

8.5 Security for Dunedin Public Transport

Prepared for: Public and Active Transport Committee

Report No. OPS2347

Activity: Transport: Public Passenger Transport

Author: Julian Phillips, Implementation Lead - Transport
Kacie Kasper, Systems Support Officer - Transport

Endorsed by: Pim Borren, General Manager Transport

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PURPOSE

- [1] To seek approval for the continuation of the Dunedin bus network security trial for the remaining eight months of the 2023/24 financial year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- [2] An increasing volume of antisocial behaviour on the Dunedin bus network was being reported in the media, and to Council, via direct contact and social media throughout 2022.
- [3] In response to this, Transport staff implemented a trial security presence at the Bus Hub, beginning December 2022.
- [4] Following ongoing incidents in March 2023, and following feedback from transport operators, the trial security services were extended to cover a targeted security presence on buses.
- [5] The funding allocated for the security trial is due to expire end-November 2023 and Transport staff are seeking an extension of this trial to the end of the financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Public and Active Transport Committee:

- 1) **Notes** this report.
- 2) **Recommends to Council the approval** to the extension of the Bus Hub and On-bus security trial to 30 June 2024 at a cost of ~\$126,000 (OPTIONS, [29] a.)

BACKGROUND

- [6] Through 2021 and particularly through 2022, Transport staff noted an increase in the volume of anti-social behaviours being experienced at the Dunedin Bus Hub.
- [7] The presence of a network of CCTV cameras, and a Police Station, in the Bus Hub has not significantly impacted these behaviours.
- [8] Anti-social behaviour in and around Public Transport settings is not unique to Dunedin, being an issue at other transport hubs in New Zealand and elsewhere in the world. Incidents at other New Zealand public transport facilities have been well publicised.

- [9] Transport staff have compiled a dossier of incidents reported across all channels (call centre, social media, local and national news, etc), which range from low-level antisocial behaviour to threats of violence, vandalism (including setting fire to toilets and benches), and disorder between groups of passengers from different schools.
- [10] In addition to this dossier, Chart 1 below details the categories of complaints related to the Bus Hub that have been escalated to the Transport team via passenger email, from 2021 to date.

