

Agenda item 6.5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - Raglan bus

Kia ora tātou

My name is Nicola Callaghan, I'm here to speak on behalf of the 250 + people who have signed the petition that we are presenting today.

Some individuals have been working in this space for many years and for others it is a recent collaboration. What we all have in common is that we would like a better bus service for our community and we would like to know what needs to happen for this to become a reality.

For us better buses means having a regular service between Raglan and Hamilton that people can rely on to get them to school, including in Hamilton East, their job, their hospital appointment or to visit friends and whānau. As there is not a regular service the community has created a FaceBook commuters group with almost 800 members to help fill the gap. Our population is growing and an increasing population are elderly who are losing their licences due to falling health. Buses help us connect to other parts of the region and other parts of the country. They allow people to meet and importantly they allow that to happen without the pressures and costs of owning their own vehicle.

Raglan is a tourist town, in summer when it can be difficult to find a carpark, with long queues at the single lane bridge and when there are long lines of traffic heading into and out of the township. If we had a regular bus these issues could be alleviated. We have many stories of tourists that want to spend time (and money) here but had difficulty getting to Raglan or had to cut trips short because there is not a bus to get them back to Hamilton and then further afield. This is especially acute at the weekend when there are only three return trips a day.

Five years ago Waikato District Council thought it was worthwhile having a local bus and were willing to fund it to the tune of \$100000 year. This hasn't eventuated yet the need has increased. A solution is overdue.

There are also the economic implications to consider. Go Raglan identified transport as a real barrier to work, locally and in the surrounding area. Without a suitable bus it is expensive for people who commute from Hamilton and can contribute to staff shortages with local businesses.

Buses are needed leaving Hamilton after 5pm. The final bus departs the Transport Centre at 6.15pm so people who finish work at 5 have to wait around for the last bus and do not get back to Raglan until after 7pm. If people want to go out for dinner, the movies or a show they have to drive or else stay overnight in Hamilton. If they drive then they cannot drink and drive safely – though some people do. Evening buses would have benefits for people and businesses in both Raglan and Hamilton by allowing more opportunities to spend longer in each centre.

It seems the decisions were made by the council in line with a report by Auckland based consultants, M R Cagney, who overlooked some basic facts. Raglan has already grown from a population of 3,000 to 4,000 and is forecast to grow to 12,000. whereas Te Kauwhata and surrounds has 2,200. In summer Raglan's population increases by 300-400% to 15000 to 20000 (WDC). We pay \$84.40 in transport rates and have high user numbers, while Te Kauwhata, with hourly buses from 2027, pay only \$29.54 and have lower passenger numbers. Raglan's bus has the highest number of passengers per bus of any Waikato route and the least subsidy per passenger of any of the routes radiating from Hamilton. If Raglan had a Structure Plan, as every other growing town does, they might have taken note of it. In whatever way need is measured, they should have realised that Raglan has an even better case for more buses than Te Kauwhata. We'd like to know how Regional Council propose to sort it out in a way that is fair to all ratepayers and bus users and in a way that will achieve optimal results for the transport network.

To quote Waikato Regional Council, "Reliable and efficient transport is the backbone of regional connectivity and economic growth. We help shape the future of our towns and city by developing mass transit solutions, cutting emissions and reducing reliance on low-occupancy vehicles." We would like to see these words in action in Raglan and look forward to a time when catching public transport is the norm.