

31 August 2022

File Ref: OIAP-7-25449

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2022-118

I refer to your request for information dated 3 August, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 3 August. You have requested the following:

“How has the introduction of Snapper on train services improved things for the travelling public i.e. your customers?”

Why does a monthly pass need to be presented 3 times for every single journey? Why can't it also be used to make the same journey by bus?

You state that you have no intention of checking the same customer's Snapper card multiple times on the same trip so why is it still happening? Why do we have to tag on at the point of departure and tag off at our destination only to have our card inspected on board the train in between?

Wellington and Greater Wellington have a tiny population compared to the cities you refer to so why do we need Snapper?

In summary:

You don't envisage the issues I have raised. In that case, I request that the following questions to be properly addressed:

- 1. What exactly does Metlink envisage and how does Metlink's perspective differ from mine?*
- 2. What exactly are Metlink's plans going forward?*
- 3. Why, as you have indicated, are you only prepared to inform your customers piecemeal?*
- 4. Exactly why didn't you reveal the big picture from day one?*
- 5. Exactly how is Snapper going to be an improvement over the previous system? It isn't so far and there is no indication that things are going to get better.*
- 6. What has been the financial cost of implementing the new system to date?*
- 7. What is the projected cost of implementing Snapper across the network and how is that going to affect fares for customers?*
- 8. Exactly what value does Metlink see there being in moving to Snapper?”*

Greater Wellington's response follows:

Thank you for your letter; you have raised some very important points and questions regarding Snapper on Rail. We apologise if you thought our earlier response was patronising – please be assured that this was not our intent.

For context, the introduction of Snapper onto the Wellington Rail network is an interim step towards transitioning to the National Ticketing Solution, which will be a Government-led ticketing system for all New Zealand public transport authorities. Initially we anticipated that we would transition to the National Ticketing Solution following the Johnsonville pilot, however in late 2021 we were advised that the National Ticketing Solution has been significantly delayed. Given that for many years a large part of our rail community has been requesting a paperless, cashless method of paying for fares (particularly in a Covid environment), the decision was made to extend Snapper to the rest of the rail network as an interim solution, following the successful pilot on the Johnsonville Line.

Metlink plans to introduce Snapper to the rest of the rail network by the end of 2022, and transition to the National Ticketing Solution when this is available, which still may be some years away.

A survey of customers in respect of the Johnsonville Line pilot was undertaken. Over 92% of surveyed customers were likely to recommend paying with Snapper on the train to other forms of payment and 98% were satisfied for ease of tagging on. It is appreciated that some rail customers would prefer paper-based passes, however from a practical perspective, it is very difficult for rail operation staff to undertake checking Snapper as well as paper-based tickets. The decision was therefore made to transition to only Snapper including for monthly passes and ten trip tickets.

We acknowledge your comments around the requirement to produce your Snapper card several times on a trip. A key part of electronic ticketing is the tagging on and off for each journey – either through a gated or non-gated system. Electronic ticketing also provides us with data, such as more accurate patronage numbers to help improve planning on the network. The decision was made to introduce a non-gated system in the Wellington region primarily due to the layout of the rail network and the logistical difficulty in gating Wellington station.

In a non-gated system, we need to undertake some checks onboard to ensure people are tagging on and off and therefore paying the required fare. A heavy focus on onboard checking when electronic ticketing is first introduced has been shown internationally to embed the right behaviours, as people get used to the new system. This onboard checking will be reduced once the system is embedded.

The benefits of the interim solution are that it allows us to introduce electronic ticketing to the Wellington Rail network to prepare the network and customers for this transition. It also allows for the opportunity to make improvements ahead of the transition to the National Ticketing Solution when this is available, such as reviewing validator locations to prevent crowding at stations.

I have responded below to your specific questions; however, I would invite you to attend one of the upcoming “Meet our Manager” sessions that we regularly hold at Wellington Station. Metlink managers would be more than happy to personally talk to you around any residual concerns you may have regarding Snapper on Rail at one of these sessions. The next session is scheduled for 16 November 2022. More information will be posted on the Metlink Facebook page closer to the time.

1. What exactly does Metlink envisage and how does Metlink's perspective differ from mine?

The above paragraphs address this question.

2. What exactly are Metlinks plans going forward?

Metlink’s plans for its network are available on the Greater Wellington website and are set out in its Long-Term Plan which can be found here:

<https://ltp.gw.govt.nz/assets/LTP-21-31/document/LTP-full-document-Web.pdf> and in the annual plan here: [Greater Wellington Regional Council Annual Plan 2022/23 \(gw.govt.nz\)](https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Annual-Plans/2022-23/Annual-Plan-2022-23.pdf)

In terms of electronic ticketing, as advised above Metlink is working towards Snapper being used on all rail lines by the end of 2022. Advice is awaited from Waka Kotahi on when the National Ticketing Solution will be available for introduction into the Greater Wellington network.

3. Why, as you have indicated, are you only prepared to inform your customers piecemeal?

This is not our intent. As set out in our Long-Term Plan, our intention was to introduce the National Ticketing Solution in 2021/22 and it was only due to delays in this project that Greater Wellington decided in early 2022 to introduce Snapper on Rail as an interim solution.

4. Exactly why didn't you reveal the big picture from day one?

The process regarding progression is explained in the paragraphs above.

5. Exactly how is Snapper going to be an improvement over the previous system? It isn't so far and there is no indication that things are going to get better.

Electronic ticketing provides a paperless/cashless method of paying for fares which a large majority of rail customers have been requesting for many years. It will also provide data to help improve planning on the network.

6. What has been the financial cost of implementing the new system to date?

The cost of implementing Snapper on Rail on the Johnsonville line was \$3.07m. Many of these costs, such as those incurred to undertake civil works or removing paper tickets from the network, will not need to be reincurred when Greater Wellington transitions to the National Ticketing Solution.

7. What is the projected cost of implementing Snapper across the network and how is that going to affect fares for customers?

The cost of implementing Snapper on Rail on the rest of the network is estimated to be \$7.9m. Many of these costs, such as those incurred to undertake civil works or removing paper tickets from the network, will not need to be reincurred when Greater Wellington transitions to the National Ticketing Solution.

There will be no change to the cost of fares for customers due to the implementation of Snapper across the network.

There are financial cost savings from the interim Snapper on Rail solution relating to reduced fare loss associated with paper ticketing as well as reduced cash handling and administrative costs. Hence the net incremental cost of an interim Snapper solution is expected to be much smaller than the amounts listed above, while providing customers with a safer and more convenient method of payment for rail services.

8. Exactly what value does Metlink see there being in moving to Snapper?

The benefits of the interim solution are that it allows us to introduce electronic ticketing to the Wellington Rail network which creates a paper-less and cashless way for rail customers to pay for their rail fares. It also allows us the opportunity to make improvements as required, such as reviewing validator locations to prevent crowding at stations ahead of the transition to the National Ticketing Solution, when this is available.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Samantha Gain
Kaiwhakahaere Matua | General Manager Metlink