



GAS/INQ/ITO 21

8 August 2012

Mr Stuart Wright  
Committee Secretary  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
HOBART TAS 7000



Dear Mr Wright

Enclosed please find COTA's submission to the Legislative Council in relation to their inquiry into Integrated Transport Options.

COTA is the peak body representing the needs and interests of older people in Tasmania. Access to transport is a key issue older people regularly bring to COTA's attention. Over the past 18 months COTA's Policy Council has identified access to transport as a key issue of focus and has undertaken significant work in relation to this issue as outlined in COTA's submission and the attached appendices.

COTA welcomes the Council's inquiry into this significant issue and appreciates the opportunity to provide a written submission. COTA would also welcome the opportunity to meet with the inquiry's Committee to further discuss and highlight our issues of concern and suggested strategies in relation to older people's access to transport.

We look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours sincerely

Sue Leitch  
CEO





## **COTA SUBMISSION Legislative Council**

### **INQUIRY INTO INTEGRATED TRANSPORT OPTIONS**

**August 2012**

#### **Background**

COTA is the peak body representing the needs and interests of older people in Tasmania. Our vision is an inclusive society which values, support and respects older people. Established in 1964, COTA has a long history in advocacy, advice and policy development in Tasmania.

The issue of older people's access to transport is constantly brought to COTA's attention by both older people themselves and service providers. Lack of access to transport is one of the key issues older people highlight to COTA as a major barrier in them feeling connected to their community and thus impacting on their quality of life.

As people age, their mobility may decline, but their need for transport does not. Access to transport has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of older people as they need to access social, cultural and recreational activities, health care and other service providers, shopping and a range of other activities. Lack of access to transport due to problems of affordability, safety, availability, convenience, lack of confidence and information, and appropriateness of the type transport available can act as a barrier to older people's participation in the community. Health issues can affect desirability to use, afford and access transport.

When both access and mobility are constrained, transport disadvantage occurs. People on low incomes and pensions are more likely to experience transport disadvantage. With Tasmania's rapidly ageing population, there will be a significant increase in the proportion of the community who are transport disadvantaged. It is important that transport is accessible, reliable and affordable and that older people feel safe and comfortable using it.

In recognition of the significance of access to transport in the lives of older Tasmanians, COTA has undertaken a range of initiatives in relation to access to transport over the past 18 months including:

- COTA's Policy Council identified transport as their key area of focus
- Sought information from government departments, public transport providers, community transport providers and local councils on the services they provide; recent reviews or research undertaken; and data or information on unmet needs or gaps.

- Produced a report *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania*, February 2011 (see Appendix 1)
- Were contracted by Tassielink to undertake consultations with older people in the Huon Valley to develop a greater understanding of the factors that would encourage older people to use Tassielink services and the barriers they face in accessing Tassielink services. Issues discussed in the report *Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley*, May 2011 (see Appendix 2)
- Production of COTA's report *A Sense of Belonging: Social Inclusion Issues for Older People in Tasmania*, September 2011 (see Appendix 3) which highlighted access to transport as a key issue of importance for older people in social inclusion and accessing their community.
- Held meetings with Community Transport Services Tasmania, Tasmanian Bus Association, Tassielink, Metro, and Minister for Sustainable Transport Hon Nick McKim MP.

## Key Issues

The following key issues regarding older Tasmanian's access to transport have been identified by COTA during their work over the last 18 months:

- COTA welcomes the Government's changes that no longer require older drivers to undertake on road assessments at age 85 years and over. However older drivers are still discriminated against in Tasmania as they are required to undertake an annual medical assessment. This is based purely on age, not on any driver accident statistics and is therefore age discrimination.
- Many older people will not catch taxis as they consider it something only "rich people do" and some fear hopping in a taxi with a stranger, ie the taxi driver.
- Many older people have never accessed public transport and to do so is very daunting and intimidating.
- Public transport is limited on weekends and after hours.
- Public transport in rural areas is very limited and because of Tasmania's large proportion of the population living in rural and remote areas transport disadvantage is significant.
- Not all public transport is accessible thereby limiting access for many older Tasmanians.
- Public bus stops often lack seating, protection from the weather, signage, and lighting and are not places older people want to frequent.
- Timetables for public buses can be difficult to read as the print size is too small and they are often difficult to understand.
- Access around the Hobart CBD is difficult for older people because of distances between key facilities and services, eg post office, hospital, shops and the hilly terrain of Hobart.
- The bus depot for Tassielink buses is difficult to access for older people because of the hilly terrain and its distance from key facilities and services in Hobart.
- Some bus services from outlying areas in to Hobart operate around the needs of school children and/or the working public which does not always meet the needs of older people

who may wish to travel into town at a later time or spend less time in Hobart than the bus timetable allows.

