

Council
20 August 2020
Report 20.305



For Information

COVID-19: PUBLIC TRANSPORT RESPONSE – UPDATE

Te take mō te pūrongo

Purpose

1. To provide Council with an overview of the operational work undertaken by Metlink and its partners in response to the move from COVID-19 Alert Level 1 to Alert Level 2.
2. To provide Council with an overview of the operational work undertaken by Metlink and its partners in preparation for any move to COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4.

Te tāhū kōrero

Background

3. The World Health Organisation declared a world-wide novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The New Zealand Government responded with a range of measures, including the 21 March 2020 announcement of a COVID-19 alert level system and the declaration of Alert Level 2 status, with a subsequent move to Alert Level 3, and then to Alert Level 4 from 11.59pm Wednesday 25 March 2020.
4. Alert Level 4 was reviewed by Government on Monday 20 April 2020, with a decision to move to Alert Level 3 at 11.59pm on Monday 27 April 2020.
5. Alert Level 3 was reviewed by Government on Monday 11 May 2020, with a decision to move to Alert Level 2 at 11.59pm on Wednesday 13 May.
6. Alert Level 2 was reviewed by Government on Monday 8 June 2020, with a decision to move to Alert Level 1 at 11.59pm on Monday 8 June 2020.
7. Alert Level 1 was reviewed by Government on Tuesday 11 August 2020, with a decision to move New Zealand (excluding the Auckland Region, which moved to Alert Level 3) to Alert Level 2 at 12 noon on Wednesday 12 August 2020.
8. At all alert levels, the Government expects Greater Wellington to maintain essential public transport services (in line with the Government's guidance on COVID-19 alert levels) to support essential services while maintaining front line health and safety. These expectations include user contact tracing.
9. Report 20.99 was presented to Council on 30 April. The report provided an overview of operational work undertaken by Metlink and its partners in preparation for moving out of COVID-19 Alert Level 4. That report was based on Government guidance at the time.

10. This report provides an update to Report 20.99 and focuses on Metlink's response for the move from Alert Level 1 to Alert Level 2. This report also provides an update on preparations in the event of a move to Alert Level 3, as well as Alert Level 4.

Alert Level 2

Government guidance on the use of public transport under Alert Level 2

11. At Alert Level 2, the Government's current guidance sets out the following advice for travel and transport:

You can travel, but make sure you do it in a safe way.

You will need to:

- *keep records of what travel services you use and who you have been in contact with*
- *keep your distance from groups of people you don't know*
- *minimise the number of places you stop on the way to your destination.*

Tips for minimising risk while travelling:

- *If you can, try to avoid travelling on public transport at peak times. Consider alternative ways of travelling, like cycling or walking.*
- *While waiting for public transport avoid standing close to strangers, and avoid sitting next to someone you don't know when on board. Follow the instructions from your transport operators.*
- *Maintain good hygiene – wash your hands often, cough or sneeze into your elbow.*
- *Keep track of your journey, including where and when you boarded and where you're sitting.*
- *If you can, try to take public transport at off-peak times.*
- *Avoid sitting or standing next to someone you don't know.*
- *If you're flying or taking other forms of transport that involve bookings, follow the physical distancing instructions from your transport operators.*

You must not travel if you are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, awaiting a test, or if you need to self-isolate.

12. The Ministry of Health (MoH) has issued guidelines for Alert Level 2 for the use of face masks on public transport for both passengers and workers. The guidelines advise that face masks can be useful if there is known community transmission, and people are near each other, (less than 2 metres apart) such as on public transport, in shops or

in other confined or crowded environments. But importantly, the guidance has not made the use of masks mandatory.

13. MoH has also confirmed that public public transport staff (including drivers) are not required to use masks or gloves. In part, this recognises that while wearing masks and using gloves may provide some health benefit in some settings, their use may also increase the risk of transmission.

Service levels at Alert Level 2

14. At Alert Level 2 bus, rail and ferry operations remain at normal scheduled timetabling, with fares continuing to be collected.
15. Physical distancing to 1 metre is required on our public transport services.

Capacity

16. In order to comply with physical distancing requirements, capacity on each service is reduced by between 50% and 65% to cater for the 1 metre social distancing proximity requirements. The percentage varies based on the layout of the particular vehicle.
17. For buses and trains, these requirements essentially mean that we only have capacity for window only seating. On the ferry, it is every alternate seat. Across all parts of the network no standing is allowed.
18. High level analysis of capacity and patronage suggests that currently demand for services exceeds capacity at certain times and on certain routes due to the social distancing measures in place.
19. Officers are actively reviewing patronage data and working with operators to put on additional services (banker buses) where resources allow and to continue to urge customers to act responsibly in line with the Government's guidance.

