



# The Path Less Travelled

Transport and Social Inclusion in the ACT

ACT Council of Social Service  
August 2009

## About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered as a result of European settlement. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and ongoing contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage and low-income citizens of the Territory.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' objectives are representation of people living with disadvantage, the promotion of equitable social policy, and the development of a professional, cohesive and effective community sector.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

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ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

### Contact Details

Phone: 02 6202 7200  
Fax: 02 6281 4192  
Mail: PO Box 849, Mawson, ACT 2607  
E-mail: [actcoss@actcoss.org.au](mailto:actcoss@actcoss.org.au)  
WWW: <http://www.actcoss.org.au>  
Location: Level 1,  
67 Townshend St,  
Phillip, ACT, 2606.

Director: Roslyn Dundas  
Policy Officer: Brooke McKail

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## Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
ACTION	ACT Inter-town Omnibus Network
ACTPLA	ACT Planning and Land Authority
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DHCS	Department of Disability, Housing and Community Service
DOHA	Department of Health and Ageing
HACC	Home and Community Care
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NATSEM	National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
NSW	New South Wales
SDoH	Social Determinants of Health
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit (UK)
TAMS	Territory and Municipal Services
UK	United Kingdom
WAT	Wheelchair Accessible Taxi

## Introduction

This report examines the barriers to people in Canberra accessing transport and makes suggestions for change, at both a Government and community level that will work to increase the social inclusion of people in the ACT.

ACTCOSS envisages a transport system that is:

- Equitable and inclusive;
- Provides for affordable and accessible public transport;<sup>1</sup>
- Better integrates community and public transport to meet the needs of people experiencing disadvantage in the ACT; and
- Encourages more integrated government planning, including transport policy, land-use planning, collaboration between education and social services.

Research clearly shows people living on lower incomes are much more likely to experience difficulty accessing transport than people in the higher income quintiles.<sup>2</sup> The *ACT Human Rights Act*, at section 13, provides that 'everyone has the right to move freely within the ACT.' However this right is not a reality for many in the ACT community, in particular those experiencing disadvantage, living on low incomes or with mobility related disabilities.

The issues of transport disadvantage and social inclusion have been given considerable policy attention in other jurisdictions, in particular Victoria and in nations throughout the UK and Europe. This report will include some case studies of good practice and interesting initiatives that may be useful in developing future directions for the ACT. It is hoped this document will provide a basis for future advocacy by bringing together ideas and information from the local Canberra community, and other Australian and international jurisdictions.

ACTCOSS consulted a number of community representatives and service users for their perspectives on the ACT transport system and their suggestions for improvement. The report focuses in particular on what the representatives consulted felt to be important.

ACTCOSS feels it is the responsibility of both community and government to support people to access opportunities and participate fully in the community. This report will attempt to engage with the different driving forces behind transport policy and where possible make recommendations that are politically and economically as well as socially viable.

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1 UITP Position Paper, *Tackling Social Exclusion; The role of Public Transport*, May 2007, p 3.

2 Australian Social Inclusion Board, *A Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators*, 2009, p 69.

## Social Inclusion Theory

The concepts and theory around social inclusion have developed over recent years. Interpretations and definitions of the concept differ, but broadly:

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most attractive features of social inclusion as a theory is that it broadens the conventional focus of poverty only defined as a lack of resources relative to needs.<sup>4</sup>

Julia Gillard, the Federal Minister with responsibility for social inclusion, defined being socially included as having opportunities for:

- Securing a job;
- Accessing services;
- Connecting with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community;
- Dealing with personal crises, such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job;
- Being heard.<sup>5</sup>

The UK Social Exclusion Unit has defined social exclusion as a

... label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health and family breakdown.

Social exclusion is not simply the result of current circumstances (such as illness or unemployment) but also recognises that a person's future prospects are limited.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that in the last two years, social inclusion has become a bigger focus of national policy development. In 2003 Peter Saunders of the Social Policy Research Centre expressed the concern that there were two barriers preventing social exclusion theory exerting any more than a marginal influence on future policy. The first was a lack of interest by agencies and individuals within the Howard Government. In recent years, the Rudd Government has established a Social Inclusion Board and a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, indicating a more open attitude to the ideas of social inclusion. The second barrier was a lack of common interest from the states and territories in tackling the causes and consequences of social exclusion. The ACT Government has indicated an interest and commitment to social inclusion, through the

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3 Quoted in VicHealth Research Summary 2 - *Social inclusion as a determinant of mental health & wellbeing*, January 2005.

