

COMMUNITY NETWORKS/LINK COMMUNITY SHUTTLE TRIAL

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

March 2023

Background

The Community Shuttle Trial ran from September 28 – December 21 2022, connecting Hāwea, Hāwea Flat, Albert Town, Three Parks and the Wānaka CBD three days a week. Its aims were:

- To address and enable community led action around the issue of a lack of public transport options in the Upper Clutha;
- To provide a short-term transport service connecting neighbourhoods in Upper Clutha in response to growing need;
- To collect data to test anecdotal demand and inform longer term planning involving multiple parties, including the QLDC and ORC, as our population base grows and comprehensive public transport becomes more feasible.

The Trial was a huge success in terms of positive feedback from people both on and off the bus. The service has an average 4.8 out of 5 star rating from users, with “comfortable,” “safe,” “convenient,” and “friendly” the most commonly used words to describe it.

Ridership numbers were not what we’d hoped, though they appeared to be slowly increasing over time. Feedback indicated that while people would use a more ‘full’ service (e.g. five days a week, more regular trips), the partial service didn’t quite meet their needs. We have heard that our experience echoes that of other transport trials – and this reminds us that behaviour change takes time. Awareness raising is the first step, then changing minds, then changing behaviours that eventually results in higher patronage.

The trial was widely publicised in local print and online media; on local radio; social media and was kindly profiled by Cinema Paradiso as part of their pre-film advertisements.

We are now developing a second Upper Clutha Community Shuttle Trial in collaboration with Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), Otago Regional Council (ORC), Lake Wānaka Tourism (LWT), and Yello! (Wānaka Transport Group). Funding for this trial has been confirmed from QLDC’s Climate Action & Biodiversity Plan and Lake Wānaka Tourism.

This second trial will:

- Allow a larger data sample to feed into long-term planning;
- Provide another short-term service with changes to the design based on feedback;
- Enable us to provide input to upcoming key planning processes – QLDC and ORC 2023-24 annual planning; ORC’s 2024 business case for public transport.

This second trial is currently in the design phase, and we hope to confirm a start date soon.

This report collates our findings from the first trial, including passenger data; service user feedback analysis; and a summary of our findings from two focus groups held in March 2023 intended to help guide what come’s next.

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Passenger numbers summary

In total, there were 665 rides during the Community Shuttle Trial. The number of unique users is estimated at 150*.

The visual data presentation on pages 9-14 depicts the following trends:

- Passenger numbers gradually increased over the three-month period, but remained fairly low, with the majority of days seeing between 10 and 25 rides taken across the 6 services.
- Usage was highest on a Friday out of the three days the Trial ran (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays).
- The spread of people using inbound (Hāwea- Wānaka) and outbound (Wānaka - Hāwea) services was fairly even.
- Pick-ups in Hāwea were spread out across the stops with Hāwea Flat usage in general (and Hāwea Flat Hall in particular) being the lowest.
- Pick-ups in Wānaka tended to be more concentrated to the Countdown stop.
- The booking system did not allow us to see drop-off locations, so this data is unavailable.

***Note: there are some limitations with this estimated number as booking data only shows the name of the person booking. If multiple bookings were made under one name, we cannot tell whether the other passengers were unique users or repeats, so we have discounted them.**

Customer feedback survey analysis

There were 83 responses to the customer feedback survey. Users were able to complete the survey multiple times, and responses were anonymous unless users submitted their email address to receive a focus group invitation at a later date. Two email addresses were submitted twice. The survey results are summarised here:

- Survey respondents were of all ages, though the most represented age group was 65+ (25%)
- The majority of survey respondents (78%) were female
- Just over half (52%) of survey respondents were employed
- The most common reason for using the Shuttle was to go to work or a meeting (27%), while 17% of survey respondents used it to go shopping. Other purposes included visiting friends or family (10%), after-school activities (9%), and sports or outdoor recreation (7%).
- The service received an average 4.8 out of 5 star rating from users, with “comfortable,” “safe,” “convenient,” and “friendly” the most commonly used words to describe it.

Tag analysis of two open evaluative questions showed what people most liked about the Shuttle:

- The driver (37 mentions)
- The cost (33 mentions)
- Comfort and cleanliness (27 mentions)
- Efficiency (11 mentions)
- Ease of use (11 mentions)
- Bike rack (7 mentions)
- Environmental benefits (7 mentions)

And what could have been better:

- Frequency (35 mentions)
- More/different connection points (15 mentions)
- Nothing (15 mentions)
- Speed/directness of service (11 mentions)
- Booking system (6 mentions)
- Connection to Queenstown Airport shuttle (5 mentions)

Focus group summary

This is a summary of our findings from two focus groups held in Wānaka on March 16 2023 (6 in attendance) and Hāwea on March 21 (10 in attendance).

1. MOTIVATIONS FOR USING FIRST TRIAL

The key themes in participants' motivations for using the Community Shuttle Trial were as follows:

Environment/climate action

- "You see so many cars coming in from Hāwea with one person in it."
- "Reducing carbon is a key issue in our household."

Changing habits/mindshift

- "Everyone is talking about climate change, but they but don't change their habits... In NZ, people are obsessed with their cars... If people would walk a little bit instead of taking their car, there'd be less parking problems... We have to start changing that habit."

Enjoyment

- "I found surprising things when I did use it. It was way more relaxing, I got to see stuff, meet people, and I could work on it if I wanted to."
- "It was so relaxing – I looked forward to my little bus rides... when you walk to and from a bus stop, you're in a totally different space than when you're driving and looking for a park."

Independence

- "It gave my husband a break from driving me around"
- "Not having to rely on rides from the community"

2. BARRIERS TO USING SHUTTLE DURING FIRST TRIAL

Common barriers for participants or those they knew using the Community Shuttle Trial included:

Three days a week

- "If you're not using it to commute, it either didn't go late enough or not on the weekend."
- "You couldn't use it to go to work every day, so you don't get into the routine."

Timetable

- "It took too long."
- "If I lived in Hāwea and started at 9, but had to be on bus at 8, I wouldn't keep using it."

- If you're reliant on other people's schedules for, the shuttle doesn't always suit. You might have 5 hours to wait in town between trips."
- "The timetable was confusing."

Hāwea-centric route

- "It didn't go anywhere I needed it to go. I live in Wānaka, and it was more for Hāwea people."
- I had no reason to go out to Hāwea or anywhere the route took you. Didn't need to use it.

3. ROUTE FOR SECOND TRIAL

We asked participants where they thought the key connection points for the second shuttle trial should be and what they thought of this draft design option: "Similar to trial #1, a full route in from Hāwea to Wānaka at the start of a day / a full route out at the end of a day / with abbreviated route run multiple times in between (which would include Northlake but exclude Hāwea)."

Connection points suggested multiple times were:

- Northlake
- Aubrey and Anderson Road
- Aspiring Retirement Village
- Old Mitre 10/new community centre
- Connections to Ritchie's airport shuttle

Conversation around design brought the following key suggestions to light:

A) Express route in the AM and PM (Hāwea – Albert Town – Wānaka CBD)

There was agreement across both focus groups that a quicker trip in the morning and afternoon with more direct stops would be useful for commuters needing to get into town by a specific time.

- "In a city, you would travel to a bus stop. If you had one stop at the Hāwea Store, and one in Hāwea Flat, it would be much faster. There should be an 'Express' route going in, and one coming home."
- "The route did meander quite a lot."
- "Not stopping if people don't request it – waiting in town if no one is getting on wastes time for people wanting to get to other spots."
- "Beginning and end of day needs to be express. It could stop on Camp Hill Road for anyone who needs to get in from Hāwea Flat?"
- "Hāwea store, Lakeview Terrace, Camp Hill Road, AT, into town, Three Parks, Ballantyne Road, CBD (skate park), Countdown. Then head up Anderson Road?"

B) Shorter Wānaka route during the day

Some, particularly those in the Wānaka focus group, would like shorter loops to run during the day that would allow people to get around Wānaka and surrounding areas like Anderson Road, Northlake.

- “I would use an in-town loop to get from the CBD to Three Parks, even if it stopped in a couple places first. For example, Anderson Road, Northlake, Albert Town, Three Parks, Medical Centre.”
- “Left hand turns across State Highways would be better.”
- “I found the stops in Wānaka quite good.”
- “It would be nice to trial a route incorporating Wānaka where people are picked up in different places (e.g. Northlake, Meadowstone, Beacon Point) and taken into town. The places people want to get to are mainly the same, it’s where they start/finish that’s different. We should start planning some of those potential places for a future service, if not for this trial.”
- “A smaller circuit of Anderson Road, Three Parks, Medical Centre, CBD, so you could tick off all your chores.”

C) Longer Hāwea route during the day

A more complete route (similar to the first trial) was still wanted by some in Hāwea and Hāwea Flat during the day to complete errands or attend medical appointments without the time constraints. Some felt Windmill Corner/ Hāwea Flat could be dropped, while others knew someone who got on there.

- “If people in Hāwea Flat are using their car to drive to a stop, they think, ‘I might as well keep going into town.’”
- “Growing population along Cemetery Road.”
- “We would still want a longer route during the day.”
- “Driving down to Windmill Corner and then back up was a waste of time.”
- “For those wanting to go in shopping etc, the 9.00 service returning at midday worked well. We can adjust our appointments to fit around that timing and we just have to get used to it.”

4. FREQUENCY / TIMING

We asked participants how long is too long for a ride in/out? For many, the route times needed to be shorter and more suited to a working day. For others (particularly those who are not working), there was less urgency.

We also asked how many days a week would be ideal – across the board, the answer to this was 7. But, understanding the need to compromise, 5 weekdays was a consensus (with some suggesting children would make more use of the shuttle on weekends).

Journey time

- “Half an hour is the max – anything else, I’m looking at my car.”

- “If I’m going home to Hāwea, I want to be home by 6. I might have to walk home from the bus stop.”
- “The bus needs to leave later than 5 – 5:10 or 5:15 for commuters.”
- “Most people start at 8.30 or 9.00 – could you accommodate both?”
- “I’m prepared to hang around for half an hour to get home.”
- “People our age can get on during the day. We’re not in a rush.”

Days a week

- “If we’re prioritizing something, weekdays is the best solution for habit forming (as opposed to three week days plus weekends).”
- “5 workdays is near essential to get commuters using it regularly”

5. COST

We asked participants how much they would be willing to pay. Overall, participants felt the \$2 price point was attractive and would want to continue at that rate. It was generally understood that, in any future full service, the cost would likely be higher.

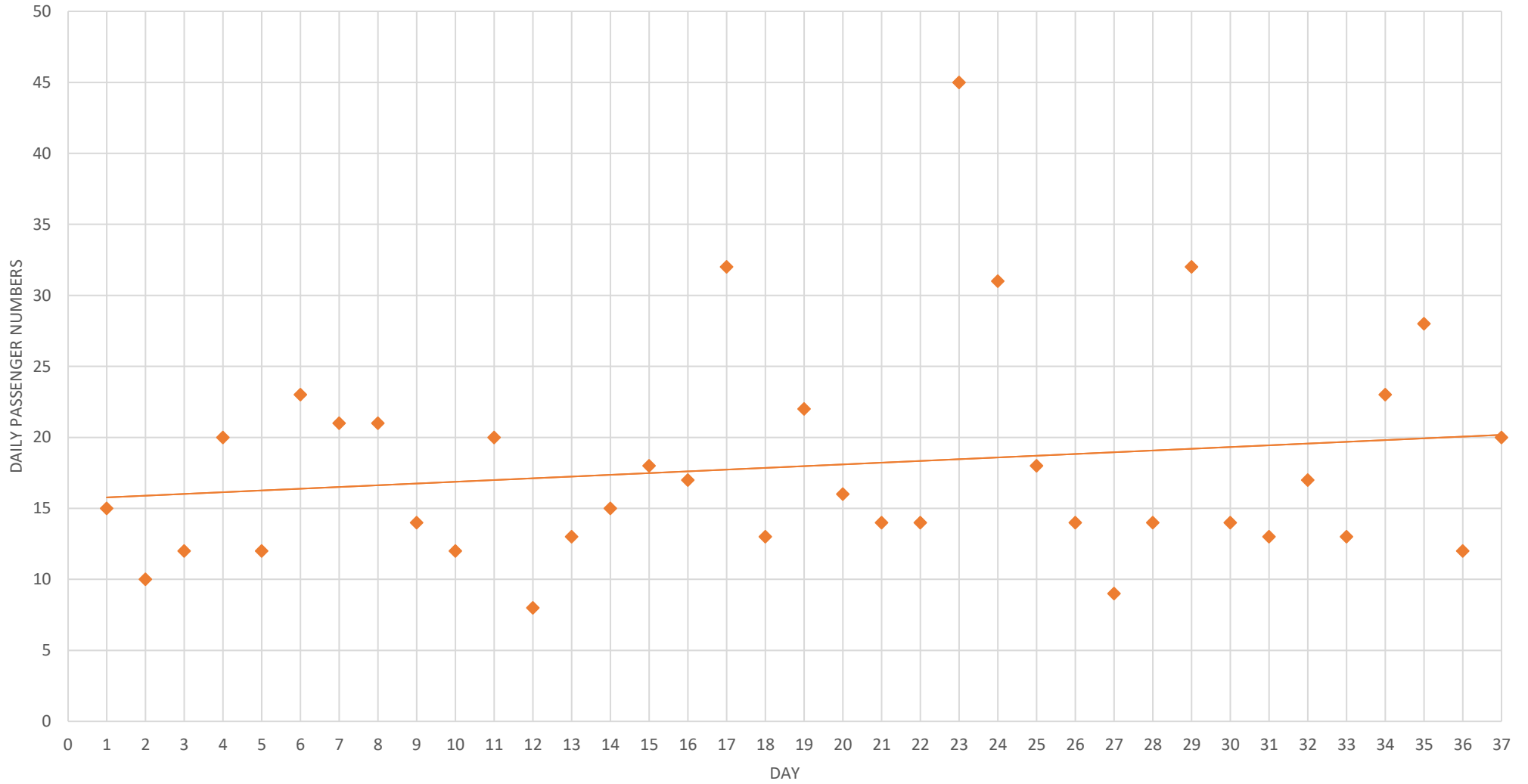
- “The \$2 fare is what appealed to me.”
- “If you start punching price up, commuters might start thinking they could just take their car.”
- “The Queenstown bus is \$2, why should we pay more?”
- “Hook people in at a low cost, and once it becomes indispensable then it can go up.”

6. BOOKING SYSTEM

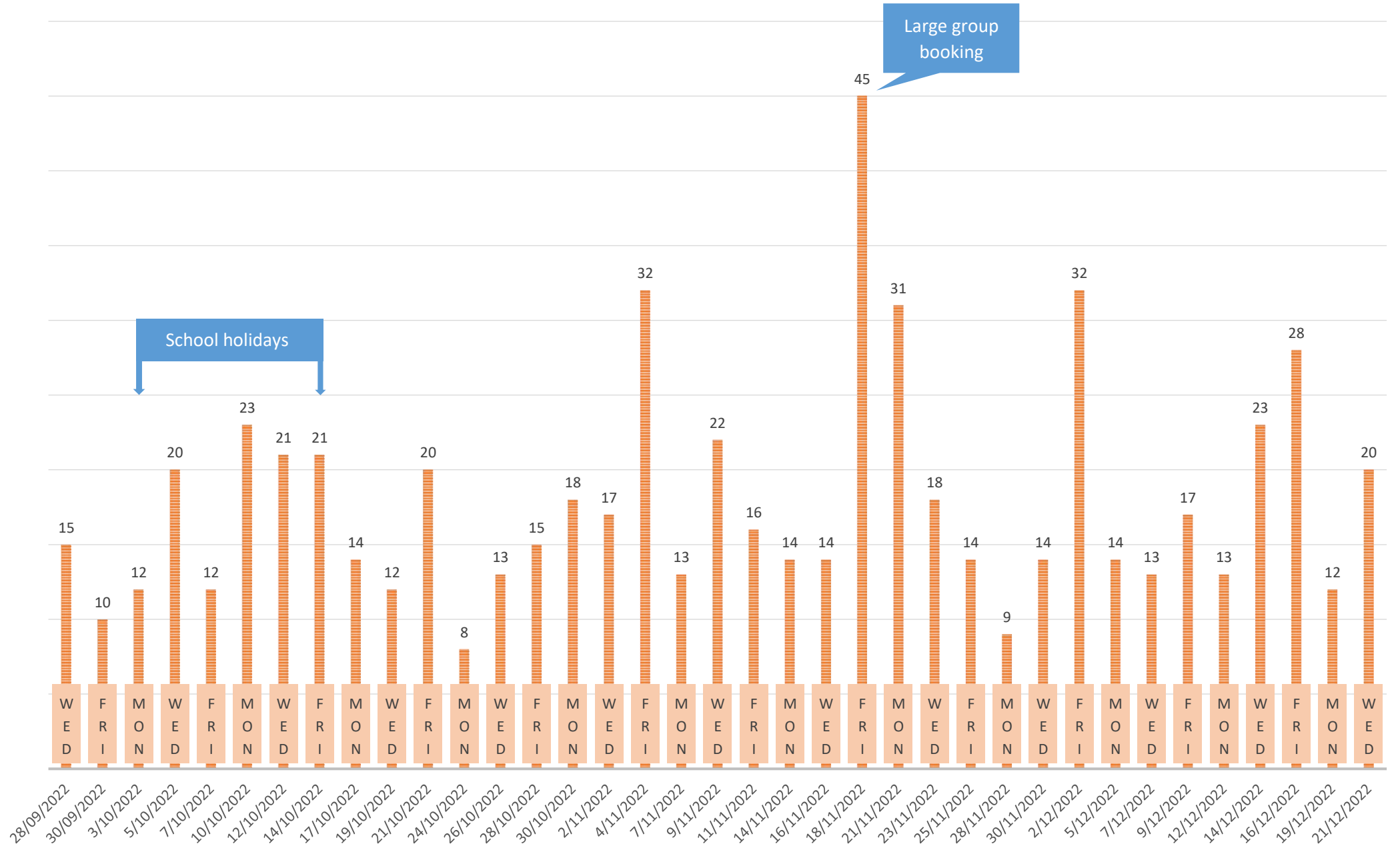
We asked participants to what extent the booking requirements were either a barrier or enabler. The booking system was a barrier for some; an inconvenience for others (especially needing to book return as two separate bookings); and no problem for others. Overall, a system where you could either book or show up was agreeable. It came up several times that being able to make only booking at a time was a hindrance.

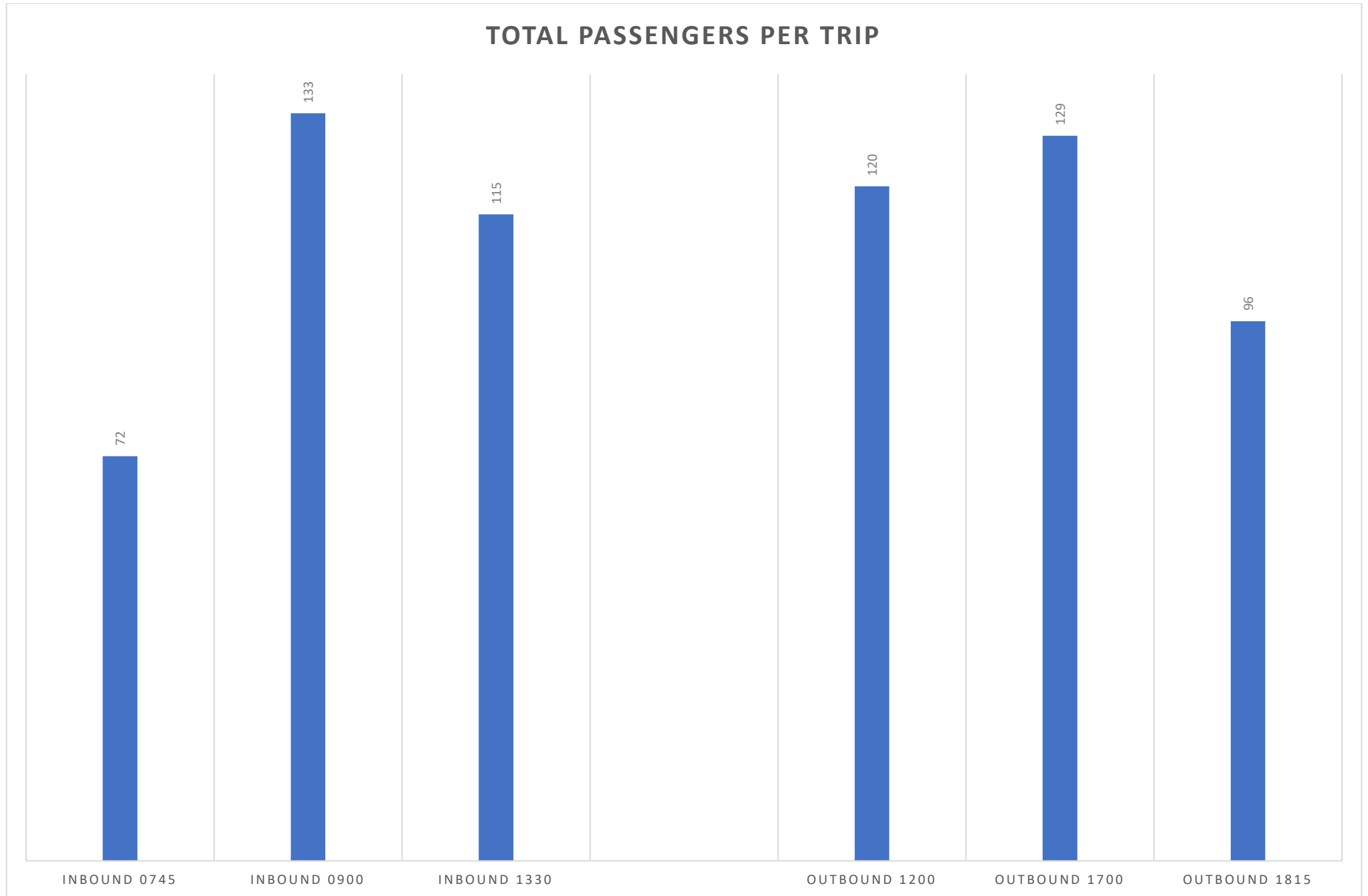
- “Booking was not an issue for us.”
- “I liked ringing up. They were always very friendly and chatty.”
- “The online element was an issue for older people.”
- “We found it fiddly – every transaction has to be a separate booking.”
- “I didn’t book – I just turned up.”
- “You could say you can just show up, but if you want to guarantee your seat you book?”

DAILY PASSENGER NUMBERS OVER THREE MONTH TRIAL

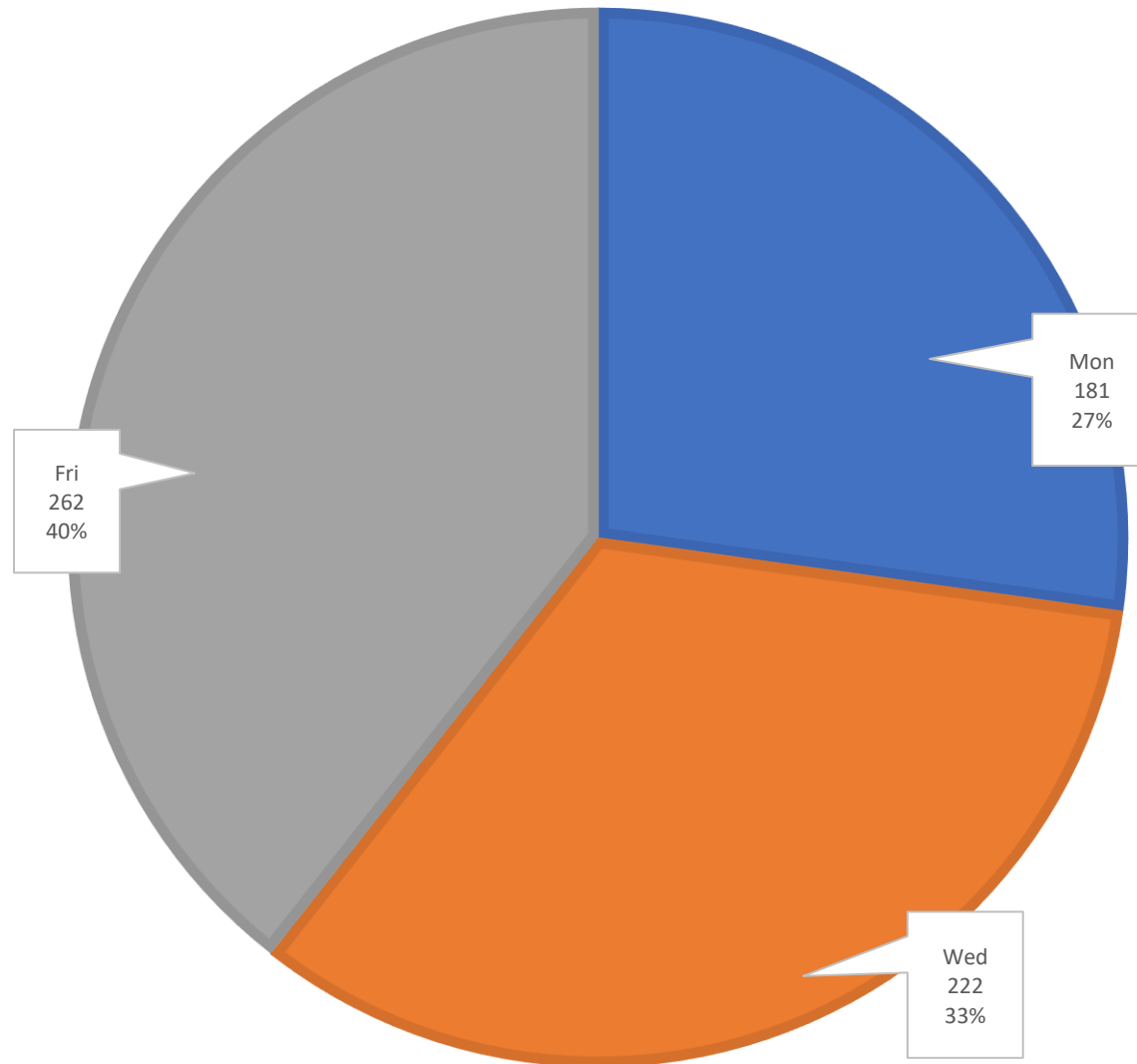


PASSENGER NUMBERS BY DATE

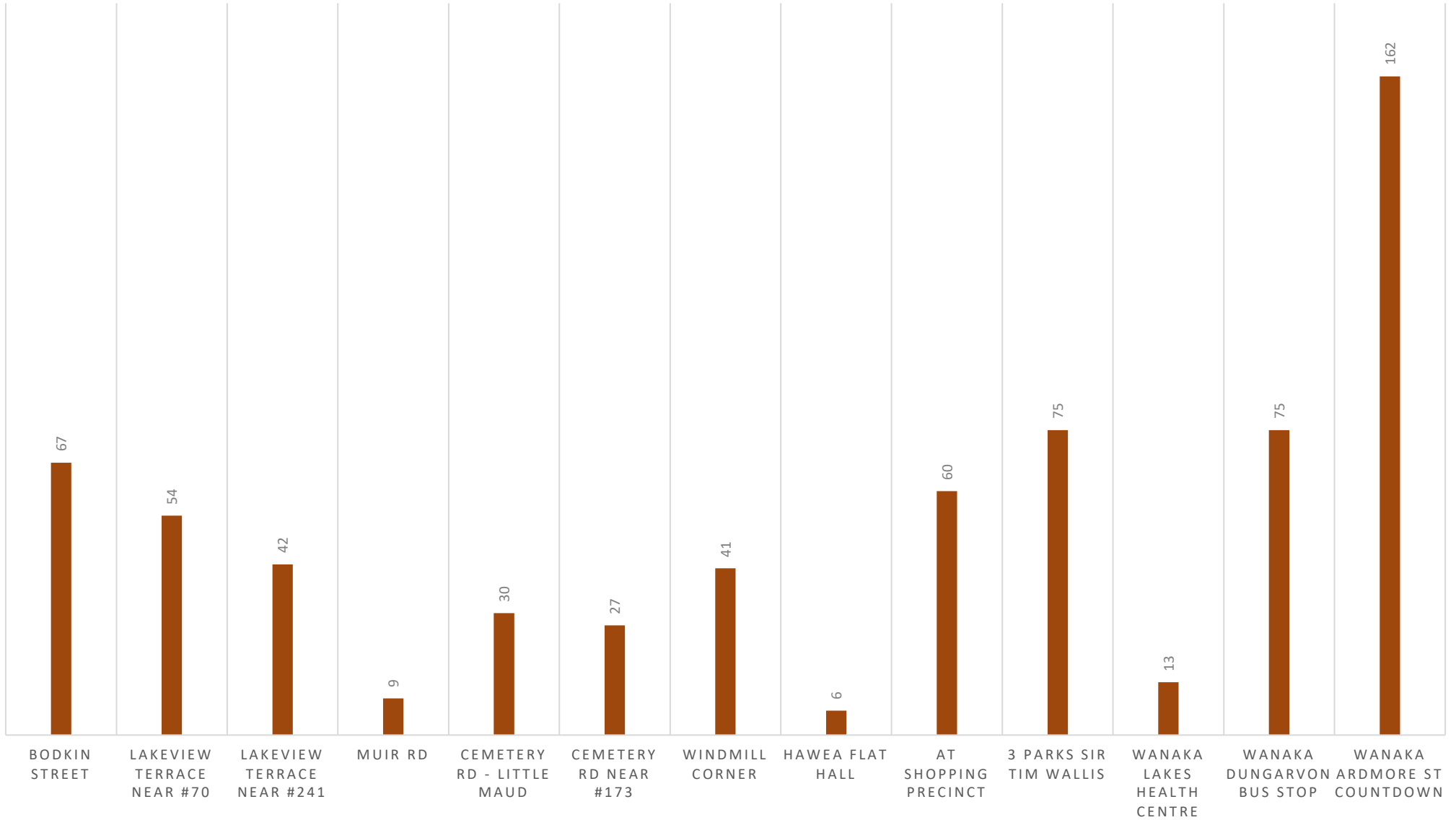




