

Chair
Cabinet COVID Committee

EXTENSION OF PERMITTED DOMESTIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Proposal

1. This paper proposes that domestic passenger transport services are permitted to continue to provide services until 2359 hours on Friday 27 March 2020 to New Zealanders returning home and international visitors who have completed self-isolation and are declared COVID-free to move to their final destinations in New Zealand. It requests that any further extensions to this period are delegated to the National Controller.

Extension of permitted domestic transport services

2. Domestic passenger services, in particular Cook Strait ferry services and domestic air services, are being inundated with demand from passengers ahead of the country moving to COVID level 4 at the end of Wednesday 24 March 2020. It is unlikely that the demand for the services can be met before the move to level 4.
3. The demand is being generated by passengers seeking to return home to comply with level four requirements. There is also demand from international tourists who are completing self-isolation and declared COVID free to move to their final destination in New Zealand.
4. It is recommended that the Committee provide an extension to allow domestic passenger services to provide services to New Zealanders and international travellers who have completed self-isolation and declared COVID free until 2359 hours on Friday 27 March. It is recommended that this should apply to Cook Strait ferry services, domestic air services, but also private cars and public transport.
5. The application to international travellers should only be to support travellers to move to their final destinations to then also comply with self-isolation requirements.
6. Following this time, services will only be provided to essential services, including freight services.
7. Different modes of transport will need to take different approaches to manage the demand and also support passengers and staff to minimise the risk of COVID moving between people. In particular KiwiRail has noted that it is reducing passenger numbers on the ferries to support social distancing and provide cabins to enable isolation for any passengers that required it (for example elderly passengers).

8. The Ministry of Transport will work with the providers of transport services to support them to implement these changes. The Ministry will also work with providers to monitor demand and consider any further changes that need to occur.
9. If passenger services are unable to support all those demanding transport to return home by Friday 27 March, then further decisions about extensions could be delegated to the National Controller.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications.

Communications

11. In order to help maintain compliance with the move to level 4 rules and to support KiwiRail crew health and safety, any communication on this extension is proposed to be limited to discussing the extension until Friday 27 March 2020.
12. Concern has been raised by KiwiRail about publicly communicating that further extension could be reviewed or provided by the National Controller.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

1. **note** that transport services across New Zealand are being inundated with passenger demand as people seek to return home or international travellers move to their final destinations across New Zealand.
2. **note** that this demand is unlikely to be cleared before the country moves to level 4 at 2359 hours Wednesday 24 March.
3. **agree** that international visitors to New Zealand who have completed 14 days isolation and declared Covid-free will be allowed to use all forms of permitted transport e.g. domestic air travel, ferries, and public transport to get to another location in New Zealand before 2359 hours Friday 27 March (if that is their final destination and they will then need to comply with the obligations to stay home like everyone else once there).
4. **agree** other people are able to use all forms of permitted transport e.g. domestic air travel, ferrie and public transport to return home before 2359 hours Friday 27 March (if that is their final destination and they will then need to comply with the obligations to stay home like everyone else).
5. **note** that following this time, services will only be provided to essential services, including freight services.
6. **note** that passenger services are expected to implement protective measures that are appropriate for their services, in particular KiwiRail has noted that it is reducing passenger numbers on the ferries to support social distancing and provide cabins to enable isolation for any passengers that required it.

7. **note** that the Ministry of Transport will work with passenger services to support their implementation of the measures noted in recommendation 5.
8. **agree** that any further extensions for these domestic passengers services beyond this period can be agreed by the National Controller.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Phil Twyford

Minister of Transport

Proactively Released