4 Peter Saunders, *Social Exclusion providing a new framework for measuring poverty?*, 2003, p 3.

5 Gillard, 28 February 2008, *Speech: Social innovation, social impact: A New Australian agenda*, Canberra.

6 Hayes et al, *Social Inclusion: Origins, concepts and key themes*, October 2008. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, p 7.

development of the Community Inclusion Board, and the ongoing support of the Community Inclusion Unit within the Chief Minister's Department. Although the Community Inclusion Board's term finished 30 June 2009, the ACT Government has stated its ongoing commitment to a whole of Government approach to community inclusion. Other states, in particular South Australia have demonstrated a strong and ongoing commitment to the principles of social inclusion.

At the 2020 summit, delegates agreed to make social inclusion a national priority and that a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion should be developed and implemented.<sup>7</sup>

## Social Inclusion and Transport

Transport is relevant to social inclusion because those without access to transport have difficulty accessing employment, education, health and other services, food shops, sporting, leisure and cultural activities.

There are four ways in which people can be socially excluded by transport from the activities they wish to undertake:

- Spatially – they cannot get there at all;
- Temporally – they cannot get there at the appropriate time;
- Financially – they cannot afford to get there;
- Personally – they lack the mental or physical capacities to use the available means of mobility.<sup>8</sup>

People may not be able to access transport as a result of isolation. People may be restricted in their use of transport by low incomes, or because bus routes do not run to the right places.

Problems with transport provision and the location of services can reinforce social exclusion. They prevent people from accessing key local services or activities such as jobs, learning, healthcare, food shopping or leisure.

Examples of people at risk of social exclusion include older people, people with a disability, people on low incomes or who are unemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, new migrants and refugees and children/younger people. Other than commuters, it is often these groups of people who are the most likely to use public transport. They are also the most likely to need public transport as they have fewer options than other groups.

A UK Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) study identified a lack of transport as a significant barrier to the take up of employment for job-seekers and linked it with low participation in post-16 education and university drop-out. The study found getting to hospital is particularly difficult for people who have to rely on public transport, leading to non-attendance at health appointments and associated delays in medical intervention.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Hayes et al, *Social Inclusion: Origins, concepts and key themes*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, October 2008. p 6.

8 Helena Titheridge, University College London Centre for Transport Studies, *Social Exclusion and Transport Policy*, 2004, p 1.

9 Social Exclusion Unit, *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion*, February 2003.

## The Social Determinants of Health and Transport

Recent years have seen a greater understanding internationally of the sensitivity of health to the social environment, including the conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age which are in turn shaped by political, social, and economic factors. ACTCOSS would like to see the ACT Government adopt a social determinants of health (SDoH) approach to policy making that takes responsibility for creating a healthy community by understanding that inequities in health are influenced by factors including access to education, housing and transport. WHO defines inequities as being:

Avoidable inequalities in health between groups of people within countries and between countries. These inequities arise from inequalities within and between societies. Social and economic conditions and their effects on people's lives determine their risk of illness and the actions taken to prevent them becoming ill or treat illness when it occurs.<sup>10</sup>

To address health inequities, program and policy development need to ensure that people living with the most disadvantage are assisted in a holistic manner. People experiencing disadvantage require services that span different ACT and Commonwealth Government departments. An SDoH approach to health would incorporate areas outside of ACT Health that impact upon a person's well-being including areas such as transport as well as housing, education and employment. Planning should take these factors into consideration and develop plans that are consumer focused, rather than based around departmental and portfolio divisions.

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WHO, *Social Determinants of Health: Key Concepts*, Accessed at [http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key\\_concepts/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key_concepts/en/index.html)

## Transport Policy Considerations

While this report is particularly focused on improving social inclusion of Canberrans experiencing disadvantage, the competing policy basis involved in transport planning must be recognised and understood.

There is a possible tension between the needs of disadvantaged citizens and the desire of transport companies and planners to ensure services and companies remain economically viable and make profits for their shareholders. Transport planners are driven by the need to ensure transport services are financially sustainable and profitable. Transport options for people experiencing disadvantage may need to be specifically targeted, servicing only small numbers or in non-peak periods, possibly being less profitable.

