

Sustainable Transport Policy for Tasmania

INTRODUCTION

Passenger transport is integral to the sustainability of Tasmanian cities, towns and regions. It plays a critical role in determining the quality of life across the state, economic growth and protection of the environment. Passenger transport provides improvements in health, education and other social opportunities through the access it provides to services.

The Tasmanian Bus Association definition for a 'sustainable transport system' is *one that makes a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the Tasmanian communities they serve.*

In advocating for a sustainable passenger transport future in Tasmania, TasBus supports not only mass passenger transport services that are delivered by modern and environmentally friendly vehicles and fuels, it also strongly supports active transport modes such as walking and cycling. This policy statement, whilst highlighting active transport issues, is however fundamentally targeted at passenger transport services delivered by buses.

VISION STATEMENT

Vision Statement: To build a sustainable passenger transport future for Tasmania.

The future sustainability and growth of our regions, cities and towns is heavily dependent on the development of sustainable passenger transport systems for Tasmania. The bus industry is the sole provider for the mass passenger transport needs of all Tasmanians, and particularly those living on the urban fringes of our major towns and cities. Our vision is to make the passenger transport system sustainable, and in doing so provide viable alternative transport choice to the private motor vehicle for all Tasmanians.

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THE TASMANIAN BUS ASSOCIATION (TasBus)

TasBus is the peak body representing the Tasmanian Bus and Coach industry.

The goals of TasBus are to work in cooperation with community and the Tasmanian Government to:

- Protect the ongoing viability of the Tasmanian Bus and Coach Industry.
- Develop and implement policies that improve the efficiency and professionalism of Tasmanian bus operators.
- Provide assistance and advice to bus operators on issues which will impact on their business.
- Promote unity within the industry.
- Promote unity between the industry and the community.
- Encourage sustainable growth of bus operations.
- Promote mobility and accessibility for Tasmanian communities through the use of mass passenger transport systems
- Encourage Government investment into mass passenger transport in the form of services, support for modern and safe vehicles and network infrastructure

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TASBUS AIMS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUTURE IN TASMANIA

The rising cost of fuel, and increasing awareness of the environmental impact of over-reliance on the car has made it critical that in the long-term sustainable transport choices are offered to Tasmanians as a genuine and realistic alternative to the car. According to figures from the Department of Environment, there are more than 245,000 cars in Tasmania with approximately 80 per cent of all trips being taken in a car.

This Sustainable Transport Policy outlines 'TasBus' vision for the development of a sustainable transport future for Tasmania which encompasses urban, peri-urban and regional mass passenger transport services. The sustainable transport future would see a greater diversity of mobility choices used by Tasmanians for work, education and leisure travel, including mass transit and active transport. In developing its policy, TasBus has sought to take into account the unique nature of passenger transport in Tasmania with a focus on solutions for Tasmanians living in regional areas and on the fringes of our major towns.

The TasBus aim is to double the share of trips being taken by passenger and active transport to 40 per cent by 2040.

WHY 40 PER CENT BY 2040?

Tasmanians are fortunate; we live in the most desirable state in a modern western democratic country which boasts a wonderful lifestyle for its citizens and has a healthy and growing economy. Tasmanians unique lifestyle and beautiful environment gives them one of the most liveable places on the planet, TasBus wish to see this not only preserved but built upon. We stridently believe that the end of Tasmania's over-reliance on the car and switch to sustainable transport is a vital element for the maintenance of our pristine environment, the economic viability of the Tasmanian lifestyle and the continued, sustainable, growth of our major centres.

The achievement of a 40 per cent (of all trips) by 2040 target will:

- Contribute significantly to a reduction in vehicle emissions.
- Enhance growth opportunities of our major centres making them more viable.
- Make the urban form of our town and cities friendlier.
- Improve community mobility and access
- Buffer Tasmanians against oil price vulnerability (increase in fuel costs).
- Build a more active population and bring with it improvements in passenger health and reductions in health care costs to Government and the community.
- Help address social inclusion issues – isolation and employment accessibility.

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Climate Change and Pollution

Vehicles are currently responsible for about 25 per cent of Tasmania's total greenhouse gas emissions through emissions of carbon dioxide. Nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and ozone in the lower atmosphere also add to the greenhouse effect.

The National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) results for 1999-2000 period indicate in Hobart 82% of the lead present in the urban area was attributed to vehicle emissions.

The challenges of increased population, climate change, pollution and crowded cities will make the use of cars in the future a more and more difficult proposition; buses need to be a frontline solution and supported by the Tasmanian Government to address transport related carbon emissions and air pollution.

Increased Population – Urban Congestion

According to the Demographic Change Advisory Council the population is expected to increase to 560,000 by 2040, a more than 10 per cent growth on current levels.

This predicted growth will have an impact both on the environmental and economic sustainability of our major centre and bring with it an increasing demand for alternative transport choices.

Energy Security

While research into oil price vulnerability in Australian cities does not focus on Hobart, recent results indicate that every capital city in Australia has experienced significant increases in oil price vulnerability, which in turn impacts on the ability of householders to meet their debt payments. Transport related costs are between 15% to 20% of total household expenditure depending on where a person lives and is the third largest household expenditure item.

Oil prices are predicted to return to high levels as early as mid 2010. The provision of alternative travel choices and investment in alternative fuel and vehicle technology for buses is part of the solution to minimizing the impact of rising fuel prices and depleting oil resources.

Personal Health

According to the Tasmanian Government submission into the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing's 2008 Inquiry into Obesity in Australia almost 49 per cent of Tasmanians reported being overweight or Obese in 2004 with projections showing this percentage on the rise.

While the Tasmania Together Plan focuses on increasing the physical activity of children aged between 5 and 14 years old and the dietary requirements of adults, no consideration is given to the increasing the activity of adults through coincidental means, such as travel behaviour change.

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A TEN POINT PLAN

Research from the New Zealand Government indicates that the annual health benefits of walking and cycling are almost \$2000 per person per annum and other research indicates passenger transport users are more likely to walk in between using passenger transport systems.

While research into oil price vulnerability in Australian cities does not focus on Hobart, recent results indicate that every capital city in Australia has experienced significant increases in oil price vulnerability which in turn impacts on the ability of householders to meet their debt payments. Clearly Tasmania is as vulnerable, or more so than other Australian communities.

All of these trends indicate that a continuation of over-reliance on cars (80 per cent of all trips) is not a long term option for Tasmania.

This policy looks firstly at some practical steps to develop a sustainable transport system, and sustainable transport choices in Tasmanians. It seeks to encourage the development of infrastructure to support those choices, upgrading the rolling infrastructure of our bus fleet, improving ticketing, marketing to encourage continued growth in patronage and improving safety and security on our passenger transport system.

TasBus has identified ten steps the Government can take towards the development of a sustainable mass passenger transport future for Tasmania.

1. Audit of existing systems and finding efficiencies/improvements in the system

The first and most critical step in building a better and more sustainable transport system for Tasmania is an assessment of what we have.

TasBus supports a whole of network audit which will be tasked with:

1. Reviewing the relative efficiencies of privately contracted and Government owned operations in delivering services and meeting policy objectives.
2. Identifying existing mass passenger transport services
3. Identifying all passenger transport related rolling stock
4. Identifying transport infrastructure already in place
5. Measuring transport needs across the network through a transport needs analysis.
6. Undertaking a gaps analysis to identify efficiencies and inefficiencies in the system.
7. Using the gaps analysis to identify potential for service improvements in the system.
8. Using the research and data to develop a 'Sustainable Passenger Transport Action Plan for Tasmania' including identifying where investment is needed for increased and more frequent services, new infrastructure and where resources and funding can be better utilised.
9. Progressively implement actions contained in the plan.

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NOTE: See attached identified passenger transport infrastructure priority projects.

2. Transport Mobility and Accessibility Co-ordination

Following on from an audit, the plan described above should seek to deliver better coordination and integration of regional, urban fringe and metropolitan services to increase coverage and service frequencies.

This coordination should be focussed on increased service coverage and frequency in areas identified as being “transport poor” by the audit. This should be coordinated through Mobility and Accessibility Committees established between the State Government, regions and Local Government areas.

3. Alternative Technology and Intelligent Transport Systems

TasBus believes that whole of passenger transport network assessment be undertaken into alternative technologies and intelligent transport systems to improve the system from an operational and user perspective. The Commonwealth Government has recently demonstrated a willingness to investigate and invest in “smart infrastructure” meaning that any identified need for intelligent transport systems might be funded through Commonwealth processes.

A planned and long term investment strategy for implementing alternative fuel technologies should be adopted based on what best suits the Tasmanian environment.

A study into Intelligent Transport Systems such as commuter real time information, integrated ticketing, driver guidance systems, operations software etc and how they will drive efficiencies in both the metropolitan and regional fleet should be undertaken.

4. Social Inclusion

TasBus supports the inclusion of transport mobility and accessibility and network coverage as a measurement of the outcomes of policies designed to ameliorate the impacts of social isolation and economic disadvantage.

This measure will broaden the scope of the Sustainable Transport policy beyond the bus industry and Government and include groups such as the Tasmanian Council of Social Services which has been taking an active role in discussions about passenger transport.

Recent research suggests a further dispersion of Tasmanian population, with most people living outside the major metropolitan centers of Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie. Tasbus agrees with TASCOS's assertion that transport is fundamental to connecting people to opportunity.

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A recent report by TASCOS indicated that the lack of, or inadequate, local services is common to all types of disadvantaged areas. This includes “health services, affordable retail shopping, childcare and transport services, local or accessible opportunities for education, training, employment and recreation. Some rural and urban fringe areas also lack basic infrastructure such as adequate and affordable drinking water, passenger telephones and broadband internet connection¹.” This finding was reinforced by responses to the Social Inclusion Consultation.

The research shows that not everyone has the same opportunities and capacity to access the goods and services they need to effectively participate in their communities. Data illustrates the differential access to transport experienced by groups such as sole parents, people on low incomes and people with a disability. Across Tasmania there are areas where people experience disadvantage in relation to accessing goods and services – in some areas the disadvantage is related to low income, in others it is related to being small and geographically isolated.

“Tasmania’s highly dispersed population is also an issue in terms of social inclusion. While rural communities may be well-connected, they often lack basic services. Young people, particularly those from diverse groups, can be very isolated, further exacerbated by lack of access to support services, education, recreational activities and transport. Plentiful and affordable food and child care, health and education services may also be limited”.

Youth Network of Tasmania Submission to the Social Inclusion Consultation

TasBus believes a future transport plan for Tasmania should include increased and improved services for rural and urban-fringe outside the morning and afternoon peak periods through a coordinated effort to measure where “transport poverty” exists and to address it.

5. Sustainability Passenger Transport Fund

A vital element in delivering efficiencies and improvements to the passenger transport network in Tasmania will be ongoing and recurrent funding of services, technology and on-street infrastructure.

To that end TasBus calls for the development of a ‘Sustainability Passenger Transport Fund’ in Tasmania to facilitate sustainable transport choices including mass passenger transit and active transport i.e. cycle lanes and pedestrian access.

This fund could be serviced by a range of income sources including parking fees, vehicle registration fees and GST collected on fuels used by passenger transport vehicles.

¹ TASCOS, 2009 *Just Scraping By: Conversations with Tasmanians Living on Low Incomes*, TASCOS, Sandy Bay.

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6. Encouraging Sustainable Transport Choices

As an accompaniment to the improvement and better utilisation of services TasBus has identified a range of “ready to go” measures that can be implemented to encourage sustainable transport choices amongst Tasmanians.

- (i) Minimum service levels – An increase in minimum service levels according to identified areas of need and demand in the network audit in cooperation with bus operators.
- (ii) Free seniors travel – An incentive scheme for free seniors travel during weekdays and on passenger holidays similar to the schemes adopted by the Western Australian and South Australian Governments. This could be supported by Commonwealth funding.
- (iii) Incentive systems for Government employees – The allowance of long-term passenger transport tickets or bikes, along with cars, in salary packaging arrangements for Tasmanian passenger servants and advocacy by the Tasmanian Government to see all citizens eligible for income tax benefits for passenger transport use under the Fringe Benefits Tax system and employers given incentives for encouraging passenger transport use amongst their employees.
- (iv) Bikes on buses – The adoption of front of bus bike racks or on bus restraint devices for metropolitan services to allow cycling within metropolitan areas for urban fringe and outer-metropolitan residents. Secure bike parking facilities at interchanges and major stops will facilitate greater integration of active transport and passenger transport.
- (v) Development of demand responsive transport systems – An investigation into the viability of demand responsive transport systems at off-peak times for metropolitan areas.

7. Developing Infrastructure

TasBus believes the development of infrastructure which supports sustainable transport choices should underpin other measures taken by the Government in delivering a Sustainable Passenger Transport Plan for Tasmania.

Infrastructure investment in a range of areas can deliver immediate benefits for Tasmanian wishing to make a switch from the car to active or mass passenger transport and can make the travelling experience better for those currently using passenger transport.

TasBus proposes investment in the following infrastructure areas:

- (i) Review interchange infrastructure in major centres and invest in modern facilities to improve the passenger transport user experience.
- (ii) Walk ways and cycle ways
- (iii) Bus priority lanes and measures– Extend existing lanes and develop lanes and measures, including lights and priority signalling, in areas identified by the network audit including Hobart and Launceston.

