

Research into the potential demand for a Piha / West Coast beaches bus service

Prepared for



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Prepared by Buzz Channel

<http://www.buzzchannel.co.nz>

Executive summary

Waitākere Ranges Local Board was interested in exploring the potential for a bus service to Piha and other west coast beaches. A survey was undertaken with 541 visitors to Piha, Karekare, Te Henga and the Arataki Visitor Centre.

The main results include:

- Piha and Te Henga were visited the most often, although average visit frequency was low with Piha being visited a few times a year and Te Henga being visited once or twice a year. Around one in ten respondents visited these places weekly.
- Almost all visitors travel to the west coast by car and most bring personal items such as a day bag with them. Many also bring beach equipment and items such as chilli bins and picnic blankets. The majority visit the west coast with other people. More than half of visitors are aged under 35.
- Most visitors are from the Auckland region, particularly Auckland central and West Auckland suburbs. Around one in seven (14%) are overseas visitors – this climbs to 34% for Karekare. The majority stay just for the day.
- A third of visitors to the West Coast (32%) said they would use a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki at least once a month, and a third (37%) said they would use it less than once per month. However, a further third of visitors (32%) said they would never use a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki.
- Demand for a bus service to Te Henga was slightly lower, with 26% saying they would use this bus service at least once a month, 31% saying they would use it monthly, and more than two in five (42%) said they would never use a bus service to Te Henga.
- Those who already use public transport were more likely to say they would use a Piha / Karekare / Arataki and/or Te Henga bus service.
- Among a small number of regular visitors (i.e. those who visit the area at least once a month) at least half say they would use the proposed bus service at least once a month.
- Most visitors (86%), particularly those from outside Auckland, felt the proposed fares were attractive from a cost perspective.
- Henderson and New Lynn Train Stations were the preferred connection points for the potential bus service. On weekdays, visitors preferred the service to arrive into the Waitākere Ranges between 9am and noon, and leave between 4pm and 7pm. On weekends, visitors preferred the service to arrive and depart between 9am and 5pm,

with around half also preferring the bus service to depart the Waitākere Ranges after 5pm.

- While many visitors supported the potential bus service, some felt that the service might be more useful for tourists than Auckland residents due to convenience and cost factors.

In summary there is some interest and indicative demand for a bus service from visitors, but it is not clear whether the level of use would be sufficient to make the service viable long-term.

The following report discusses these results in detail.

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Objectives and method

Background and objectives

The Waitākere Ranges Local Board and Auckland Transport were interested in exploring the potential for a bus service to Piha and other west coast beaches. The two objectives for this new service would be to relieve pressure on the car parking facilities at the beach, and to encourage more visitors to come to the area (using a sustainable mode of transport).

For any such service to be viable long-term, there would need to be demonstrable demand from visitors and, ideally, local residents as well.

To determine the potential viability of such a service, the local board and Auckland Transport initially needed to conduct research among Piha and Waitākere Ranges visitors.

The specific research objectives were to:

- understand visitors' current travel habits (where have they come from, via which mode of transport etc)
- explore visitors' potential interest in a bus service
- explore the preferred options and characteristics of such a potential service (in terms of where it would run to/from, the route, the frequency, etc).

Following this research with visitors, we understand that Auckland Transport will conduct further research and engagement with Waitākere Ranges residents.

Buzz Channel's methodology

Face-to-face interviews were undertaken with a sample of visitors on-site at Piha (on the beach, around the carpark and in the general area), as part of key summer events in the area, and in and around the Arataki Visitor Centre, at Karekare beach and Te Henga.

This approach was taken as it allowed us to speak directly to the potential users of the bus service, and understand their needs and level of interest.

Our team of experienced interviewers conducted a number of interviewing shifts in each location, during late January and early February 2016, speaking to a random sample of visitors who were invited to complete the brief survey. The number of shifts and interviews achieved at each location is shown in the table below.

Location	Number of shifts	Number of interviews achieved
Piha	5	186
Karekare	4	106
Arataki	4	76
Te Henga / Bethells	3	173
Total	16	541

In total, 541 surveys were completed. A survey sample of n=541 has a margin of error of $\pm 4\%$ (meaning that we can be 95% confident that the survey results would be within 4% of the opinions of the target group).

To encourage participation, all participants were offered an incentive in the form of a prize draw for \$250 worth of shopping vouchers.

The feedback has been analysed in two ways:

- for the tick box questions, responses to each option have been reported as proportions of the total number of participants and presented as charts; and
- responses to the open-ended question ranged from one-word answers to a short paragraph. Key themes for the open ended comments have been identified and ordered by frequency. A selection of comments have been included in the report to illustrate dominant themes.

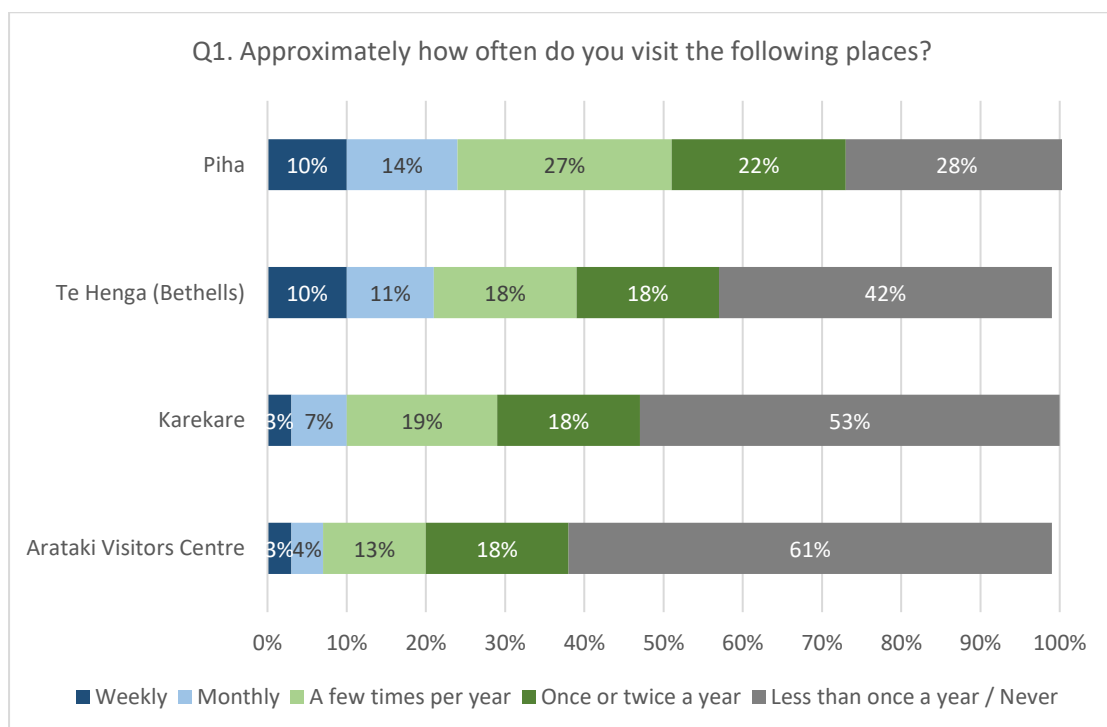
Findings

1. Visit behaviour

Visit frequency

Piha and Te Henga were more frequently visited than Karekare and Arataki Visitors Centre. Around one in four (24%) visited Piha at least once a month (including 37% of those interviewed at Piha) and around one in five (21%) visited Te Henga at least once a month (including 42% of those interviewed at Te Henga). On average, Piha was visited a few times a year, Te Henga once or twice a year and Karekare and Arataki Visitors Centre less often than once a year. Few of those interviewed at Karekare or Arataki were regular visitors; 9% of those interviewed at Karekare visited Karekare at least once a month and 13% of those interviewed at Arataki visited Arataki at least once a month.

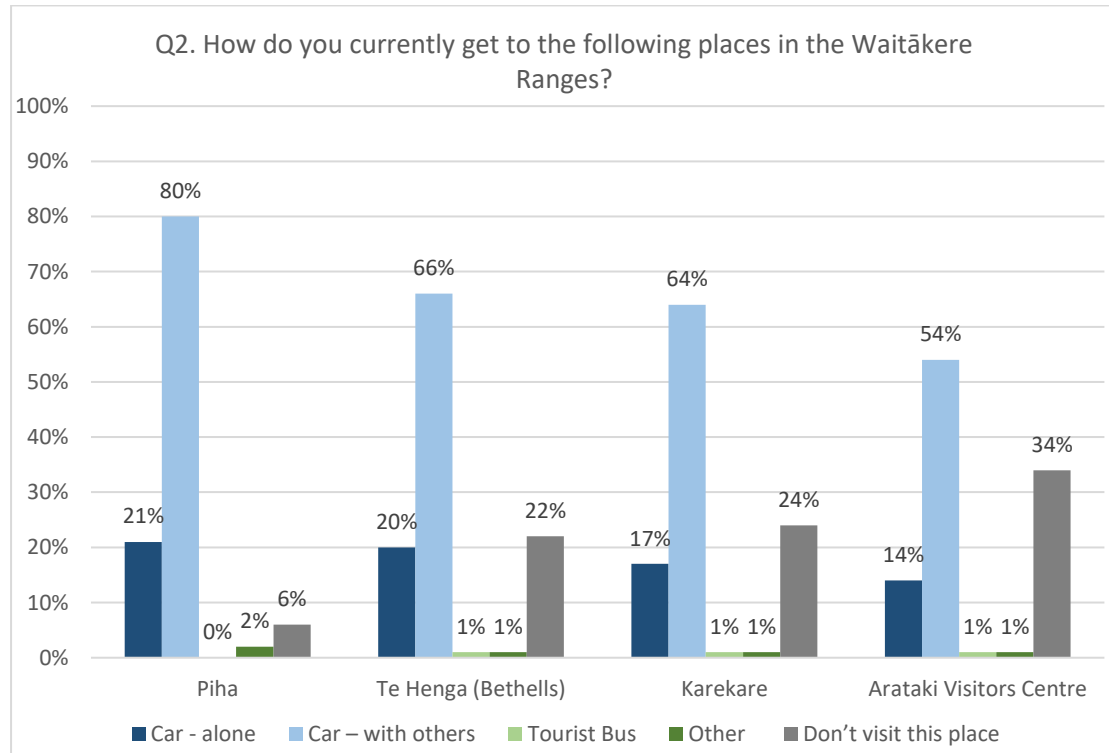
Unsurprisingly, Aucklanders were more frequent visitors to the west coast than those living outside of Auckland.



Base: 451-520 responses. Due to rounding, numbers may not add to 100%

Transport modes

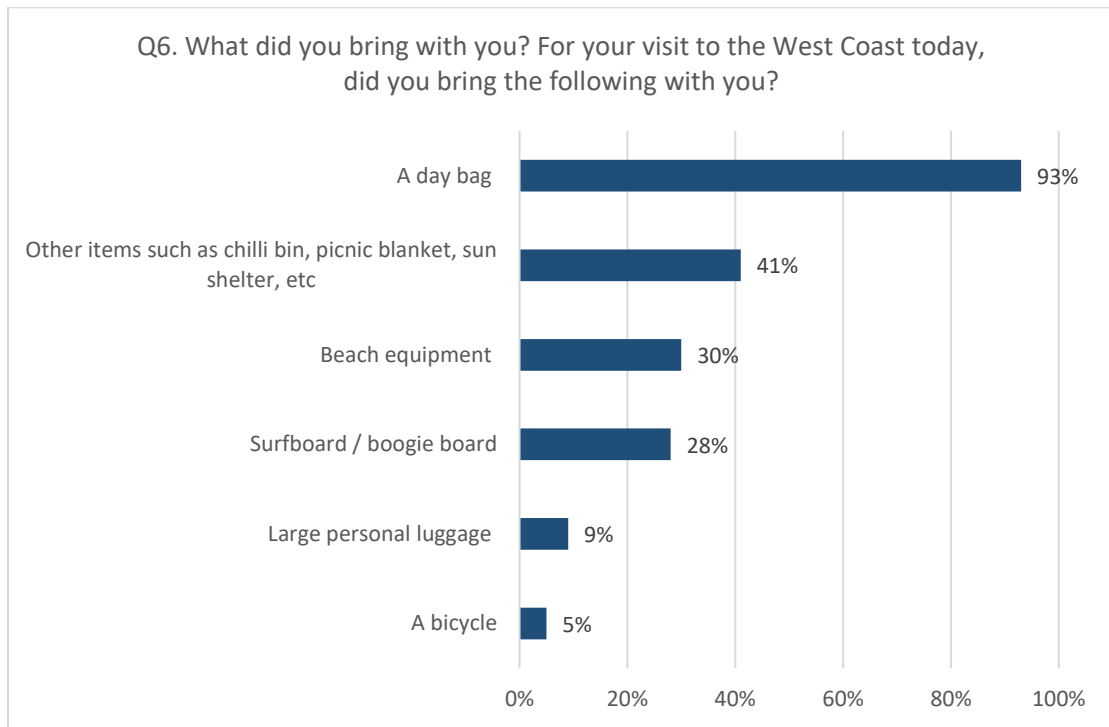
Almost all visitors travelled to the West Coast by car – either with others or by themselves. Only 1-2% of visitors travelled to the West Coast by tourist bus or another mode of transport.



Base: 450-523 responses. Multiple responses permitted, numbers may not add to 100%

What do they bring?

Most visitors (93%) had brought a day bag along with them and many visitors had also brought items such as a chilli bin / picnic blanket / sun shelter (41%), beach equipment (30%) and/or a surfboard / boogie board (28% - including 42% of those visiting Piha). Unsurprisingly, those visiting Arataki Visitors Centre were less likely to have brought a surfboard / boogie board and/or beach equipment with them.



Base: 514 responses. Multiple responses permitted, numbers may not add to 100%

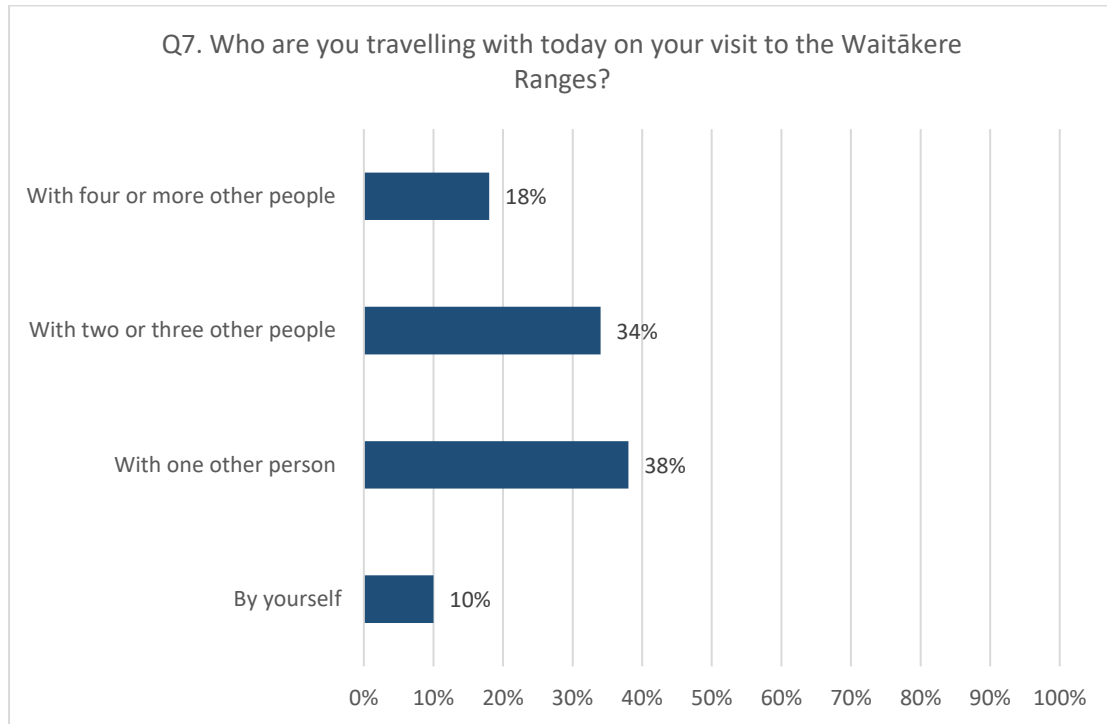
	Total	Piha	Karekare	Arataki	Te Henga / Bethells
A day bag	93%	91%	96%	93%	93%
Other items	41%	43%	38%	40%	43%
Beach equipment	30%	34%	31%	14%	31%
Surfboard/Boogie board	28%	42%	8%	10%	33%
Large personal luggage	9%	11%	9%	4%	8%
A bicycle	5%	7%	5%	6%	1%