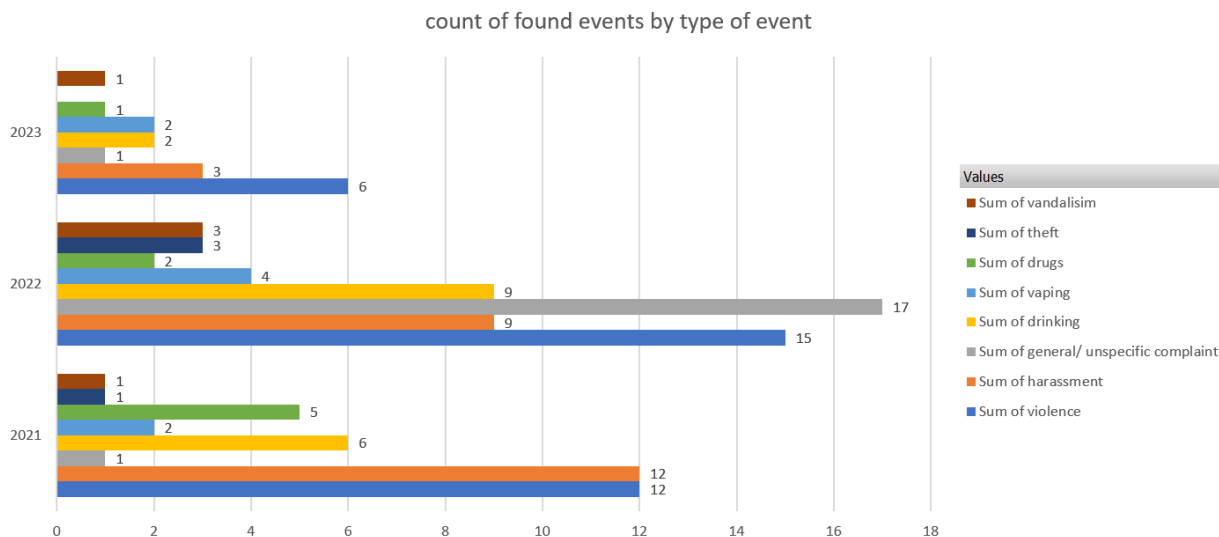


Chart 1: Bus Hub complaints by type

- [11] Often, but not always, younger members of the public are reported to be causing these issues. At the same time, with the increasing number of school children using the Bus Hub, the sentiment from the community is that they are amongst the most vulnerable passengers at the Hub.
- [12] A trial was put in place with Allied Security in December 2022, comprising two experienced security guards maintaining a presence during peak hours at the Bus Hub. Note in Chart 1, the lower level of escalations in 2023, with a pro-rata ~70% decrease in events to date.
- [13] The security guards are tasked with de-escalating potential incidents and reporting incidents. By maintaining a presence at the Bus Hub, they provide reassurance to passengers whilst also acting as an effective deterrent.
- [14] Allied Security also provide the same service, via DCC, to the areas surrounding the Bus Hub (the Countdown car park and George Street), meaning that the public transport security complements the security arrangements for the wider area and increases public familiarity with their presence.
- [15] In March 2023, further to discussions with Council's contracted transport operators, (Go Bus and Ritchies), regarding driver-passenger incidents and on-bus anti-social behaviour, this trial was extended to encompass on-bus security.
- [16] The on-bus security targets a limited number of bus services where antisocial behaviour may be increasing. As per the Bus Hub security, they provide a visible presence to deter

bad behaviour and are trained at de-escalation.

- [17] On-bus security comprises an afternoon-to-evening schedule on weekdays.
- [18] Feedback from passengers, transport providers and their drivers has been very positive. This, together with a decline in media reporting and feedback to ORC from the public, signals that the trial is positively impacting the Bus Hub environment and on-bus passenger experience.

DISCUSSION

- [19] The total cost to operate the arrangement in its current format for eight months to end-June 2024 is c.\$126,000, of which \$73,000 is for Bus Hub security and the remaining \$53,000 for on-bus security.
- [20] Due to the timing of the trial being extended after the Annual Plan, there is no budget for these costs for the remainder of 2023/34. Funding is being sought for continued future provision of PT security services through inclusion in the LTP process for the future.
- [21] The new Community Connect fare concessions make public transport more affordable for under-25's and there are likely to be increasing numbers of younger passengers on our bus services.
- [22] With the service having been in place for 11 months at the Bus Hub and the positive feedback received, withdrawing part or all of this service increases the potential for an escalation of antisocial behaviour at the Bus Hub.
- [23] Withdrawing the on-bus service increases the potential for driver assaults, robberies, and other incidents that have occurred over the past two years or more on the Dunedin network. Improving driver working conditions is essential to retaining drivers.
- [24] Maintaining a security presence on the Dunedin network brings Dunedin in line with other major centres such as Canterbury and Auckland, both of whom have established security teams or in-progress trials. It should be noted, however, that the Dunedin Bus Hub is not staffed.
- [25] Council risks reputational damage if the service is removed.
- [26] Providing a secure and safe environment for our passengers and drivers is key to increasing patronage/maintaining existing patronage, supporting drivers and promoting mode shift by ensuring public transport is an attractive alternative to the motor car.
- [27] Consideration of the Queenstown network will need to be made at a later date. Currently anti-social behaviour is not being widely reported across any Queenstown services or facilities.
- [28] Dunedin's patronage and revenue have increased significantly through Q1 2023/24, by 28% and 35% respectively compared to 2022/23. It is appropriate that a commensurate security presence is maintained to cater for this increased usage, ensuring existing and new passengers are confident and comfortable.

OPTIONS

- [29] **a. Maintain existing:** Transport staff recommend extending the existing security arrangements for both Bus Hub and on-Bus to 30 June 2024. The cost of this is c. \$126,000.
- [30] **b. Reduce scope:** Approve the extension of the Bus Hub security trial to 30 June 2024, excluding on-Bus security. The cost of this is c. \$73,000.
- [31] **c. Reduce scope, alternative:** Approve the extension of the on-Bus security trial to 30 June 2024, excluding Bus Hub security. The cost of this is c. \$53,000.
- [32] **d. Increase scope:** Increase level of spending to cover more hours/bus services. Costs are determined by the level of increase.
- [33] **e. Remove:** End security arrangements at the expiry of the existing agreement in November 2023.

CONSIDERATIONS

Strategic Framework and Policy Considerations

- [34] ORC's Strategic Directions specify the provision of "Sustainable, safe and inclusive transport".

Financial Considerations

- [35] The \$126,000 cost for the recommended option is unbudgeted in the 2023/2024.
- [36] In the context of the annual budget for PT Operations for Dunedin, this represents ~0.6%. Fare revenue is tracking ahead of budget for the year as are operating expenses. The addition of these unbudgeted costs will have a very minor impact on the year-end financial result.

Significance and Engagement

- [37] Not applicable.

Legislative and Risk Considerations

- [38] There are significant risks to the reputation of the Dunedin public transport system should there be high numbers of antisocial incidents. The provision of security services has resulted in a reduction in incidents.

Climate Change Considerations

- [39] Not applicable.

Communications Considerations

- [40] Not applicable.

NEXT STEPS

- [41] Should one of options a. to d. be approved by Council, an extension to the existing agreement with Allied Security will be implemented.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil