

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Government Administration Committee B Integrated Transport Options

Submission by the Tasmanian Bus Association

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 to services.

The Tasmanian Bus Association's (TasBus) 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.

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.

TasBus currently has 185 members operating in excess of 700 buses and coaches within the state, with an additional 220 buses operated by Metro, also a member of TasBus.

The members provide in excess of 500 contracts to Government, providing 1500 bus services per day, transporting 47,000 passenger trips per day.

The private passenger transport industry currently provides employment for approx 300 Full Time Equivalents

During the past five years the private bus industry has upgraded the fleet with approx 500 new or new second hand vehicles being introduced to contracts, which represents an investment by TasBus members in excess of \$60 Million.

This investment has had the affect of reducing the bus age for large private owned buses in Tasmania from in excess of 22 years to approx 15.5 years. This large vehicle upgrade has, in addition to the reduced age of the vehicle fleet now offering the travelling passenger more modern buses with increased safety features, together with reduced emissions from modern engines.

Passenger transport by bus is the safest form of transport currently available in Tasmania, with school children using bus services being 7 times safer than in the family car, 22 times safer than walking and 227 times safer than cycling.

During the period 2004 – 2007 the Core Passenger Review on all contracted services within the state was undertaken by the Government. Results of the review highlighted in excess of 100 contracts no longer required. Operators of these services were offered a package of 1 year's gross payment to discontinue the service.

The remaining contracts were then offered to the incumbent operators with a new common contracting framework for a period of 10 years being made up of two 5 + 5 year terms.

As mentioned previously the new contracting framework provided by Government had an immediate effect with the upgrading of the fleet. The operators are now 4 years into the first term of the 10 year contract and the industry is looking to government to provide security at the end of the second 5 year term so that the upgrading of vehicles continues and operators elect not to operate old vehicles due to uncertainty for the future.

1. Social Inclusion

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.

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 include groups such as the Tasmanian Council of Social Services, which has been taking an active role in discussing passenger transport.

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

Urban Fringe Services

The Urban Fringe General Access services that were a direct result of the Core Passenger Review process have been one of the successes of the review. These services are as the name suggests, General Access Services for all types of passengers including students, together with adults travelling into the four Tasmanian cities on a regular timetable, in some instances seven days per week.

The operators of these services have invested into transport infrastructure, modern technology and newer vehicles as per the model payment in the new contract system, and in many of the areas have seen in excess of 10% increase year on year since 2009

The increase in ridership has resulted in more passengers travelling to the cities which has had a net result of more passengers for the urban metro services, all of which are operated by Metro Tasmania in Hobart Launceston and Burnie, with a private operator providing the urban Devonport service. The success of these services has put additional pressure on the city infrastructure and transport providers.

In some cases the private bus industry has commenced trials with the local community transport provider where Community Transport Services Tasmania transports the passenger to the urban fringe bus service and collects the passenger upon the return service. This partnership benefits both parties, as the local community vehicle remains in its area and is available to other community transport clients, while the urban fringe operator has an increased passenger load to the city.

A trial of this type of service has now been operating in the Swansea area for several months and Community Transport Tasmania is keen to expand the service to other areas.

Future Needs

Increased patronage from the urban fringe areas is now being restricted due to the lack of service and infrastructure integration and varying ticketing systems by operators. Tas Bus fully supports the need for an integrated ticket system where passengers are able to travel on all General Access Services with the one ticket, such as the current Metro Greencard. This is currently being evaluated by a working group representing Metro and private operators.

In conjunction with the integrated ticket system, there is also a requirement for the implementation of a trip planning system together with travel behaviour change initiatives which has proven to be successful in other states.

There needs to be recognition in urban areas that investment in non infrastructure can provide a better return to government than infrastructure. The provision of the bus lane on the Southern Outlet has resulted in less travel time for bus commuters. The extension of this to Macquarie Street would further reduce the travel time and increase patronages on the buses, with less infrastructure spend required.

There are many areas within the urban areas where non infrastructure on bus lanes or bus priority systems will assist in a reduction of traffic congestion if passengers are able to travel to their destination quicker by bus than the private car.

The continued growth of passenger transport in the urban fringe and outer urban areas is dependent on continued support for accessibility and mobility to these growth areas by future governments.

The future use of Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) must be considered in conjunction with the evaluation of the northern rail corridor in Hobart. The conversion of the existing rail corridor being able to take buses on a daily tidal flow system would improve travel times of the current urban fringe services from the Southern Midlands, Derwent Valley and outer northern suburb area's together with inter city services. Australia has one of the most successful BRT systems, operated by the Brisbane City council.

Conclusion

Passenger transport extends beyond the areas serviced by Metro, with a full integration of all services providing the seamless journey for passengers. The Core Passenger Review provided a basis for a highly integrated service involving the public and private service operators.

Hobart has some substantial transport and mobility problems on the horizon with a fully integrated passenger transport system playing an important role in the future development of the city.

TasBus and its private member operators wish to continue to work with Metro on passenger transport issues, believing that a focus only on Metro will not provide the solutions to the issues faced by our cities future problems. The Tasmanian bus industry has invested millions of dollars in creating a transport framework which is advanced and modern, making it best placed to cater for the growing transport needs for all of Tasmania.

Tasmanian needs a transport strategy that considers the needs of communities all over our state, utilising the network of transport providers and options available in Tasmania.