Safety measures at Alert Level 2

Contact tracing

20. Metlink has been working with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi), Snapper and the Ministry of Health in regard to contact tracing solutions across public transport services. The objective of these discussions has been to make sure Metlink is able to offer the best contact tracing solutions across all modes of transport and supports the Ministry of Health contact tracing requirements.
21. Metlink has several methods available to support contact tracing of customers. These are:
 - a Snapper ticketing system on our bus fleet. Snapper requires passengers to 'tag on and tag off'. To effectively trace a passenger by name the Snapper card needs to be registered by the individual. Currently, just over 50 % of Snapper cards are registered.
 - b In addition, unregistered cards are able be used in contact tracing efforts as it is possible to determine where the card has been used, but not who owns the card. This is useful in understanding the movements of people across the entire journey. Currently, just over 75% of the Metlink bus patronage use Snapper cards, with a number of routes nearing 90% or thereabouts.

- c Quick Response (QR) codes have been installed on all rail and ferry services in the Metlink network. QR codes on rail have been trialled using a minimum and maximum spread across the carriages and, as a result of the trial, the QR codes were installed using the maximum spread. This means that there is a QR code within approximately 1 metre of every seat.
 - d Each service also has an orange capacity poster at the entrance door showing the service/vehicle/vessel number so that customers can manually record their trip data ([Attachment 1](#)). Many vehicles also have the Government COVID-19 'contact tracing' poster as well.
22. Messaging across the network encourages all passengers to 'track their journey' by one of the above methods.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment

23. All frontline Metlink workers have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
24. The use of this PPE is in accordance with MoH guidelines.
25. Passenger use of PPE is communicated by the MoH and this messaging is re-affirmed on the Metlink website and our other social media channels.
26. Metlink frontline staff are not required to monitor or enforce distancing or use of PPE on our services. This is a user responsibility and, if necessary, the Police should be called to resolve any situations. Attachment 2 to this report sets out the guidance given to frontline staff ([Attachment 2](#)), as well as a range of other collateral.

Cleaning

27. At the time when the Government first introduced the Alert Levels to support the fight against COVID-19, Metlink and our operators worked closely together to implement a strengthened cleaning regime for our buses, trains and ferry.
28. The cleaning regimes are based on advice from the MoH. This strengthened cleaning regime has continued since the COVID-19 Alert levels were initially put in place.
29. This strengthened cleaning regime remains under Alert Level 2. In summary, it means an increased amount of cleaning on our fleet concentrating on things such as high touch areas and air conditioning systems for example

Communication to transport users

30. Officers are working to ensure that our communities are aware of the restrictions and requirements at Alert Level 2. Communications include:
- a Alert Level 2 collateral in the form of posters by the doors, window stickers and floor decals on-board vehicle, vessel and carriages to encourage physical distancing and other key messages. An example of one of these posters is attached ([Attachment 3](#))
 - b Collateral in the form of two posters at key stations/stops/wharves to remind passengers of key messages before they board, such as physical distancing, mask use is encouraged and that fares remain in place at Alert Level 2
 - c The Metlink website COVID-19

- d Paid social media campaigns are running with messaging around physical distancing, fares remaining, encouraging mask use, Snapper information (to encourage contact-less payment) and specific information for Total Mobility customers.
- e Videos to show passengers how to travel on public transport during Alert Level 2 are being produced, and an initial video with information from Scott Gallacher - General Manager, Metlink has been well-received.

Preparations for move to Alert Level 3

Government guidance on the use of public transport under Alert Level 3

31. At Alert Level 3, the Government's current guidance sets out the following advice for travel within your local area:

You can travel within your local area, for example going to work or school, shopping, or getting exercise. Public transport can continue to operate with strict health and safety requirements.

You should maintain physical distancing. You are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering if you can't maintain 2 metres distance from people you don't know.

Service levels at Alert Level 3

32. At Alert Level 3 bus and rail remain at normal scheduled timetabling, with fares still being collected.
33. The ferry will suspend services.
34. Physical distancing to two metres is required on our public transport services.

Capacity

35. In order to comply with physical distancing requirements, capacity on each service is reduced further by approximately an additional 25%.
36. During Alert Level 3 (27 April 2020 -13 May 2020) we saw an 87% reduction in bus passenger boardings compared to the equivalent days the previous year.
37. Our experience at Alert Level 3 is that capacity will meet demand due to the Government's instruction for more workers to work from home.
38. In the event of a move to Alert Level 3, we would actively monitor the situation to determine what (if any) steps can be taken to meet services with demand.