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- (iv) State Government to assist Local Governments meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (Accessible Transport Standards) in on-street accessibility infrastructure.
- (v) Rural school stops – Improve the safety and amenity of school bus stops in rural areas.

8. Enhancing Contracts and Upgrading the Fleet

A sustainable transport plan requires long term planning. TasBus believes that this planning should deliver a framework that provides for increased confidence of private operators through the service contracts determination process. It should also seek to lower the average age of the fleet across the whole of Tasmania.

1. Improved contract certainty – the contract agreement between the Government and Operators should be improved to provide at the end of current 5+5 year contract terms in 2018, the incumbent operator having first rights on option for renewal. This will create greater incentives to perform and give stronger investment certainty resulting in better long-term service delivery outcomes.
2. Average fleet age – reduction in the overall average age of the fleet to 12 years by 2020. This age profile would deliver a bus fleet at a standard commensurate with other Australian states and represent a major step in delivering a sustainable passenger transport system.
3. Disability Discrimination Act -TasBus calls for a review of the current state-wide fleet to determine what action needs to be taken to ensure that all operators are meeting Disability Discrimination Act (Accessible Transport Standards) requirements. It is necessary that the prescribed level of vehicle quality, performance and safety is achieved, not only in urban areas, but in regional and remote Tasmania.

The review of DDA compliance would be in accord with the undertakings made by the Government, under the Disability Framework for Action. Implementation of the actions arising from the review would help in delivering better mobility outcomes for the disabled, as well as serving to lower the average age of the fleet across Tasmania.

4. TasBus supports the recommendation of the DIER Core Passenger Services Review that the Government provides a funding program of \$3 million per annum over 5 years to support the replacement of student only and rural school buses on identified high risk routes with new buses.

9. Improving Ticketing

The introduction of electronic ticketing by Metro Tasmania (Green CARD) is a good and supported initiative. However, TasBus believe a better integration of ticketing between metropolitan and non-metropolitan services and other modes, including ferries, is necessary to maximise its potential in support of sustainable transport outcomes. This will provide efficiencies in the system and encourage use of passenger transport within metropolitan areas amongst commuters travelling into CBDs from urban fringe areas.

Such integration could be done by extending the Go CARD system through the current provider to encompass all passenger transport systems in Tasmania.

10. Marketing for Future Growth and Safety

Raising awareness of alternative transport choices has proven to deliver benefits, not only in patronage increases and accessibility to the system, but also in safety.

The implementation of trip planning systems and travel behaviour change initiatives has proven successful in other states, and TasBus believes the following simple measures could be adopted in Tasmania:

- (i) Travel behaviour change initiatives - The development of a 'TravelSmart' program similar to that undertaken in Victoria could deliver real travel behaviour change outcomes for Tasmania in future.

In Victoria, TravelSmart has shifted from individualised marketing to travel planning and is now mainly delivered in partnership with local government.

Under the program Councils and other organisations are funded to develop and implement travel plans using the TravelSmart travel planning methodology.

This has expanded delivery capability to produce over 100 travel plans (at schools, workplaces, tertiary institutions, hospitals, activity centres) affecting more than 300,000 people.

TravelSmart projects now emphasise:

- The uptake of sustainable transport by new users
- Conversion of short car trips to sustainable transport options
- Innovative approaches to encourage sustainable transport.
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- (ii) Joint marketing campaigns with Federal Government – market alternative travel choices – walk bike ride (equivalent to slip slop slap)

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(iii) Campaign to promote passenger transport safety for on and off bus – cycling and pedestrians

A safety campaign focused on boarding, alighting vehicles and travelling around buses

- particularly school buses, targeted at passenger transport users and motorists with the intent of increasing awareness of buses and serving as a cost effective, preventative road safety measure.

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(iv) Website functionality –

The presence of trip planning, cost savings and emissions reduction data

in relation to passenger transport use has been adopted by several states. The presence of this information not only encourages more efficient use of passenger transport by individuals, but demonstrates clear economic and environmental benefits to users.

This increase in functionality would include developing a comprehensive single website for all Tasmanian services a 'one stop shop' overseen by DIER which could provide information about connecting services between metropolitan, outer-metropolitan and regional Tasmania.

CLOSING STATEMENT

TasBus envisions a sustainable transport future for Tasmania that will see a greater diversity of mobility choices for all Tasmanians.

The Tasmanian Bus and Coach Industry will partner with the community, and like minded organisations to drive the change we need to deliver sustainable transport for the benefit of the Tasmania's future.