
- KiwiRail's contracted peak punctuality result, once exclusions for project work are applied, falls to 84.4% against a 96.6% target; TSRs accounted for 74–75% of total delay minutes in August 2026. Staff note that greater weight should be placed on underlying causes of delay and KiwiRail's progress in removing network constraints than on the headline contractual KPI result (item 10, p.85–86).
- Physical delivery of KiwiRail's planned renewals programme in August remained below the expected level, continuing a trend through the year where the programme has not translated into the volume of completed asset renewals required to materially reduce network delays and TSR-related customer impacts. KiwiRail has described this as a deliberate reset; staff note they will monitor whether the reset converts into improved delivery (item 10, p.87).
- Trovon's cessation of trading continues to affect Matangi fleet availability: maintenance deferrals caused by Trovon's cessation affected 2.40% of rail services in August 2026; three units remain impacted by deferred maintenance and are expected to re-enter service periodically through to November 2026 (item 10, p.83).
- Rail staffing (locomotive engineers, train managers and passenger operators) was 281 out of a target of 319 as of August 2026, a shortfall of 38 positions; 15 are in training and 6 are on long-term ACC (item 10, p.101).
- Ferry reliability was 85.1% in August 2026, well below the 95% target (classified as 'Unsatisfactory'), with 106 cancellations — 100 due to adverse weather and 6 due to staff illness; year-to-date ferry patronage is at 87.8% of 2025/26 levels (item 10, p.87).
- Bus fare revenue is \$473,786 below budget year-to-date (July–August 2026), and ferry fare revenue is \$59,730 below budget year-to-date; rail fare revenue is \$307,357 above budget, leaving a net year-to-date shortfall of \$226,159 across all modes (item 10, p.88).

- Rail patronage has been declining since 2023 and remains at only 90% of the 2023 baseline; January–June 2026 rail patronage was 6% lower than the same period in 2023, with the decline most marked on Fridays. Wellington rail patronage compares unfavourably with Auckland (117% of 2023 baseline) and Waikato (111%) (item 6, p.21–22).
- Overall patronage is forecast to grow only approximately 1% per year over the next triennium, with rail forecast to remain below bus and below 2023 levels through to 2029; the forecast is described as susceptible to post-election policy settings and economic headwinds (item 6, p.22, p.50).
- Changing passenger demographics — a declining proportion of full-fare-paying adults and growing proportions of SuperGold and child travellers — are reducing fare revenue. Staff note this may require fare increases above inflation or a review of concession levels to remain revenue neutral (item 6, p.22).
- Wellington Region filled jobs fell by 12,000 since December 2023 to 253,000 by June 2026; Budget 2026 commits to a further decrease of 8,700 core public service jobs by 2029, with many expected to be in Wellington City, further weakening commuter demand (item 6, p.22, p.55).
- Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) construction is causing peak-period bus delays averaging around 10 minutes and sometimes exceeding 30 minutes on SH2 near Melling and key alternative local roads; disruption is expected to continue through to 2030. Bus complaints on affected Hutt Valley routes rose by 47 in the seven months February–August 2026 compared with the previous seven months (item 6, p.22–24).
- Wairarapa Line Bus Replacement Train (BRT) services from 5 January 2027 will be affected by Hutt Valley roading delays once traffic volumes increase from the first working week of January, creating a risk to service reliability for Wairarapa passengers transferring at Upper Hutt (item 7, p.61).
- Tranche One bus contract award is anticipated by December 2026, but principal programme risks include affordability outcomes, depot readiness and transition planning; depot readiness remains dependent on future Council decisions on the Kenepuru and Southern satellite depot developments, which are subject to regulatory processes (item 8, p.67). 📖 *Record-stated LTP commitment budgets \$354 million over the LTP period for Public Transport Depot Ownership; the brief identifies that Tranche One depot readiness remains dependent on future Council decisions on Kenepuru and Southern satellite depots subject to regulatory processes, and that Grenada Depot construction costs are not yet finalised — both of which are components within the scope of that record-stated capital programme.* — GW Long Term Plan 2024–34
- Tranche Two bus procurement: current forecasting indicates delivery of future Unit 24 (Hutt Valley) services may exceed the approved funding envelope; the programme has used the majority of its schedule contingency, and feedback analysis, network design refinement and Council decisions remain on the critical path with limited flexibility for further delays (item 8, p.68).
- The Future Rail Services Contract Procurement Programme faces key risks around stakeholder and specialist resource availability, programme complexity and the time available to complete planning, procurement and transition activities before the current Rail Partnering Contract expires in July 2031; the programme only formally commenced its initiation phase in August 2026 (item 8, p.68–69). 📖 *Record-stated Annual Plan 2026/27 commitment is to begin early planning for future rail service procurement in 2026/27; the brief reports the Future Rail Services Contract Procurement Programme only formally commenced its initiation phase in August 2026, which is within 2026/27 and consistent with that commitment, though the brief also notes the programme faces risks around the time available before the current Rail Partnering Contract expires in July 2031.* — GW Annual Plan 2026/27
- The LNIRIM Rolling Stock Package first design milestone was achieved in May 2026 but was delayed three months from the initial programme; staff are less confident the delay will be recovered during the design phase, though no contract cost impact with Alstom is noted if the delay eventuates (item 8, p.65).
- Bus complaints for August 2026 were 34.0% higher than August 2025 (627 vs 468), with the North-South, Khandallah and Brooklyn network recording a 56.4% increase; year-to-date bus complaints are 28.5% higher than 2025/26 (item 10, p.112).

- In August 2026, attempted physical assaults on bus drivers increased, involving intoxicated passengers spitting, throwing bottle or can contents, or attempting to hit drivers; the 12-month rolling averages for physical abuse, verbal abuse and all aggressive/abusive/anti-social behaviour events have all shown a slight increase (item 10, p.88–89).
- Population growth projections for the Wellington Region carry very high uncertainty: the medium series projects growth of 74,000 over 30 years to 2053, but the range spans from a 7,000 decrease (Stats NZ 'low') to a 302,000 increase (Sense Partners '95%'), making business cases for large investments more challenging (item 6, p.22, p.52).
- Waterloo Station: continuing to maintain the existing structure is not recommended from an economic perspective; a refurbishment cost will be added to the proposed spend for the next Long Term Plan (LTP) and National Land Transport Fund bid regardless of any Transit Oriented Development (TOD) decision; a demolition report is scheduled for Council on 10 December 2026 (item 8, p.66–67). 📖 *Record-stated LTP commitment is to replace ageing and unsafe building infrastructure at Waterloo Station with a mixed-use transport/commercial Transit Oriented Development (2024–2029); the brief reports that continuing to maintain the existing structure is not recommended on economic grounds and that a demolition report is scheduled for Council on 10 December 2026, with refurbishment costs to be added to the next LTP bid regardless of any TOD decision — indicating the TOD pathway assumed in the record-stated commitment remains unresolved.* — GW Long Term Plan 2024–34
- 8.0% (784) of rail services in August 2026 were replaced by buses (planned and unplanned); of the unplanned replacements, the remainder of vehicles beyond Metlink bus operators and NCS did not meet Metlink's preferred fleet requirements (item 10, p.84).

3. What's unmeasured or missing

- The Extraordinary Pay benefit is confirmed to make public transport more affordable, but the report states it is not possible to confirm whether access to the benefit has increased patronage or the number of trips taken; no patronage impact measure is provided in Report 26.433 (item 6, p.25).
- The bus emissions data (in-service kilometres by engine type and CO2 equivalent tonnes) in the August 2026 performance report is stated to be as of June 2026 only, pending implementation of a new bus emissions calculation system; August 2026 emissions data is therefore not available in the supplied report (item 10, p.109–110).
- The Network Operations Centre feasibility (bus communications integration into a central public transport communications system, requested 19 February 2026) remains ongoing with no completion date stated; the action register notes an update will be provided as part of LTP preparations, but no specific reporting date is given in the supplied report (item 5, p.17).
- The mix of services to initially operate on the Harbour Quays corridor is not yet confirmed; the September 2026 minutes record that this will be confirmed by Council in the first quarter of next year (item 4, p.9).
- The full Metlink communications brief for the summer 2026/27 rail disruptions is not yet complete at the time of this report; further information on customer communications is to be presented to the Committee in November 2026 (item 7, p.62).
- The Grenada Depot construction costs are not yet finalised; the report states Metlink is in the process of finalising depot construction costs (item 8, p.69).
- The Golden Mile bus shelters programme delivery approach and funding envelope are not yet determined; a report back is due in March 2027 to inform both Councils' 2027 LTP processes (item 8, p.70).
- The So Far As Is Reasonably Practicable (SFAIRP) arguments for level crossings between Waikanae and Palmerston North (required for Tūhono regulatory engagement) are still being prepared; the programme team is 'currently optimistic' that mitigations may be covered within the programme budget, but no confirmed outcome is stated in the supplied report (item 8, p.65).

