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MEDIA RELEASE

Wakatipu bus network subsidies confirmed

Thursday 29 June 2017

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A much improved, inexpensive, reliable and frequent public transport system will be launched across the Wakatipu later this year, with the Otago Regional Council and Queenstown Lakes District Council both confirming funding and resources through their annual plans. This complements the significant funding previously confirmed from the NZ Transport Agency.

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A \$2 fare trial is a key part of the plan, enabled by targeted rates each council is levying to subsidise the bus services – a key means of providing more transport options for residents and visitors and reducing traffic congestion. These subsidies are additional to the NZ Transport Agency's core funding for the service.

The new publicly-subsidised service will replace the privately-run commercial service that currently operates in the area. Reducing traffic via increased use of public transport is a key part of a wider coordinated approach between the Transport Agency, ORC, QLDC and Queenstown Airport to address transport issues in the Wakatipu Basin.

The new service is geared to being simple to use, with direct routes and regular buses (either every 15 minutes or 30 minutes on-peak). Services will follow the same routes and timetables 364 days a year.

The \$2 fare trial will be offered across all zones to all those using GoCard, and includes a free transfer within 30 minutes. Alongside this flat fare, the plan is for all buses to have free wifi and cycle racks.

The funding announced by ORC yesterday follows confirmation of QLDC's Annual Plan on 23 June and comes after community consultation in March-April this year. The new service is expected to start in the last quarter of 2017.

ORC chairman Stephen Woodhead said ORC had brought forward the review of passenger transport in the Wakatipu by 12 months to fast-forward the introduction of a 'fit for purpose, enhanced and subsidised bus service for the Queenstown area'.

"We're excited to be bringing a better bus service to our constituents in the Wakatipu' Mr Woodhead said. "The continued support of both QLDC and the Transport Agency has been critical and the end result will be a much better public transport system for the Wakatipu Basin."

Queenstown Lakes District Council Infrastructure Committee chairwoman Alexa Forbes sees this as another significant step towards a public transport system that will be a viable alternative to private cars with benefits of easing traffic congestion and reducing pollution in the basin.

"What it needs now is for the community to truly support it. It will be a 'use it or lose it' offering. We think the time is right, that people are ready to make the switch to convenient affordable transport and I'm sure it will be welcomed.

"It's great to see ORC and the Transport Agency on the same page as QLDC because this cooperation will support success. Cost is a huge driver of change and (Queenstown Lakes) Mayor (Jim) Boulton's push to deliver a \$2 fare has been fantastic. If successful, this new offering will be simply the first step in a future focused transport network.'

NZ Transport Agency director regional relationships Jim Harland said the agency strongly supported a reliable public transport network in Queenstown, as another step in the partnership approach to reducing Queenstown's congestion issues.

"We believe this will give local people and visitors a real and viable choice with the more affordable fare structure, network approach, and frequent services. We encourage people to use it later this year and see the benefits for everyone on the network.'

Route summary

1. Sunshine Bay (peak only), Fernhill to Queenstown, Frankton Flats, Airport, Remarkables Park, Airport 6am-midnight (with potential to extend to 1am) Every 15 mins (every 30 mins off-peak; potential to extend to every 15 mins off-peak as well)
2. Arrowtown, Frankton Flats, Queenstown town centre, Arthurs Point 6am-10pm (with potential to extend to midnight) Every 30 mins (every 60 mins off-peak; potential to extend to every 30 mins off-peak as well)
3. Five Mile, Frankton Flats, Airport, Remarkables Park, Kelvin Heights 6am-10pm (with potential to extend to midnight) Every 60 mins (with potential to extend to every 30 mins)
4. Lake Hayes to Jacks Point 6am-10pm (with potential to extend to midnight) Every 30 mins (every 60 mins off-peak; potential to extend to every 30 mins off-peak as well)

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