



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Liam Berry

fyi-request-34481-b40403e3@requests.fyi.org.nz

25 May 2026

Tēnā koe Liam

OIA: GEMS-47675 – Information relating to the school bus transport contract awarded to Go Bus Transport Ltd in the Manawatū–Whanganui region

Thank you for your email of 13 April 2026 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

I am writing pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 to request the following information relating to the school bus transport contract awarded to Go Bus Transport Ltd in the Manawatu-Whanganui region.

Contract Details

- 1. A copy of the contract or tender agreement between the Ministry of Education and Go Bus Transport Ltd for the provision of school transport services in the Manawatu-Whanganui region, including the contract term, total contract value, and annual payments.*
- 2. The date on which Go Bus commenced services under this contract, and the scheduled expiry date.*
- 3. The total annual sum payable to Go Bus under the contract for each year of the contract term.*

Service Reductions

- 4. A list of all school bus routes in the Manawatu-Whanganui region that have been discontinued, reduced, or modified since Go Bus assumed the contract, including the date each change took effect.*
- 5. The number of students affected by each route change identified in response to question 4.*
- 6. The total number of students in the Manawatu-Whanganui region who were eligible for and receiving Ministry-funded school transport in the final year of the previous provider's contract (Uzabus/Madge Coachlines), compared with the number currently eligible and receiving Ministry-funded transport under Go Bus.*

Financial Impact

- 7. The estimated cost savings, if any, realised by Go Bus as a result of the route reductions and discontinued services identified in response to question 4.*
- 8. Whether the Ministry has adjusted (increased or decreased) the payments made to Go Bus following any route reductions or service changes. If so, please provide details of each adjustment, the date it took effect, and the financial value.*
- 9. If no adjustment has been made, please confirm whether Go Bus continues to receive the full contract sum originally tendered, notwithstanding the reduction in services.*

Eligibility Policy

- 10. Any internal policy documents, guidelines, or directives issued to Ministry staff (including by or to James Meffan or members of the school transport review team) regarding the interpretation or application of the “nearest suitable school” eligibility criterion for school bus entitlement.*
- 11. Any correspondence between the Ministry and Go Bus regarding the transport of non-qualifying students on contracted school bus services.*
- 12. Any records of the “cartwheel” or inter-school transfer arrangement previously operated in Palmerston North, under which rural students were collected and redistributed to their chosen schools, and any Ministry decision or communication discontinuing this arrangement.*

Previous Provider Comparison

- 13. The total annual sum paid to Uzabus (or Madge Coachlines) under the previous Ministry contract for the same region, for each of the final three years of that contract.*
- 14. The total number of school bus routes operated under the previous contract in its final year of operation, compared with the number currently operated by Go Bus.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

On 11 May 2026, we refused **parts 10, 11 and 12** of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collusion or research such as would interfere with normal operations.

In response to **part one** of your request, Ministry contracts with bus operators are commercially sensitive, so we cannot release the specific contract with our Palmerston North bus operator. I am refusing this part of your request under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, to protect information where the making available of the

information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

However, I am able to release a copy of the contract template in full, attached at **Appendix A**.

In response to **part two** of your request, the start date for this contract with GoBus is Term 1, 2022. The initial term is for six years, and there are two rights of renewal available in the contract, each for three years.

I am refusing **part three** of your request under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, as above, as the total annual sum payable to GoBus is commercially sensitive.

In response to **part four** of your request, please see a list of discontinued, reduced or modified school bus routes in the Manawatū-Whanganui region from Term 1 2022 to 13 April 2026 below as **Appendix B**.

In response to **parts five and six** of your request, the Ministry does not use an onboarding or ticketing service for school bus services that it contracts or funds. For this reason, we do not collect detailed patronage data, except through ad hoc manual patronage audits. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds for believing that it is either held by, or more closely connected to the functions of, another department or organisation subject to the Act.

However, from Term 1, 2026, our bus routes in the Manawatū–Whanganui region have been designed to support 3,758 students.

In response to **part seven** of your request, the Ministry does not hold financial or commercial information for GoBus. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as above. I suggest that you approach GoBus directly for this information.

Regarding **parts eight and nine** of your request, details of the payment adjustment mechanism can be found in clause 127, and Schedules 4 and 6 of the contract template. Financial details of each adjustment are commercially sensitive, so I am refusing these parts of your request under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, as above.

I am refusing **part 13** of your request under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, as above, as payments to bus operators, past or present, are commercially sensitive.

As required under section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered the public interest in releasing the information withheld. I do not consider that the public interest considerations favouring the release of this information are sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold it at this time.

In response to **part 14** of your request, when the contract changed at the start of 2022, a reclassification of all regions and routes throughout New Zealand was

implemented. This means that we are unable to provide a like-for-like comparison, so I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as above.

I am able to provide the total number of Ministry-contracted daily school bus routes operating across the country at the start of Term 1 2022 (1,438). At the start of Term 1 2026, there were 1,392 Ministry-contracted daily school bus routes operating across the country.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Meffan', is positioned above the typed name.

James Meffan
General Manager, School Transport
Te Mahau | Education Services

Appendix B

Table: School bus routes in the Manawatū–Whanganui region that have been created, discontinued, reduced, or modified, 1 January 2022-13 April 2026

Route	Change type	Effective date
D080603	Lengthened	6/02/2023
D080203	Shortened	3/03/2023
D080420	Shortened	9/03/2023
D080417	New	29/05/2023
D080105	Shortened	6/06/2023
D080312	Lengthened	1/01/2024
D080422	New	1/02/2024
D080201	Lengthened	29/04/2024
D080315	New	1/01/2025
D080413	Lengthened	1/03/2025
D080213	Shortened	28/06/2025
D080601	Shortened	14/07/2025
D080301	Cancelled	19/09/2025
D080506	Merged	19/09/2025
D080311	Shortened	6/10/2025
D080312	Shortened	6/10/2025
D080501	Lengthened	6/10/2025
D080204	Merged	31/12/2025
D080206	Cancelled	31/12/2025
D080211	Merged	31/12/2025
D080409	Merged	31/12/2025
D080203	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080205	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080207	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080208	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080209	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080210	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080212	Lengthened	1/01/2026

Route	Change type	Effective date
D080213	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080215	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080217	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080218	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080219	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080221	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080222	Cancelled	1/01/2026
D080224	Cancelled	1/01/2026
D080225	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080226	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080227	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080228	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080229	Cancelled	1/01/2026
D080230	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080231	Lengthened	1/01/2026
D080234	New	1/01/2026
D080235	New	1/01/2026
D080412	Shortened	1/01/2026
D080236	New	1/01/2026
D080205	Shortened	16/03/2026
D080234	Shortened	16/03/2026

Notes:

- Excludes changes not yet implemented
- Covers the entire Manawatū–Whanganui School Transport region, including (but not limited to) services operated by Go Bus
- Routes with multiple changes during the period may appear more than once
- Excludes contractual amendments to routes that do not impact students