4. Questions to ask

- Rail punctuality at peak, once KiwiRail contract exclusions are applied, was 84.4% in August 2026 against a 96.6% target, with TSRs accounting for 74% of delay minutes (item 10, p.85–86). Staff note the contracted KPI does not reflect customer experience. What is the current total length and number of active TSRs on the network, and what is KiwiRail's projected timeline for removing them to a level that would materially improve customer-experienced punctuality?
- KiwiRail's planned renewals delivery has been below expected levels throughout the year, described as a 'deliberate reset' (item 10, p.87). What specific delivery milestones or volume targets has KiwiRail committed to under the reset programme, and by what date does Metlink expect to be able to assess whether the reset is converting into improved outcomes for passengers?
- Rail staffing was 281 against a target of 319 as of August 2026, a shortfall of 38 (item 10, p.101). What is the current recruitment and training pipeline trajectory, and at what point is the shortfall expected to be resolved?
- Tranche One bus contract award is anticipated by December 2026, but depot readiness for the Kenepuru and Southern satellite depots remains dependent on future Council decisions and regulatory processes (item 8, p.67). If those decisions or processes are not resolved before contract award, what contingency arrangements exist to ensure operational commencement on 16 July 2028 is not jeopardised?
- Tranche Two bus procurement for Unit 24 (Hutt Valley) may exceed the approved funding envelope, and the programme has used most of its schedule contingency (item 8, p.68). What is the quantum of the potential funding shortfall, and what service optimisation options are being considered for Council's consideration?
- The Future Rail Services Contract Procurement Programme commenced initiation only in August 2026, with the current Rail Partnering Contract expiring in July 2031 (item 8, p.68–69). What is the minimum lead time required to complete procurement and transition, and does the programme team consider the current timeline sufficient given the identified risks around resource availability and programme complexity?
- The Waterloo Station demolition report is scheduled for Council on 10 December 2026, and a refurbishment cost is to be added to the next LTP bid regardless of any TOD decision (item 8, p.66–67). What is the indicative refurbishment cost range that will be included in the LTP bid, and what is the current estimated cost of demolition?
- Bus complaints in August 2026 were 34% higher than August 2025, with the North-South, Khandallah and Brooklyn network up 56.4% (item 10, p.112). The report attributes some of this to flu-season driver absences and Hutt Valley roading disruption. Are there other contributing factors specific to the North-South, Khandallah and Brooklyn network, and what targeted actions are planned to address the complaint trend in that area?

5. What you're endorsing by accepting

- Item 4 — The Committee is asked to confirm the public minutes of the Public Transport Committee meeting of 10 September 2026 (Report 26.419). Confirmation of minutes is a formal record-keeping action; it does not re-open, amend or re-authorise any resolution made at that meeting.
- Item 5 — The Committee receives Report 26.457 (Update on the Progress of Action Items) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report records the status of outstanding action items and notes that completed items will be removed and new items added following this meeting.
- Item 6 — The Committee receives Report 26.433 (Emerging Trends in Transport) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report presents analytical findings and strategic considerations for Metlink's future network planning. A follow-up trends update is scheduled in six months.

- Item 7 — The Committee receives Report 26.434 (Planning for Summer 2026/27 Rail Disruptions) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report describes operational planning for Bus Replacement Train (BRT) services across all lines from 26 December 2026 to 25 January 2027. A further report on customer communications is to come to the Committee in November 2026.
- Item 8 — The Committee receives Report 26.435 (Transport Major Projects and Programmes – Quarterly Update) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report updates the Committee on the status of LNIRIM, RiverLink, NTS/Motu Move, Waterloo Station, Future Transport Services Procurement (Tranches One and Two and Future Rail), the Bus Depot Programme, Busways projects and the Accessibility Action Plan. Separate Council decisions on contract award (Tranche One, anticipated December 2026), the Waterloo Station demolition report (10 December 2026), and Tranche Two network recommendations (10 December 2026) are identified as future decision points not authorised by this item.
- Item 9 — The Committee receives Report 26.436 (Public Transport Advisory Group Meeting – 24 September 2026) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report fulfils the Terms of Reference requirement to review a written report of each PTAG meeting. The PTAG's feedback on Tūhono carriage design and rail replacement communications is noted for the LNIRIM programme and Metlink's communications planning.
- Item 10 — The Committee receives Report 26.438 (Public Transport Performance – August 2026) for information. No substantive approval is sought; the report presents operational performance data for bus, rail and ferry for August 2026. Receiving this report does not certify satisfactory performance or waive scrutiny of the below-target results reported for rail reliability, rail punctuality and ferry reliability.

Coverage

- Analysed: Public Transport Committee, 15 October 2026 — [Source](#)
- Reference plans checked: GW Long Term Plan 2024-34 — [Source](#); GW Annual Plan 2026/27 — [Source](#)
- Prior briefs checked: none checked.