Base: 514 responses (Piha = 182, Karekare = 99, Arataki = 72, Te Henga / Bethells =160)

Blue denotes a result significantly higher than the total; red a result significantly lower than the total

Who do they travel with?

Most visitors to the West Coast travelled with at least one other person (90%) and around one in five (18%) travelled with four or more other people. Those visiting Karekare were less likely to be travelling in a larger group.



Base: 530 responses.

	Total	Piha	Karekare	Arataki	Te Henga / Bethells
By yourself	10%	11%	9%	9%	10%
With one other person	37%	36%	51%	27%	35%
With 2 or 3 other people	34%	32%	36%	38%	35%
With 4 or more other people	18%	22%	5%	26%	20%

Base: 530 responses (Piha = 185, Karekare = 104, Arataki = 74, Te Henga / Bethells =166)

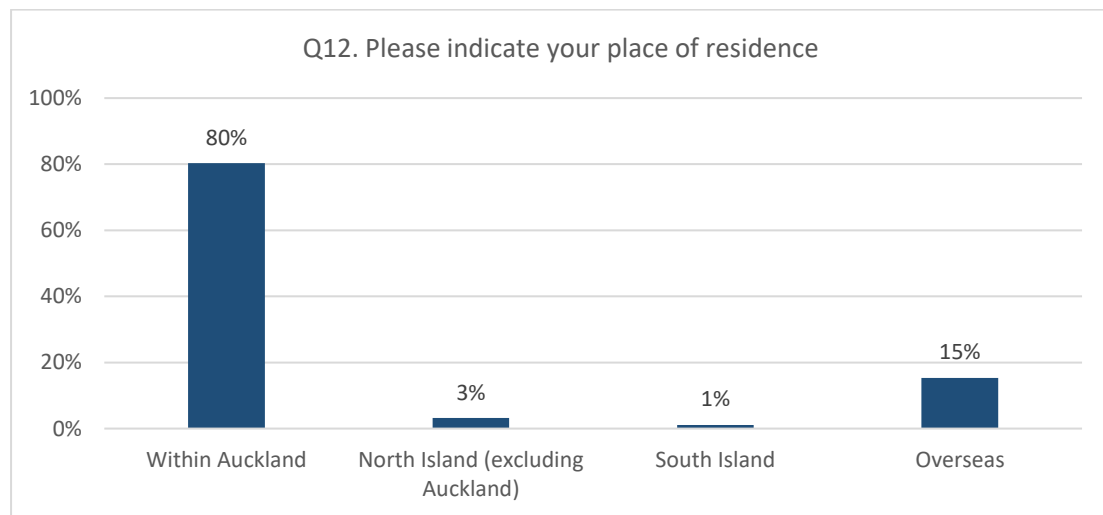
Blue denotes a result significantly higher than the total; red a result significantly lower than the total

2. Visitor profile

Where do they live?

While most visitors live within Auckland (80%), around one in seven visitors are tourists visiting from overseas (15%). Karekare had the highest proportion of overseas visitors (34%), while Te Henga had the lowest (6%).

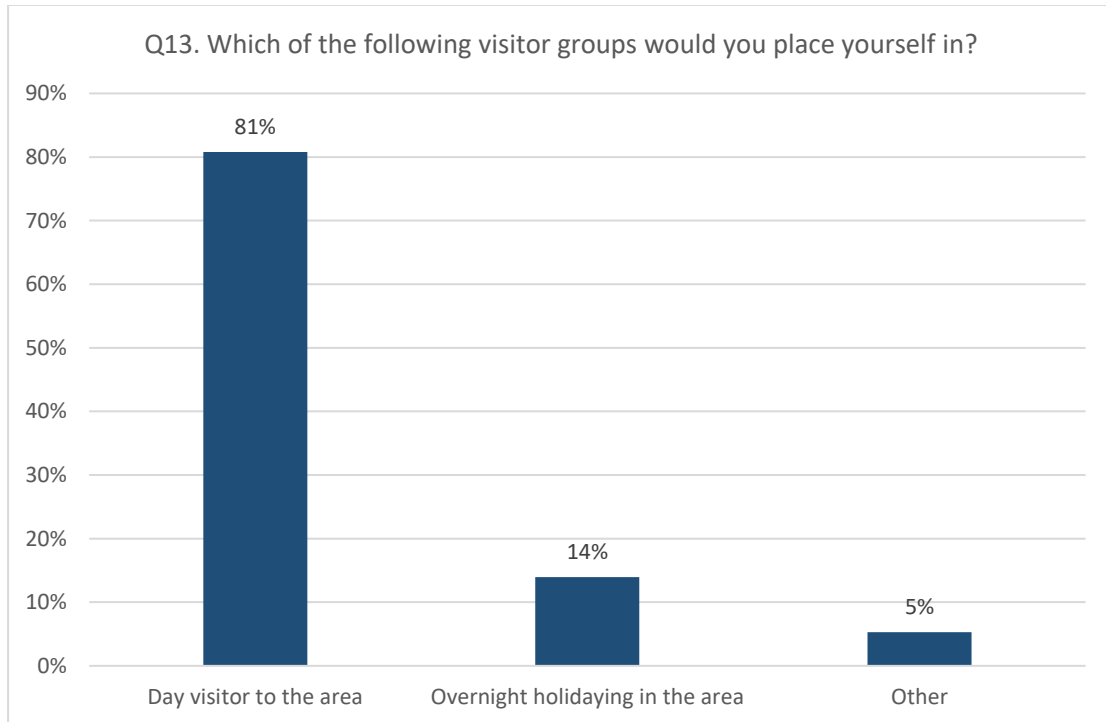
Of those who live in Auckland, the majority live either in the central Auckland suburbs (eg. Avondale, Blockhouse Bay, Epsom, Kingsland) (42%) or West Auckland suburbs (eg. Henderson, Massey, New Lynn, Swanson) (41%). Around one in ten were visiting from North Shore suburbs (12%) and the remaining 12% of Auckland visitors lived in Manukau, Papakura, Pukekohe and Rodney.



Base: 534 responses

How long do they stay?

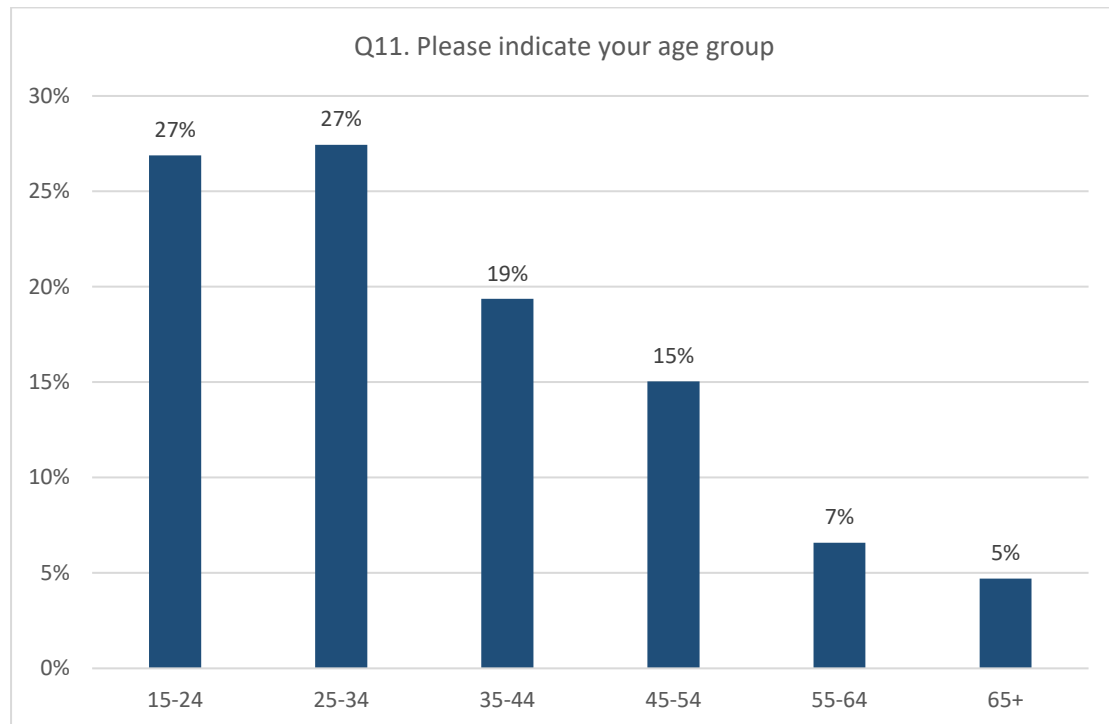
Most visitors were visiting just for the day (81%), although around one in seven (14%) were holidaying in the area overnight. Piha had the highest proportion of visitors staying overnight (21%), while Arataki had the lowest (1%). Those aged 45 to 54 years were the most likely to be staying overnight (25%).



Base: 531 responses

How old are they?

Many visitors to the west coast are young, with more than half (54%) aged under 35 years. In particular, Karekare and Piha had a high proportion of younger visitors aged between 15 and 24 years (39% and 34% respectively).



Base: 532 responses

Do they already use public transport?

Around half (52%) of visitors are existing users of public transport. Visitors who are more likely to be users to public transport include:

- Those interviewed at Piha (59%)
- Those living in Auckland (58%)

Visitors less likely to be current users of public transport include:

- Those interviewed at Karekare (38%)
- Those living overseas (24%)

3. Preferences and attitudes towards the proposed bus service

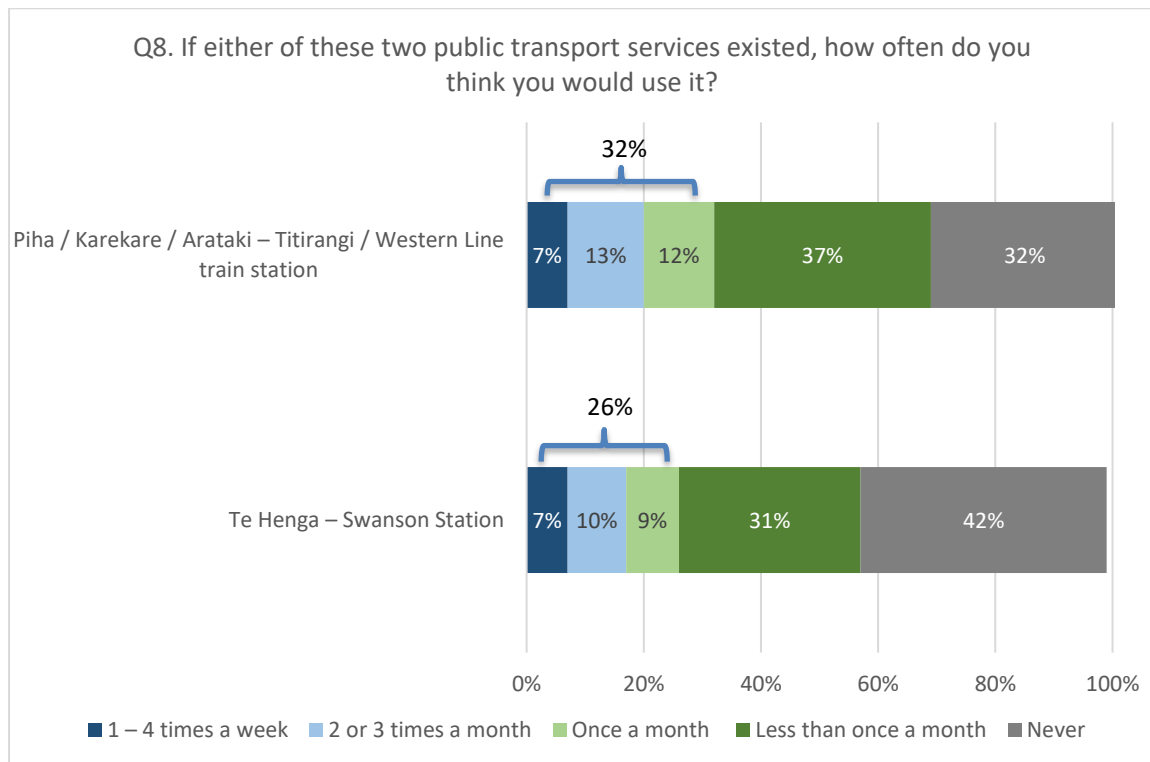
How often would they use it?

Overall, around a third of visitors (32%) said they would use a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki at least once a month, including 7% who said they would use it once a week or more often. A further third (37%) said they would use it less than once per month.

Demand for a bus service to Te Henga was slightly lower, with 26% saying they would use this bus service at least once a month, and 31% saying they would use it monthly.

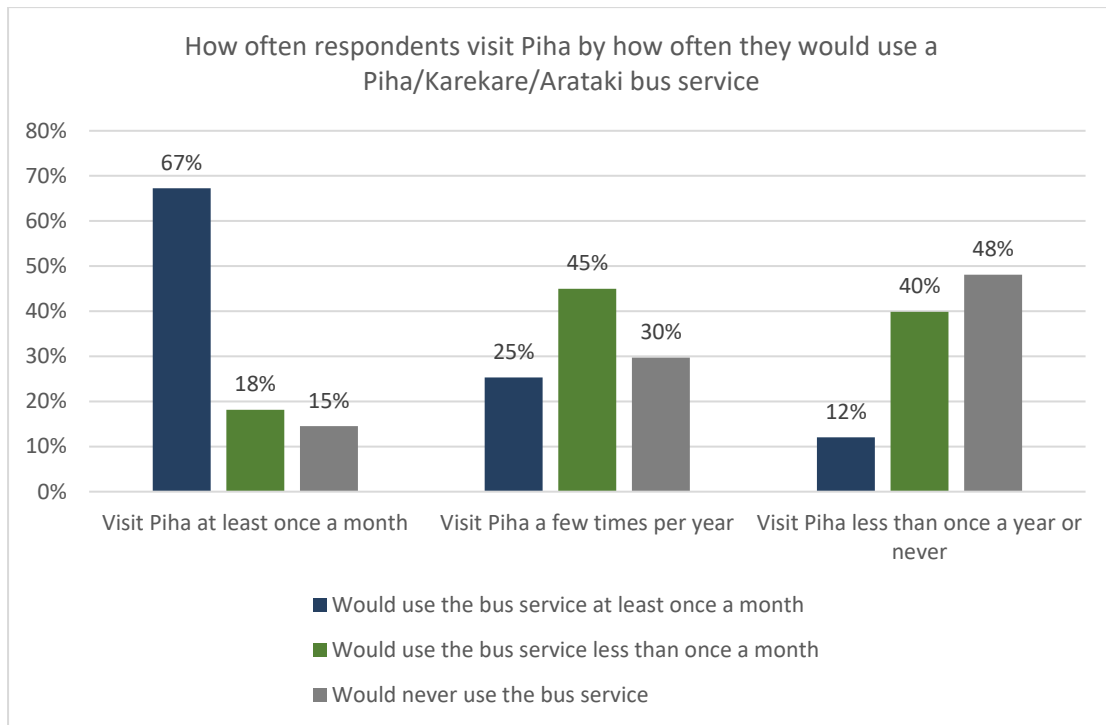
However, a third of visitors to the West Coast (32%) said they would never use a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki, and more than two in five (42%) said they would never use a bus service to Te Henga.

Existing public transport users were significantly more likely to say they would use the proposed bus services: 42% would use a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki at least once a month (compared with 21% of those who don't currently use public transport) and 34% would use a bus service to Te Henga at least once a month (compared with 19% of those who aren't currently public transport users).

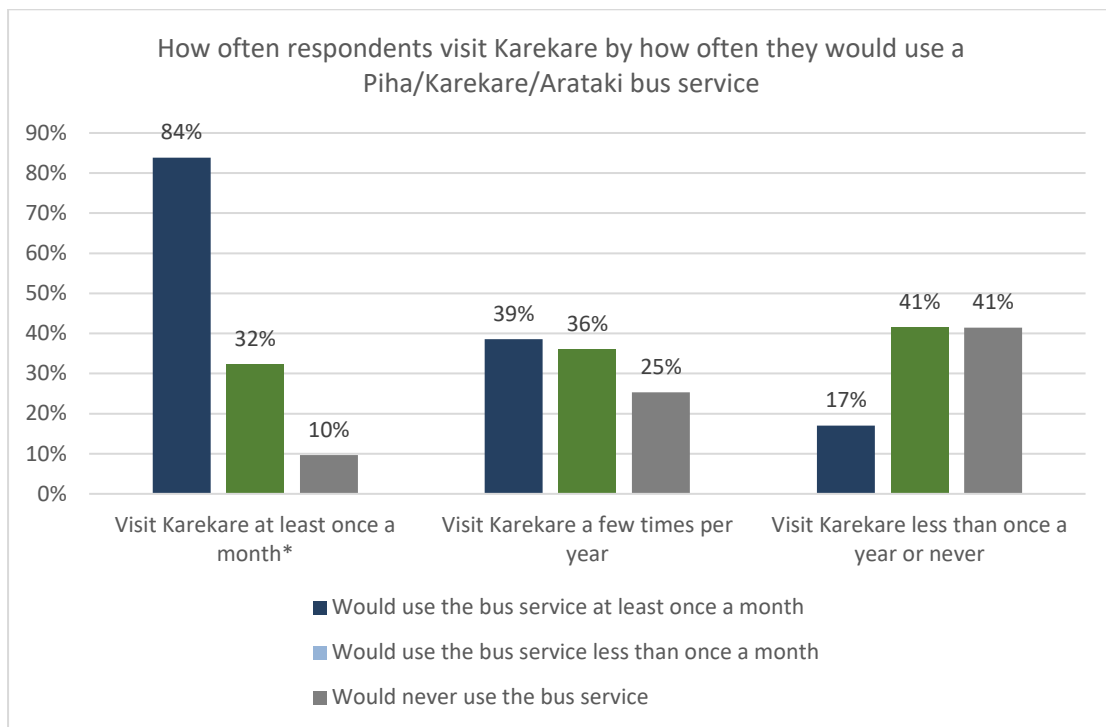


Base: 447-484 responses

Among frequent visitors (those visiting once a month or more often), many say they would consider using the proposed bus service at least once a month (67% for Piha, 84% for Karekare, 59% for Arataki and 52% for Te Henga). However, it is worth bearing in mind that frequent visitors comprise a relatively small share of those visiting each place, particularly for Karekare and Arataki. Unsurprisingly, those who visit less frequently are less likely to be frequent users of the proposed bus service.

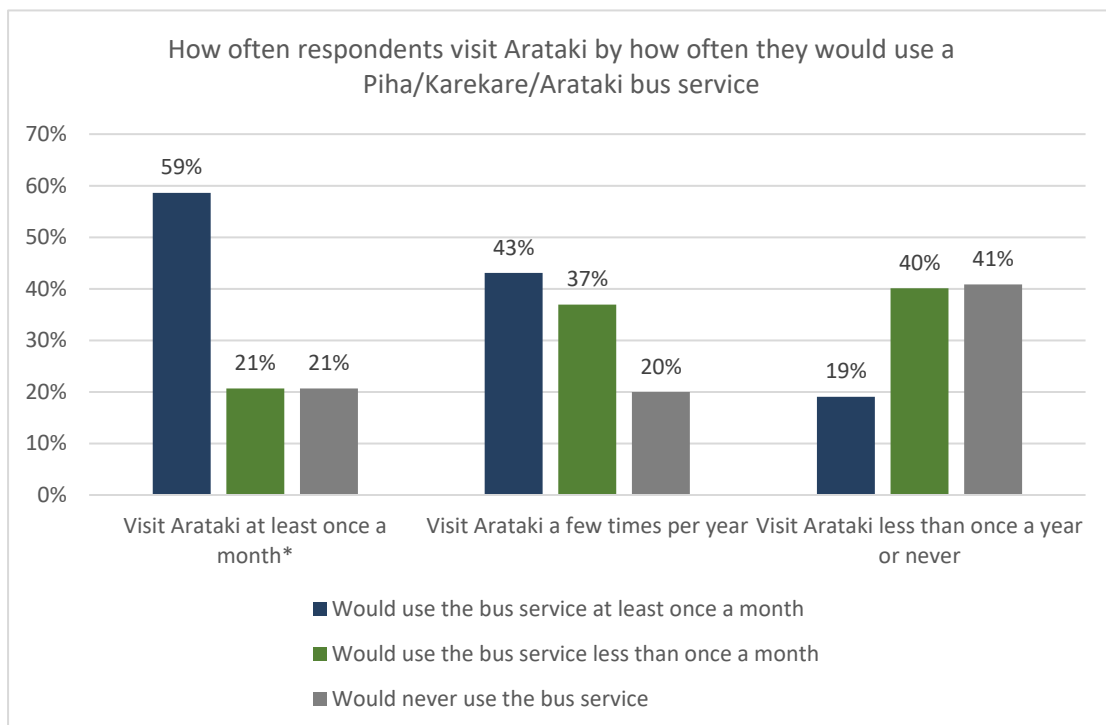


Base: 472 responses (Visit at least once a month = 110, Visit a few times a year = 229, Visit less than once a year or never = 133)



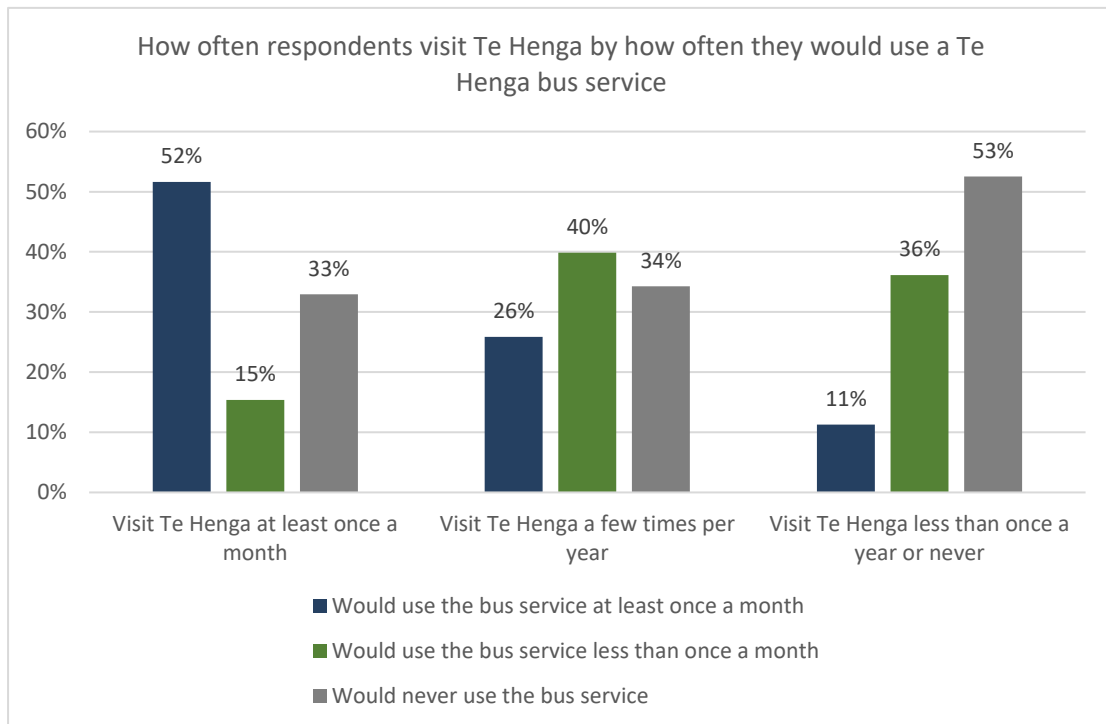
Base: 418 responses (Visit at least once a month = 31, Visit a few times a year = 158, Visit less than once a year or never = 229)

*NB: base size for visiting Karekare at least once a month is small. Results should be considered indicative only.



Base: 416 responses (Visit at least once a month = 29, Visit a few times a year = 130, Visit less than once a year or never = 257)

*NB: base size for visiting Arataki at least once a month is small. Results should be considered indicative only.

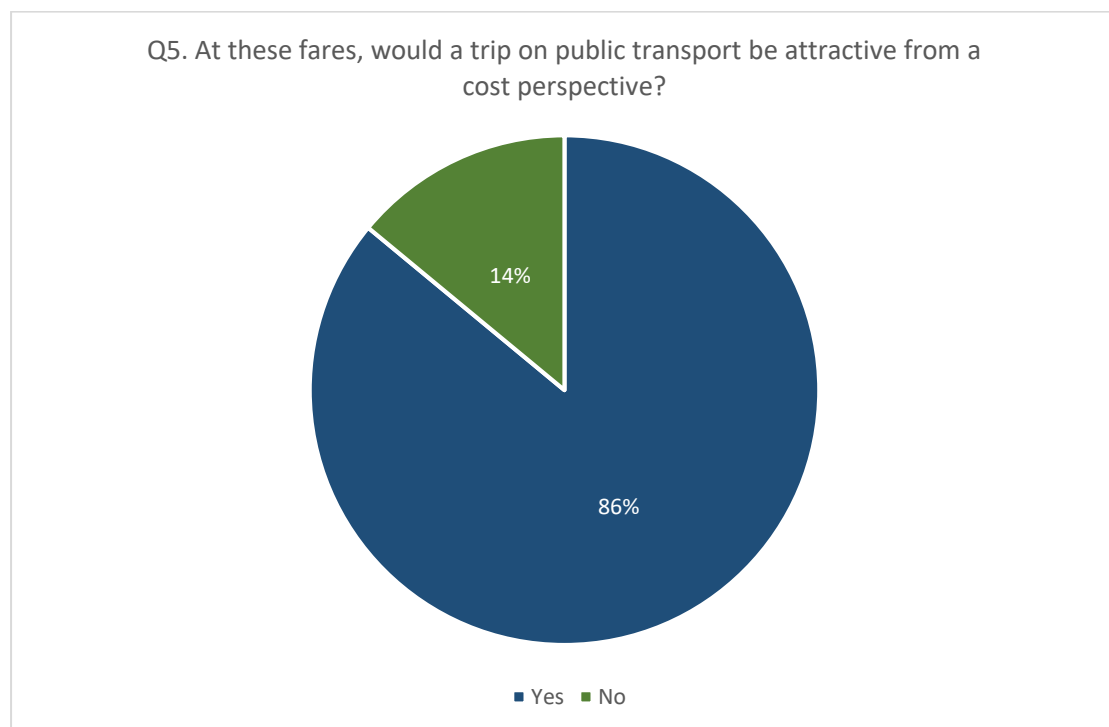


Base: 411 responses (Visit at least once a month = 91, Visit a few times a year = 143, Visit less than once a year or never = 177)

How much should it cost?

Visitors were told that any future Piha / Karekare / Arataki service or a Te Henga service would likely cost \$8-\$12 from Auckland CBD, or \$5-\$7.50 from West Auckland. These fares would be one-way, adult prices. Normal discounts for concessions would apply as they do on all other public transport services in Auckland. Visitors were then asked if, at these fares, a trip on public transport would be attractive from a cost perspective.

Most visitors (86%) said that these fares were attractive from a cost perspective, particularly those visiting Karekare (93%) or Piha (92%). Those visiting Te Henga or Arataki were less likely to find these fares attractive (80% and 77% respectively). Visitors from overseas were significantly more likely to find the cost attractive than those from Auckland (93% and 85% respectively). There was no difference in perceptions of cost between current public transport users and those who do not use public transport.

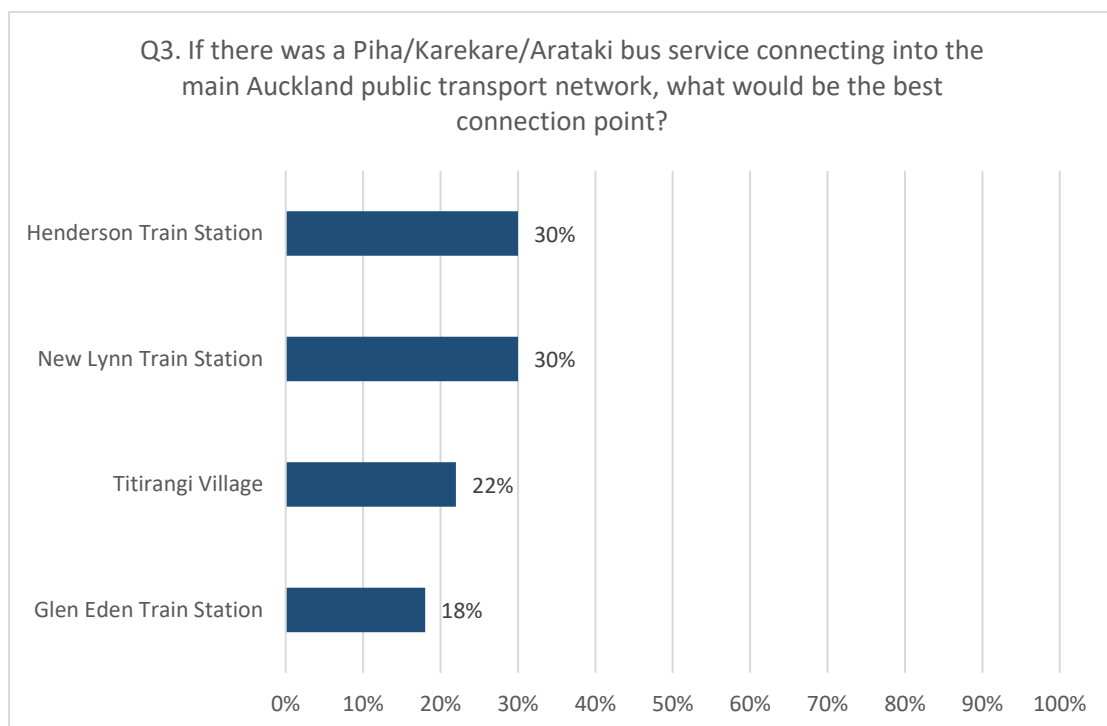


Base: 499 responses

Where should the service connect?

Overall, three in ten respondents felt that Henderson Train Station (30%) or New Lynn Train Station (30%) would be the best connection point for a bus service to the West Coast. Titirangi Village (22%) and Glen Eden Train Station (18%) were slightly less popular alternatives.

Preference of connection points varied slightly by interview location; those interviewed at Te Henga were more likely to consider Henderson Train Station the best connection point (42%), while those interviewed at Arataki were more likely to consider New Lynn Train Station as the best connection point (48%).



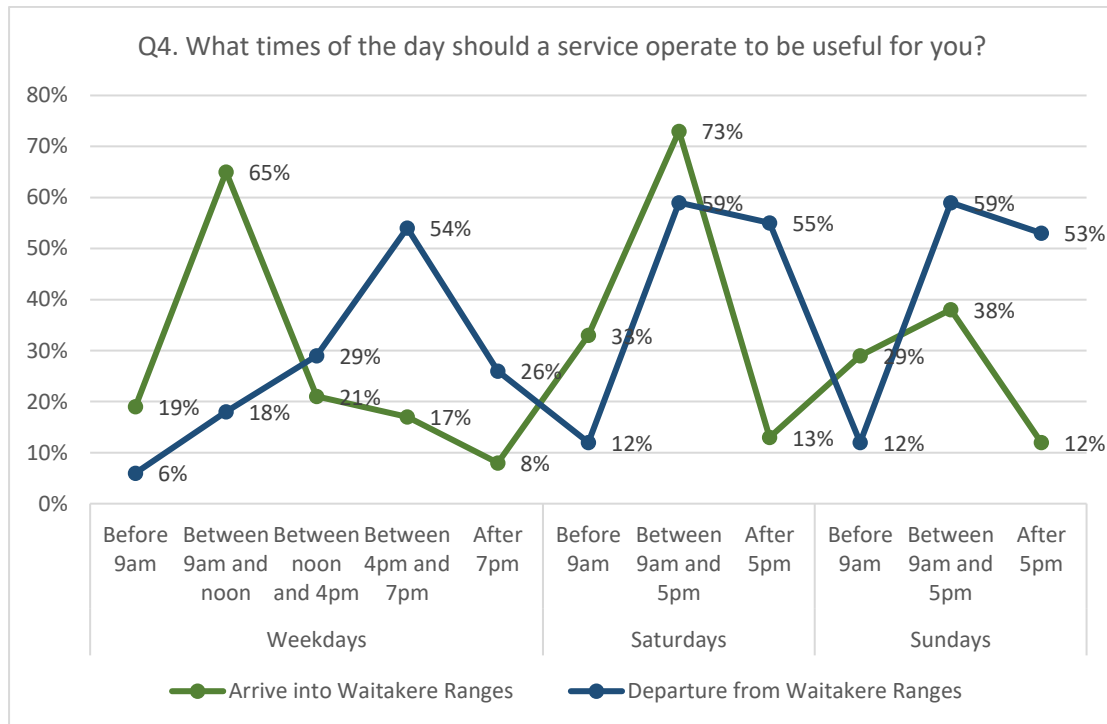
Base: 454 responses

What times should it operate?

The most popular arrival times for weekdays were between 9am and noon; 65% of respondents stated a weekday service arriving between 9am and noon would be useful to them. A service arriving before 9am, or after noon, was considered less useful. The most popular weekday departure time was between 4pm and 7pm.

For weekends, service arriving between 9am and 5pm was considered the most useful, particularly on a Saturday (73% of respondents stated this service would be useful to them). Few wished to arrive after 5pm. Departure times of between 9am and 5pm and 5pm onwards from the West Coast were equally popular – around half suggested departing at this time would be useful to them.

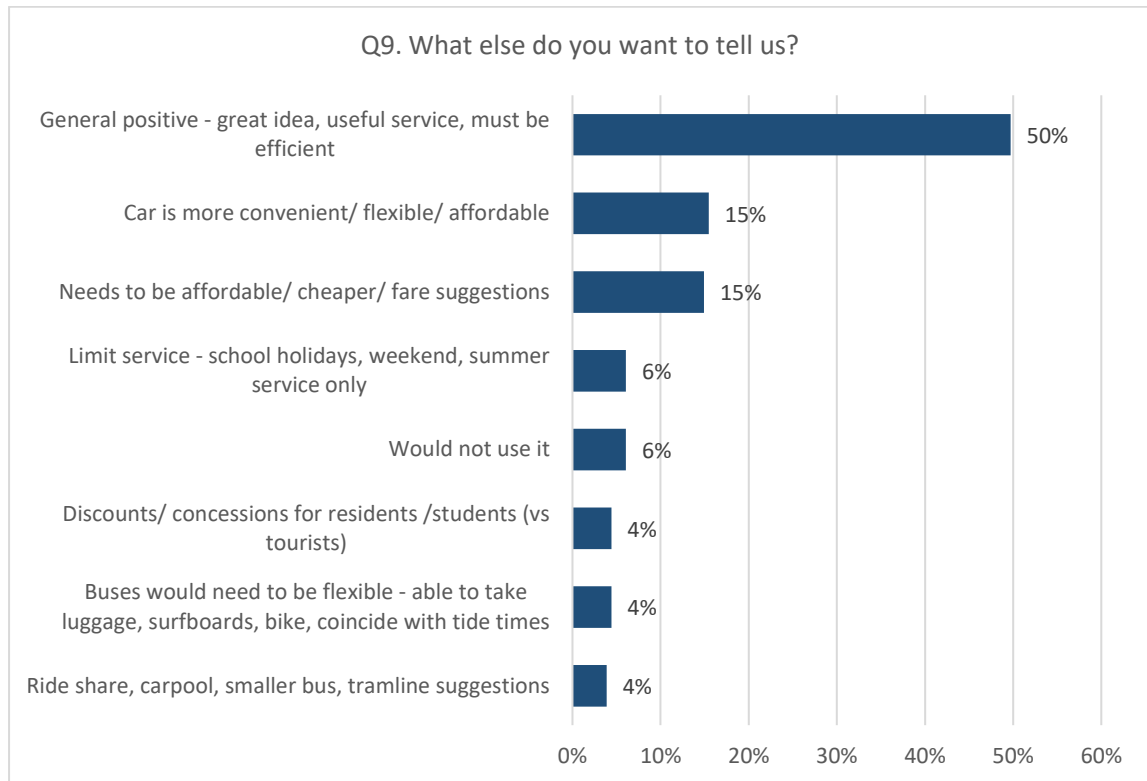
Hence, this was predominantly seen as a day-time service, to coincide with the warmest part of day.



Base: 448-487 responses

What else should be considered?

Visitors were invited to make further comments about the proposed service. Around a third of respondents took this opportunity.



Base: 181 responses

Of those who provided further comments, half (50%) made a positive comment about the proposed service. Fifteen per cent said that travelling by car to the Waitākere Ranges was more convenient and/or affordable, while a further 15% said that the proposed bus service would need to be more affordable or cheaper.

Some of the comments made by visitors included:

“Seven days a week in summer school holidays, otherwise only on the weekends. More passing bays on the roads if buses are too slow.”

“Perhaps different hours for winter. Round trip price would be good and a family pass. Bike carriers on the bus would be an attraction.”

“It’s a good idea because people without cars struggle to get here.”

“Had to hire a car to get here. Bus would have been cheaper.”

“We would have opted for a bus because of the windy roads- miss the scenery because of concentrating on the road.”

“Great idea of formalised carpooling and shuttles from Titirangi Village.”

