Council Supplementary Agenda 28 October 2026

Meeting will be held at the Otago Regional Council Chamber, Aonui, 180 High Street, Dunedin, Otago, and live streamed on the ORC YouTube channel.

Members:
Cr Hilary Calvert (Chair)
Cr Kevin Malcolm (Deputy Chair)
Cr Robbie Byars
Cr Chanel Gardner
Cr Neil Gillespie
Cr Matt Hollyer
Cr Gary Kelliher
Cr Michael Laws
Cr Andrew Noone
Cr Gretchen Robertson
Cr Alan Somerville
Cr Kate Wilson

Senior Officer: Richard Saunders, Chief Executive
Meeting Support: Kylie Darragh, Governance Support Officer

28 October 2026 10:30 AM

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Agenda 1

1. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION 2

1.1 Decision on Changes to Dunedin Bus Timetables 2

1.1. Changes to Dunedin Bus Timetables

Prepared for:	Council
Report No.	TRN2625
Activity:	Public Transport
Authors:	Anita Dawe, General Manager, Regional Planning and Transport
Endorsed by:	Richard Saunders (Chief Executive)
Date:	28 October 2026
Portfolio Leads:	Cr Hollyer and Cr Somerville, Transport

PURPOSE

[1] This paper is to note the issues arising following widespread Dunedin network changes introduced on 1 October 2026 and seek Council's endorsement for the process to appropriately review and respond to the feedback received.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[2] The timetable and route changes implemented on 1 October have failed to deliver the intended benefits and have caused considerable issues across the City.

[3] The scope of the changes should have triggered a formal Council decision and likely a community consultation process to enable an opportunity for bus users and the broader community to comment on proposed changes.

[4] An urgent review is underway to clearly identify each of the issues resulting from the changes and understand the root cause. Staff will prepare options in response that will be brought to Council for decisions, as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council:

1) ***Notes*** *this report.*
2) ***Notes*** *that an external consultant has been engaged to support a rapid review of the Dunedin network changes.*
3) ***Notes*** *that a small number of priority changes will be made to early morning services to reinstate previous levels of service where these changes can be delivered within approved budgets.*
4) ***Notes*** *that a further paper will be brought to Council with options for responding to the remaining issues identified.*

BACKGROUND

[5] As part of preparing for the transition of public transport Units 1 and 2 in Dunedin, route optimisation and efficiency reviews identified the opportunity to make what were intended to be minor timetable changes, alongside addressing some known network deficiencies. These changes were identified through data analysis and feedback collated over a number of years from public transport users.

[6] New timetables were introduced on 1 October, and it was immediately evident that the nature and scale of the changes resulted in changes to levels of service on some routes. These changes in levels of service should have been the subject of a Council decision.

[7] The changes include several cancelled late-night services across the city, changes in the start time of some services, and realignment of some routes. In addition to this, there are several issues related to new drivers unfamiliar with routes which is causing general disruption, including late running of services, and causing disruption to school students' ability to get to school.

[8] While some changes have been well received by public transport users, the scale of changes made has proved widespread and disruptive. An urgent assessment of the changes and review of the process is now underway.

[9] An initial review has indicated that due to the scale of the changes made, community consultation on the changes should have been undertaken as part of the process.

[10] Reverting to the original timetable is not a straightforward option – the new timetable has been in planning for a number of months and optimises the available fleet. Returning to the previous timetable will reintroduce known issues and take some time to adjust drivers schedules and workforce planning.

DISCUSSION

[11] The transition to a new contractor for Units 1 and 2 affects a significant part of the Dunedin network and changes which were intended to streamline services, improve efficiency and achieve cost savings, have not appropriately considered the impact on users.

[12] A full review of the changes is being expedited, with a consultant engaged to provide additional external support.

[13] While there will be several changes required that will necessitate Council decisions, in the interim there are two shorter term changes that can be implemented to address known timetable issues.