There is also the potential for conflict between improving environmental outcomes through reducing carbon emissions, and increasing social inclusion by extending services to people experiencing disadvantage. The problem is that sustainability goals are only met if large numbers of people use public transport. Services designed to meet social inclusion goals, such as access to services for older people, people with disabilities and people on low incomes must run outside of peak times and to outer suburbs or lower density areas. As a result they often have low-patronage and do not efficiently displace car trips, so have little effect on sustainability outcomes.

An example of an area where environmental and social benefits intersect is in the area of child-friendly planning. Discussions have been taking place in the ACT and elsewhere about how we create positive environments for children to grow up in. There is more to creating health environments, however than reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The UN concept of child-friendly cities is used to describe cities that guarantee the rights of children, including the right to safely and playfully explore their environment without constant threats of traffic, danger or violence, and that promote a sense of connection between the child and their community and neighbourhood.<sup>11</sup>

This concept promotes an environment with less traffic congestion, and therefore less carbon emissions and an enhanced sense of local community. Paul Tranter suggests one way of creating a more child-friendly city in Canberra is to look at changing our urban planning methods, so that schools, shops and services are located closer to children's homes, encouraging children to walk.<sup>12</sup> The recent trend of closing schools is leading to a less child-friendly environment, where fewer people use footpaths, and parents feel they must protect their children from outside environments.<sup>13</sup> This is having a detrimental impact on both the environmental outcomes as more people use private vehicles for short journeys, and social impacts as children are less connected with their local communities and environments.

Policies that support travel by private vehicle can have negative impacts both socially and environmentally. Although increased wealth and vehicle ownership tend to increase social inclusion for individuals, higher vehicle use leads to increased dependency on private vehicles

11 UNICEF, *Child Friendly Cities*, accessed at <http://unicef.org.au/GetInvolved-Subs.asp?GetInvolvedID=53>

12 Dr Paul Tranter, *Creating child-friendly cities: lessons from Monstropolis*, Speech 27 October 2007.

13 Ibid.

throughout the community (through private vehicle oriented land use patterns, transport policies and planning practices, reduced non-private vehicle transport options and increased stigma associated with alternative forms of transport). There is a risk of increased social exclusion at a community level by making some groups relatively disadvantaged. Increased private vehicle dependence also increases greenhouse gas levels, a negative environmental consequence.

Similarly more flexible public transport options that respond directly to people's travel requirements improve accessibility and social inclusion by allowing people to get to where they actually want to go in less time. Demand responsive transport can also allow transport providers to use resources more effectively by introducing flexible routes where demand is more dispersed or outside of peak times.

## Government Responsibility for Transport Planning and Policy

Responsibility for transport planning and policy is spread across a number of Government departments and sections, including:

- Community transport is the responsibility of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Service (DHCS);
- HACC transport is funded by ACT Health;
- Public transport, sustainable transport, roads and parking are the responsibility of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS);
- Land use and planning is the responsibility of the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA); and
- Climate Change mitigation and adaption is the responsibility of the Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water.

A result of such wide dispersion of responsibility for transport in the ACT is a lack of communication between key stakeholders and a risk there will both be:

1. Overlap where two agencies or organisations are performing the same function; and
2. Gaps, where no organisation is meeting the needs of ACT residents in relation to transport.

Obviously the possible result is an imperfect allocation of resources and a fragmentation of decision making.

In addition, planning decisions about the location of medical and social services, the allocation of public housing properties, school policies and locations and assistance for job-seekers are further fragmented across a range of government and non-government agencies. This fragmentation means no single department or organisation is responsible for improving access to work, learning, healthcare, cultural activities and other services. Because transport is not considered core business of many of these organisations, transport considerations can sometimes be given low priority by agencies when making decisions to open or close facilities and services.

### Community and Government Partnerships

During the consultation process, a participant commented they had previously thought there were not enough transport services for people experiencing disadvantage in the ACT. After the consultation session they had revised their opinion, and thought in fact, there were a lot of services in existence, but a lack of coordination meant they were overlapping, leaving gaps and generally not making best use of available resources.