“It would be good for tourists and teenagers to bus.”

“As a tourist I had to take a car but would have much preferred a bus.”

However, others were concerned about affordability and convenience:

“\$24 would only become attractive if parking at the beach became metered so there was disincentive to drive. A family is unlikely to catch a bus as it would total to over \$50.”

“Don’t think I or any surfers would bus for multiple reasons. Too much hassle with gear.”

“Concession cards for residents. That price is attractive for tourists but probably not for residents. As a resident it would cost less taking my car.”

“I would drive because public transport means too many connections which would take too long.”

“We bring a lot of stuff therefore might not be able to get it on a bus. It would also take us 3 connections to get here.”

4. Conclusion

Overall visit frequency to the Waitākere Ranges is relatively low per person for Karekare and Arataki (and to some extent Piha), suggesting that there are large numbers of people visiting these areas relatively infrequently. Visitors to Te Henga appear to be doing so more frequently.

Most visitors are from within Auckland (primarily Auckland central and western suburbs), although there are a reasonable number of overseas visitors travelling to the area, particularly Karekare. Due to current limited travel options, almost all visitors travel to the Waitākere Ranges by car. Further, most visitors travel with at least one other person and one in five travel in a larger group of at least five people. The majority of visitors bring a day bag with them, and many also bring along items such as chilli bins, picnic blankets and beach equipment (which some feel would be difficult to take on a bus).

Overall, while demand for a bus service does not appear to be high, there is some level interest in the service, with some saying they would use it almost as often as they would visit. Those less likely to be interested included families, those travelling in groups and those carrying lots of belongings, who felt that the fares were too expensive when multiple visitors were taken into account and/or that it would be more convenient to take their own car when considering travel times and the need to carry items such as bikes, surfboards, beach equipment and chilli bins.

However, many of those who wouldn't use it themselves were supportive of the proposed service and felt that it would be a great option for tourists or other visitors without access to a private vehicle (e.g. teenagers and those who don't drive).

While most respondents stated that the proposed pricing was attractive (particularly to those visiting Piha / Karekare), analysis of the verbatim comments suggested that these fares might be more attractive to tourists, who would pay more to hire a car or join a tourist bus / tour, than to Auckland residents who would probably find it more cost effective to drive, particularly when travelling in a group.

The survey findings suggest that a bus service to Te Henga is less likely to be in high demand; almost all visitors to Te Henga live in Auckland, they are (on average) older than visitors to Piha / Karekare, almost half say they would never use a Te Henga bus service and one in five say the proposed fares are not attractive. They are however regular visitors, almost half visit Te Henga once a month or more often, although regular visitors to Te Henga are less likely to use a bus service than regular visitors to Piha / Karekare / Arataki. Anecdotally, our interviewer noted many visitors to Te Henga brought their dog

with them as there is a free dog running area, although few specifically mentioned that they would not be able to take their dog on a bus.

There appears to be greater demand for a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki, particularly to Piha and Karekare, given the visitor profile (younger visitors, a higher proportion of visitors from overseas and more likely to find the proposed bus fare attractive) and that a higher proportion of regular visitors would use the bus service at least once a month. However, it is unclear whether the demand for a bus service to Piha / Karekare / Arataki would be sufficient to support its introduction and continued viability.

Appendix I – Survey

FEEDBACK FORM

Piha/Karekare, Arataki Visitors Centre and Te Henga / Bethells Beach – potential public transport service

Location: _____

Date: _____

Dear Visitor

The Waitākere Ranges Local Board and Auckland Transport are exploring the potential for a public transport service to Piha/Karekare and the Arataki Visitors Centre and also potentially to Te Henga / Bethells Beach. We would appreciate your views on whether and how a service might be designed to be attractive to you as a visitor to the Waitakere Ranges area.

Interviewer to check that respondent is indeed a “visitor”. A visitor for the purposes of this survey is someone who does not live in the location where the survey is being conducted.

The survey will take around 5 minutes. To thank you for your time, all completed surveys will go in the draw to **win \$250 worth of shopping vouchers (eg. Westfield Gift Card, Prezzy Card)**!

Q1. Approximately how often do you typically visit the following places?

(Read out. Please tick as applicable)

Destination	Weekly	Monthly	A few times per year	Once or twice a year	Less than once a year / Never
Piha					
Karekare					
Arataki Visitors Centre					
Te Henga (Bethells)					

Q2. How do you currently get to the following places in the Waitākere Ranges?

(Read out. Please tick all that apply)

Destination	Car - alone	Car – with others	Tourist Bus	Other (please specify)	Don't visit this place
Piha					
Karekare					
Arataki Visitors Centre					
Te Henga (Bethells)					

Q3. If there was a Piha/Karekare/Arataki bus service connecting into the main Auckland public transport network, what would be the best connection point – i.e. where should it depart from / return to?

(Read out. Please tick one only)

Note: a Te Henga (Bethells) service would be to/from Swanson Station

Titirangi Village	Glen Eden Train Station	New Lynn Train Station	Henderson Train Station

Q4. What times of the day should a service operate to be useful for you?

(Please tick all that apply)

Times / days	Arrive into Waitākere Ranges	Departure from Waitākere Ranges
Weekdays - before 9am		
- between 9am and noon		
- between noon and 4pm		
- between 4pm and 7pm		
- after 7pm		
Saturdays - before 9am		
- between 9am and 5pm		
- after 5pm		
Sundays - before 9am		
- between 9am and 5pm		
- after 5pm		

Q5. How much should a trip cost?

Any future Piha/Karekare/Arataki service or a Te Henga (Bethells) service would likely cost \$8-\$12 from Auckland CBD, or \$5-\$7.50 from West Auckland. Sample fares are one-way, adult prices, normal discounts for concessions would apply as they do on all other public transport services in Auckland. At these fares, would a trip on public transport be attractive from a cost perspective?

Please circle one: Yes / No

Q6. What did you bring with you? For your visit to the West Coast today, did you bring the following with you?

(Please tick all that apply)

A day bag (e.g. a shoulder bag or small backpack) _____

Large personal luggage (e.g. a suitcase or large bag) _____

A bicycle _____

Surfboard / boogie board _____

Beach equipment (e.g. childrens toys, beach games) _____

Other items such as chilli bin, cooler bag, picnic blanket, sun shelter, etc _____

Q7. Who are you travelling with today on your visit to the Waitākere Ranges?

(Read out. Please tick one only)

By yourself _____

With one other person (including children) _____

With two or three other people (including children) _____

With four or more other people (including children) _____

Q8. Based upon what you have told us so far, if either of these two public transport services existed, how often do you think that you would use it?

(Read out. Please tick one only for each service)

Potential Service	1 – 4 times a week	2 or 3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Te Henga – Swanson Station					
Piha / Karekare / Arataki – Titirangi / Western Line train station					

Q9. What else do you want to tell us?

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us that might make public transport a realistic and effective travel option for you to get to/from Piha / Karekare / Arataki Visitors Centre / Te Henga (Bethells)?

These last few questions are about you.

Q10. Are you a current user of public transport in Auckland?

(Please circle)

Yes / No

Q11. Please indicate your age group

(Read out. Please circle)

15–24 25–34 35–44 45–54 55–64 65+

Q12. Please indicate your place of residence:

(Read out. Please tick only only)

- Within Auckland, please state suburb _____
- North Island New Zealand – outside Auckland
- South Island New Zealand
- Overseas

Q13. Which of the following visitor groups would you place yourself in?

(Read out. Please tick only only)

- Day visitor to the area
- Overnight holidaying in the area
- Other (please specify): _____

Thank you for your time in helping us understand how public transport might support visitor travel to/from Auckland west coast and the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.

If you would like to be included in the Prize Draw for \$250 worth of shopping vouchers, please enter your details here. Privacy Note: Please be assured that if you provide them, your personal details will only be used to contact you about the prize draw. Your survey responses will not be linked to your contact details.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____