Safety measures at Alert Level 3

39. In addition to the safety measures set out for Alert Level 2, the following safety measures will be considered for implementation:
- a At Alert Level 3 operators would work with MoH guidelines to consider rear door loading.
 - b We would also consider isolation of Metlink staff from our passengers to prevent close contact.

Preparations for move to Alert Level 4

Service levels at Alert Level 4

40. At Alert Level 4 bus and rail services will likely operate a Sunday timetable with some additional services to communities who have no Sunday service.
41. The ferry will suspend services.

Safety measures at Alert Level 4

42. In addition to the measures outlined above for Alert Levels 2 and 3, Metlink will implement in cooperation with our operators all further Government guidance on Alert Level 4.

Ngā tūāoma e whai ake nei

Next steps

43. Officers will continue to monitor the situation as it evolves and make any necessary operational adjustments in line with the Government’s alert level guidelines and Metlink’s Business Continuity Plan.

Ngā āpitihanga

Attachments

Number	Title
1	Vehicle capacity and tracing
2	Information for Metlink Staff
3	Information for passengers

Ngā kaiwaitohu

Signatories

Writer	Matthew Lear – Principal Advisor: Service Delivery
Approver	Melissa Anderson – Manager Metlink Operations Scott Gallacher – General Manager, Metlink

<p>He whakarāpopoto i ngā huritaonga Summary of considerations</p>
<p><i>Fit with Council’s roles or Committee’s terms of reference</i></p> <p>This is an information report for Council.</p>
<p><i>Implications for Māori</i></p> <p>There are no implications for Māori.</p>
<p><i>Contribution to Annual Plan / Long term Plan / Other key strategies and policies</i></p> <p>This report relates to Metlink’s response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public transport, which is a key activity in the Long Term Plan 2018—28.</p>
<p><i>Internal consultation</i></p> <p>Customer Engagement has been involved in developing communications.</p>
<p><i>Risks and impacts: legal / health and safety etc.</i></p> <p>This report sets out actions taken to respond to our public transport responsibilities under the Government’s alert level system.</p>

Keep your distance.

During the COVID-19 response, and in line with the physical distancing requirements for public transport, the maximum capacity of this vehicle is:

_____ customers

Vehicle fleet number _____

Please space yourself on board to maintain physical distance and we encourage you to use a facemask.

Thank you for your patience during this time and remember to track your journey.





Information for Metlink Staff

What you need to know during Alert Level 2.

The Government has placed the Wellington Region into Alert Level 2 at 12 noon on Wednesday, 12 August. Metlink will continue to offer a full service across the bus, train and harbour ferry network.

We are working as fast as we can to get physical distancing messages onto vehicles and stops / wharfs / stations. Expect to see information inside buses, trains and harbour ferries soon.

Passengers are being told:

- There are no changes to the Metlink timetables at Alert Level 2
- If you are sick, do not travel on public transport, if you can, work from home
- Please space yourself on-board to maintain a physical distance
- We encourage you to wear a mask on public transport
- Buses will retain front door boarding, which allows accessibility for all passengers
- Under Alert Level 2 we have physical distancing restrictions and no standing is allowed on services.
- Fares will remain in place at Alert Level 2 and we will be accept cash, but we continue to recommend people use other options where available
- Checking-in campaign messages for customers: commit to good hand hygiene, passengers are encouraged to wear a mask on Public Transport, maintain safe physical distancing, cleaning precautions are being enhanced, contact tracing:
 - Track your journey on Metlink services during Alert Level 2
 - On buses, if you have a Snapper card, please register it at snapper.co.nz/register/, this will then give you access to your journey information
 - On trains and harbour ferries, Metlink are rolling out QR codes, however this will take time, so please take a note or photo of what service you're on, the vehicle, vessel or train number, where you were sitting and the time you got on and off
- School services - At Alert Level 2 there is no standing allowed, however all seats can be used. Hand sanitiser will be made available and schools will log students for contact tracing and that students should have a Plan B because of the reduced capacity



Escalation for disputes / not respecting distancing etc.

You can politely ask passengers not to stand or to leave the vehicle. But if you feel uncomfortable, or if there is a problem, **you should call or radio your Supervisor**. If you feel you are in danger, call the police. It is not your role to step into any dispute.



Thank you Metlink Team – you are doing a fantastic job.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE



Stay safe during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 alert levels, physical distancing from your fellow passengers is important.

- Facemasks are encouraged
- Space yourself on board to maintain physical distance
- Keep a safe physical distance when waiting or queuing at stops and stations
- Capacity will be limited due to physical distancing which may mean you have to wait for the next service

We're all in this together. Thanks for your patience and understanding during this time.