The Department of Planning and Community and Development in Victoria (formerly the Department for Victorian Communities) recently developed a project to address similar concerns. They found that although many regions in Victoria had a significant number of vehicles, both public and private, there were issues of fragmented funding, and other barriers to best addressing

the community's needs.<sup>14</sup> The Victorian Government subsequently made a strong commitment to cross-government innovation and collaboration. As a result, in 2003 they established the transport connections pilot program, funding nine programs on the basis that local partnerships would be formed, and that the various local players would work collaboratively to innovate, making good use of existing resources. Partnerships would be made up of local government, community service agencies, health service providers, public transport providers, community transport providers and other interested groups in the community.

The Department of Communities learnt several lessons from the pilot programs, including:

- Partnerships need to be broadly based, and have representatives from across the community. Innovation is best driven by diverse groups of stakeholders collaborating together;
- Partnerships need to focus on community engagement – determining the needs of the community, and working closely with the community to develop solutions that will be successful;
- The involvement of local level government is essential;
- A mix of short and long term strategies is best. Quick wins are important – they generate enthusiasm, but the bigger systemic challenges are important too; and
- If government is to be supportive of new approaches driven by the community, then it needs to think outside the program 'box'. Being exclusively program focused can unnecessarily stifle innovation, and limits government's capacity to work in partnership with communities.<sup>15</sup>

Consultations held for this project brought up many of the same issues discussed by the Victorian Department of Communities. Community representatives noted the importance of genuine communication and community involvement. The *ACT Social Compact* emphasises the importance of consumer and community participation in planning, policy development and other decision making processes and 'innovation and continuous improvement in community and government processes and in the planning and delivery of services'.<sup>16</sup> It is essential the community is allowed the opportunity to be innovative and to be involved in the agenda setting and planning from the initial stages.

**Recommendation:**

Support Government and community to work together to ensure there is community involvement in transport policy development, right through from the initial planning stages.

One suggestion was the establishment of a single body that would have some role in coordination and planning for the different agencies and organisations involved in transport services across the ACT. Ideally this body would consist of both Government and community representatives as well as other relevant stakeholders, including service users. An example of an innovative Canadian cross-Government program is described below:

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14 Andrew Wear, Department of Victorian Communities, *Improving Local Transport Outcomes through Partnerships and Joined up Government*, 2006, accessed at <http://www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference06/>

15 Ibid.

16 ACT Government, *The Social Compact; A partnership between the community sector and the ACT Government*, 2004.

**Case Study: Ontario - Community Transportation Action Program**

The Program was launched as a joint venture of five Ontario ministries: Transportation, Education and Training, Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, Community and Social Services and Health. CTAP's mandate was to provide transitional support to communities interested in restructuring and coordinating their local transport services.

Improved coordination of resources resulted in less duplication, inefficiency and fewer gaps in services. It also led to breaking down barriers between client groups, thus providing a wider range of vehicles to meet user's needs in a more flexible and cost-effective manner. For example, in some communities, school buses are now being used between morning and afternoon student runs to transport older people and people with disabilities. In one community the Board of Education has contracted the local Meals on Wheels provider to transport disabled students to school in its van, providing an economical solution for the school and offsetting the cost of the van for the community organisation.

## Accessibility Planning

The Centre for Transport Studies at University College London has published materials on accessibility planning which overcomes some of the conflicting goals of public transport planning by focusing on the impacts transport developments have had on accessibility – the ease with which people can reach their ‘needed’ or desired destination.<sup>17</sup> By integrating accessibility planning into transport planning at an early stage, a focus can be placed on social inclusion.

Accessibility planning is an integrated approach to planning that aims to ensure people are able to access employment, healthcare, shops, social activities and other important destinations, through the consideration of both transport and the location of activities.

A simple example of the theory behind accessibility planning might be in ensuring students in transport disadvantaged households can get to school, it is possible to either fund special bus services (a mobility-oriented solution), or to locate schools and manage road systems to ensure most students can easily walk to school (an accessibility-oriented solution).

Accessibility oriented solutions tend to provide the greatest benefit to transport disadvantaged people. The Social Exclusion’s Unit report on transport and social exclusion *Making the Connections* forms the basis for the UK Department of Transport’s approach to accessibility. This approach emphasises that accessibility is not just about the type and ease of use of a particular transport service, but can be influenced by decisions on the location, design and delivery of all types of services, and by people’s perceptions of safety.