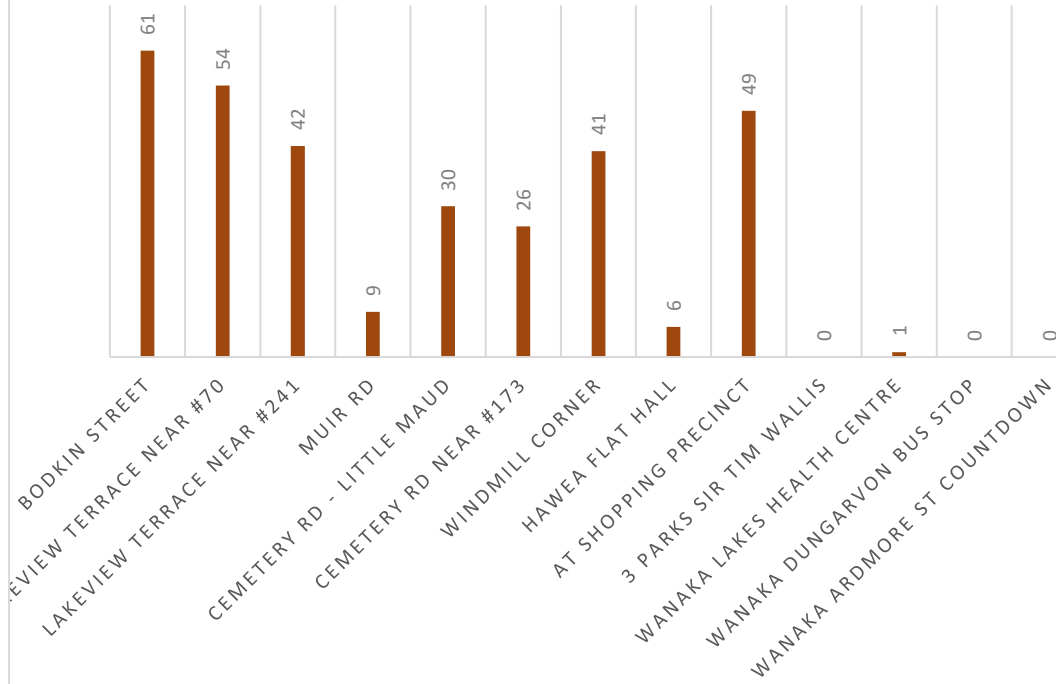
TOTAL PASSENGERS PER WEEKDAY



PICK UPS PER LOCATION (TOTAL)



PICK-UPS PER LOCATION (HAWEA - WANAKA TRIPS)



PICK-UPS PER LOCATION (WANAKA - HAWEA TRIPS)