- COTA welcomes the Government's recent increase in bus services in some areas, however there are still limited options for transport in some country towns, especially on the west coast.
- There is a need for coordination between community transport services and public transport.
- COTA welcomes the review of community transport to be undertaken by DHHS within the next 12 months.

## Recommendations

COTA believes that currently the key strategies in relation to older people's access to transport are:

1. **Greater coordination** of existing transport services,
2. **Greater education and promotion** of existing services
3. **A shuttle service in Hobart CBD** between the major bus depots and key destinations, eg hospital, post office, shops, etc.

COTA believes that there are currently significant transport resources and services in the community. The major stumbling blocks for older people in accessing transport services are the **lack of coordination** of existing public and community transport services and the need for greater **promotion and information** about existing services and how to access them.

The viability of public transport relies on regular patronage. Older people would patronise public transport more once they are more confident about using it and know that it is reliable, safe and accessible. For older people to become familiar with public transport who have not previously used it; they require tailored information, promotion and individual assistance.

COTA believes the most cost effective and practical way to increase older people's use of public transport and greater coordination of public and community transport services is to increase the role of Community Transport Services Tasmania's (CTST) District Coordinators. Currently CTST has divided Tasmania into 10 districts, each with a CTST District Coordinator. These Coordinators work part time coordinating CTST's services within the district including liaising with CTST passengers and volunteer drivers and coordinating the use of CTST vehicles. Examples 3 and 4 below outline how the CTST District Coordinators' role could be expanded to increase older peoples' awareness and access to both public and community transport.

Examples of action to be considered by the Tasmanian State Government include:

1. Greater coordination between existing transport providers including trials of linking services, producing timetables in similar format, similar ticketing systems, etc to eliminate confusion of, and duplication between services. COTA welcomes the Government's funding of Metro to develop a business case on integrated ticketing and supports further development of such initiatives.

2. Greater links between community transport services and public transport services to provide transport for older people to and from public bus stops.
3. Extension of the CTST Regional Coordinator's role to coordinate all community transport, in conjunction with other providers, promote community and public transport, taxis and car pooling and educate older people about public transport, community transport, taxis and car pooling. This role is ideally undertaken on a local regional basis to facilitate links between older people and local services.

This promotion and education role could develop tools and resources based on existing information, such as that included in Environment Victoria's *Getting about without a car: Guidelines for promoting healthy transport to older people*.

4. Further investigation of the initiatives that operated in two Melbourne municipalities aimed at supporting older people and people with disabilities to develop the confidence to use public transport. These initiatives involve older people and people with disabilities being matched with a volunteer buddy/mentor for a short period of time to support them in accessing public transport by showing them how to read the timetable, how to buy a ticket and accompanying them on their first few trips on public transport.

These pilots operated in the City of Monash and the Darebin Health Centre. Recently the City of Monash has re-established this service.

This initiative could be piloted on a trial basis through the CTST's regional model with their Regional Coordinators funded to implement this service or a specific volunteer coordinator employed to work with the Regional Coordinator to trial this initiative.

5. Engage COTA Tasmania to develop a peer education session to be delivered by COTA Peer Educators to educate and inform older people about public and community transport options, use of taxis as an alternative method of transport, car pooling, getting about without a car once they give up their driver's licence, etc.

COTA currently has 10 Peer Educators who deliver presentations on health and wellbeing issues to older people's organisations across Tasmania. COTA has offered this highly successful form of education and information provision to older Tasmanians for over eight years and annually reaches over 600 older people through 50 older people's organisations. Over the eight years of this service COTA has educated more than 6,000 older people through approximately 250 older people's organisations.

Currently COTA has contracts with *beyondblues* and NPS to deliver peer education sessions and has recently received funding to develop additional peer education sessions on elder financial abuse and cyber security.

6. Investigate the potential for local taxi services to offer shared taxis at scheduled times for older people who find it difficult to get to their local shops and services. Such a service operates through the Brisbane City Council.

Local councils in Tasmania do not provide transport services however this service could be coordinated through the extension of the role of the existing CTST Regional Coordinators, as outlined in recommendation no. 3.

7. Facilitate a potential partnership between Hobart City Council, Tassielink, Metro, other bus providers and tour operators to trial a small, accessible shuttle bus to shuttle passengers in Hobart between the major bus depots and key destinations such as the hospital, post office and the major shopping precinct.

This service could be trialled on two or three days per week, including pension days, between the core hours of 10am to 2pm. A similar service is currently being trialled by Hobart City Council on Saturdays for access to the Salamanca Market to and from the Hobart CBD undercover carparks. The City of Launceston operates the free Tiger Bus around key services and facilities in Launceston.

