

Proposed variations to the Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2015-2021

I am making a submission about the Portobello bus service - the no. 18 route. While I am pleased the buses now take bikes and have a more frequent service, there are two major constraints to this being an effective bus service.

1. Route change

The bus no longer stops close to the University (the Museum Reserve), and instead returns to the peninsula via George Street. The University and Polytech are significant employers in Dunedin, hence it would seemingly make sense to enable its employees/students to reach it relatively easily via public transport. I am a university employee who tries to persist with catching the bus because I believe in supporting public transport but my commitment is sorely tested. The bus leaves earlier at 5.08, which is a problem for those of us who finish work at 5pm because it now takes longer to walk to the bus stop near New World. Although the bus leaves earlier it arrives at Portobello at a similar time to the previous bus that departed the museum reserve at 5.20 because the bus now takes so long negotiating peak hour traffic on George St. In other words, it is now a longer walk to catch the bus and is a longer bus trip. This makes taking my car more attractive.

The number of university employees and students that boarded the bus at the museum reserve was often around 10 but this has decreased dramatically now that the bus departs from New World: 1-2 passengers might be gained via George St but these passengers would only have 2 blocks to walk to join the bus on the one-way street going south, which is a much better route for bus traffic.

The museum reserve's proximity to the Uni/Poly area is important and should be added back to the peninsula route. From New World, it is a considerable walk to other parts of Uni/Poly. Whilst I appreciate the supposed plan that those heading for Uni/Poly would transfer onto another bus once in town, there are some glitches with that reasoning:

- A transfer system requires the arrival/departure of buses to be very reliable, and it is somewhat difficult to have confidence in that at the moment.

- Reasonably, one would at least (at best) have to allow for a 10 minute wait for the transfer, which would mean we would have to leave home a whole bus-time earlier than if the bus went directly to the Museum Reserve e.g. we would need to catch the 7.27am from Portobello, instead of the 7.57am, for say a 9am start at Uni (the closest parts of Uni that is). That makes car travel so much more practicable, even for those of us who would prefer to support a public bus service.

2. The contract process

Firms who put forward the lowest costs when tendering for contracts are typically the firms who are granted contracts. For the contracting process to achieve the intended efficient and effective provision of services/products, penalties must be included in the contract - so as to deter firms from under-costing their service/product. For instance, a bus service that under-budgets for drivers, including stand-by drivers, would otherwise be unfairly advantaged when tendering for a contract. Correspondingly, the penalties would need to be rigorously imposed, and those affected by the contract would need to be aware of any penalties that have (or have not) been imposed. Those affected by the no. 18 bus service contract include the local community. So, what we need to know is what penalties were included in the contract, and what penalties have been imposed?

Finally, an effective public transport system is the only way to reduce traffic on our roads. The Otago Regional Council claims it is committed to addressing climate change, yet its recent public transport tendering and route-change processes have directly discouraged people from using public transport, especially employees and students from two of Dunedin's largest institutions (the university and polytech). For students at both institutions, the Otago Regional Council is offering very poor leadership in encouraging young, and older, people to travel by bus.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Nairn