

By email: tramwaysunion@tradeshall.org.nz

14 May 2024

Bus drivers of Wellington
C/o Anne Reedy and Kevin O'Sullivan.

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Tēnā Koutou

On board bus announcements

On behalf of Greater Wellington, Metlink and the disability organisations, networks and groups who have penned this letter, we would like to respond to the concerns raised by members of the Tramways Union regarding our on board announcement system on Metlink buses.

In responding, we wish to emphasise the importance of having an on board announcements system on Wellington's buses. The technology, which is commonplace on public transport networks worldwide, is a standard accessibility requirement and ensures that all members of our community, including those with disabilities, can navigate our network with ease and dignity.

Accessibility is not merely a matter of convenience; it is a fundamental right. As a nation, we've long recognised this, and in 2008, New Zealand ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. Ratification means New Zealand must make a regular report to the United Nations on how the country has implemented the Convention.

At a regional level, this principle lies at the heart of our jointly developed and signed Accessibility Charter which highlights network improvements we need to prioritise and implement to achieve this goal. By providing on board announcements, we significantly enhance the accessibility of our buses and ensure that public transport is available to all.

Furthermore, we recognise that solidarity is a core principle of the union movement. Ensuring a group's collective rights are advocated for is the cornerstone of a strong union

movement. As representatives of the Tramways Union, we urge all bus drivers to stand in solidarity with our disabled community members by acknowledging the need for this system. By doing so, you are not only fulfilling your beliefs as a union member but also demonstrate a commitment to equity, inclusivity and fairness.

It is important to acknowledge the extensive consultation that has taken place between Metlink and bus companies since testing began in July 2019, including driver demonstrations and a trial onboard 20 buses in May 2023.

This included implementing changes based on complaints made around the system's volume. Prior to the system's rollout, thorough testing was undertaken, and feedback was sought to ensure the volume was set to an appropriate level for both passengers and driver comfort.

Since then, we've made further adjustments including switching off the speaker above the driver's seat and reducing the length of some messages from the announcements, like points of interest on routes, to reduce the amount of spoken text. A decibel meter was also used to calibrate the announcements for each bus type and the volume adjusted for the different noise levels at peak and off-peak times.

In closing, we would like to extend our gratitude to the disability organisations, networks and groups and operators with whom we have collaborated on the development of on board announcements as we work towards our shared goal of a more accessible network.

Ngā mihi



Thomas Nash
Chair, Transport Committee



Rose Wilkinson
Chief Executive, Blind Citizens NZ

Copy: Richard Wagstaff, President New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Prudence Walker, Disability Rights Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, Paula Tesoriero, CE, Whaikaha - Ministry for Disabled People, Chris Ford Kaituhotuho Kaupapa Here ā Rohe Regional Policy Advisor Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) and Chief Executives of the four bus operators in the Wellington region (Tranzurban, Kinetic, Mana Newlands Coach Services and Uzabus).