[14] These changes are reinstating the Route 78 (Mosgiel to Dunedin) first service by shifting the time back by 10 minutes, and reinstating the early Route 18 (Peninsula) service that starts at Harington Point. Both these changes are currently being priced by the contractor and should be implemented in the next fortnight. Communication with bus users and the relevant Community Boards will occur as soon as the details are confirmed.

[15] In addition to the immediate changes identified above, staff have been engaging directly with the contractor in relation to driver training issues. The contractor has brought in a Dunedin based trainer to respond to the issues identified, and staff will continue to escalate training issues as required. Driver training and assurance will form part of the review that is underway.

[16] More detailed changes will be brought to Council for consideration once the review is completed. These decisions will have been informed by complaint data, contractor feedback, discussions with community boards and further staff assessment. Consideration of formal community consultation will form part of these decisions.

[17] Staff will continue to prioritise this work, to ensure solutions can be implemented as soon as reasonably as practical.

OPTIONS

[18] As this is a noting paper, no options are currently proposed.

SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS

Community Outcomes

This work aligns with the following community outcomes from the ORC 2024-2034 Long-Term Plan:

Transport

Otago has an integrated transport system that contributes to the accessibility and connectivity of our community, reduces congestion and supports community wellbeing aspirations.

Councillor Priority Actions

The priority action that ensure[s] public transport performance reporting supports effective governance oversight, including reliability, accessibility and service effectiveness directly relates to this paper. While the changes have been made to address issues identified through regular reporting, the oversight required did not occur.

Alignment with Central Government Legislation

There is no specific national policy statement or central government direction that is directly applicable to this work.

Alignment with Otago Regional Council Internal Policy

There is no specific ORC policy that is directly applicable to this work.

Financial Considerations

The budget for this work forms part of the retendering of Unit 1 and 2, and general staff time. Changes to optimise the network are considered part of day to day duties.

Legal Compliance/Risk

The changes to the Dunedin network were intended to be minor and no consultation was undertaken. Legal advice has confirmed that consultation should have been undertaken. Consideration of consultation requirements will form part of future decisions brought to Council.

Reputational Risk
The changes have damaged the reputation of ORC in relation to the provision of transport services. This is not unexpected given the nature and scale of changes. In order to mitigate some of this damage, staff are ensuring they are communicating through a range of different fora, attending community board meetings to listen to concerns, and ensuring that solutions respond to the most significant or impactful changes.

Climate Resilience
The impacts of climate-related risks (e.g. flooding, drought, extreme winds, coastal erosion, wildfires) on this work has not been assessed.

Carbon Emissions
The implications of this work on organisational or regional greenhouse gas emissions has not been assessed.

He Mahi Rau Rika: Significance, Engagement and Māori Participation Policy
This work is of HIGH significance as assessed against He Mahi Rau Rika. The changes have had widespread impact across a range of routes and timetables. It has impacted several stakeholders negatively.

Engagement with Mana Whenua
There has been no engagement with mana whenua or Māori specifically for this work.

Stakeholder Engagement
There has been no engagement with external stakeholders and/or the public specifically for this work.

Communications
The issues caused by the changes to the network have caused a corresponding increase in communications, both through complaints received and requirements to provide updates to the public. It will be important that regular communications are maintained while staff work through options for Council to consider.

Staff are completing the planning process for the first meetings on the Transport Community Liaison Groups. These groups are seen as an ideal opportunity to test proposals for changes on the Public Transport networks. It is intended to bring forward the initial meetings, to enable them to occur prior to the end of the calendar year.

NEXT STEPS

[19] Staff will continue to work through the complaints and issues to identify the root cause of the problem and develop options for future Council consideration.

[20] The changes identified for Route 18 (Peninsula) and 78 (Mosgiel) will be introduced as soon as practical.

[21] Staff will continue to attend community board meetings as required.

ATTACHMENTS
Nil