The SEU set in motion a cross-departmental policy framework which involved issuing guidance on accessibility planning to all local authorities, requiring local transport planners to work closely with land use planners, National Health Service primary care and hospitals, local education authorities, social services and key employers. The key aims for accessibility planning in the UK are to ensure local decision makers have improved information on the areas where accessibility is poorest and the barriers from the perspectives of local consumers. People are being encouraged to ‘think outside the box’ and work more collaboratively with partner agencies to produce a wider range of solutions to accessibility issues.

Accessibility has too often at an ACT level been thought of as a transport planners problem, rather than one that can be influenced by other organisations, for example, by locating, designing and delivering services so they are easily and conveniently available to people at risk of social exclusion. Despite the recognition in the ACT Government’s *Integrated Transport Framework 2008* that accessibility and land-use activities are inextricably linked and that transport and land-use planning should be integrated, there continue to be situations where accessibility-orientated options are dismissed.

Community representatives gave an example of where land use planning was not adequately considered. In some of the new suburbs in Gungahlin, community workers in this area noted

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17 Juliet Solomon and Helen Titheridge, University College London Centre for Transport Studies, *Accessibility Indicators and the Policy Goal of the Reduction of Transport Related Social Exclusion*, 2006.

some residential facilities for older and frail people were located on streets that were too narrow to allow buses to access them. Therefore older people were required to walk significant distances to access public transport.

It was also raised that many people living in public housing are being provided housing in the outer suburbs where there is less access to public transport. A representative spoke of some people from CALD backgrounds being unable to attend church services or cultural events, particularly on weekends, as they cannot access transport. They are missing out on essential social and cultural supports. An accessibility-oriented, long-term solution to this issue is to ensure public housing and community facilities are located in areas that are accessible by public transport.

**Recommendation:**

Improve planning to ensure residential and community facilities are located in areas that are accessible by different means of transport.

The SEU interim report on transport and social exclusion argued inadequate transport was undermining government objectives in other policy areas such as employment, education, welfare and health, thus incurring additional costs on the state. This report included substantial empirical evidence to support these contentions. For example the SEU quoted research which found 38% of jobseekers cited transport as a barrier to finding work, 65% of lower quintile households did not own a car, such that 58% of their trips are on foot compared to 30% for low income households with cars, and 17% for high income households with cars.<sup>18</sup>

In order for accessibility planning to be a successful means of promoting social inclusion there must be cross-government coordination and communication, as well as improved communication with the social services sector and medical services. Community representatives emphasised the need for community involvement from the early planning stages and in the agenda setting.

**Case study: Strasbourg - Integrated city and traffic planning**

In the early 1990s the French city of Strasbourg began a comprehensive project to improve the city transport system through integrated transport planning. The main project was a new tram line passing through the city centre, connecting the north and south of the city. In addition, it connects large housing estates and shopping centres on the outskirts with the city centre. Park and ride facilities for cars and bikes were built at the tram terminal. Driving through the city in a private car was made impossible and cycling and walking infrastructure was improved. The changes have led to improved quality of life for the city's inhabitants, and improved health outcomes including more exercise and better air quality.

Canberra could learn from the innovative ideas implemented in Strasbourg to change behaviour and increase population health. Strasbourg is a comparable city to Canberra, in terms of population and urban density.

### **Case Study: West Midlands, UK - Access to Employment**

The West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive is working closely with a local network of employment agencies which are publicly funded by the UK Government. The agencies have raised concerns about the difficulties in providing information about public transport to job seekers and even when users of the services are employed, they cannot afford travel costs at least until they receive their first pay cheque.

The employment agencies currently provide tickets for travel to interviews, but under the Transport Act in the UK, transport authorities are unable to subsidise travel for people who are unemployed.

A new scheme called WorkWise was established, where the costs of providing staff and public transport tailored information for the employment agencies service users are met by the transport authority, while the costs for travel tickets are met by regional agencies and European development funds.

In an evaluation of WorkWise, 80% of users who obtained employment, said they would have been unable to obtain the new job without the scheme.

### **Case study: Surrey, UK - Measuring accessibility**

Surrey County Council is a Centre of Excellence for integrated transport planning and is one of the most advanced local authorities in terms of modelling and mapping accessibility. It has models covering public transport, walking, cycling and roads, and uses these in conjunction with socioeconomic and demographic data. These models have been applied for a number of years to decisions on land-use planning, public transport services, the development of major schemes, car parking, and even the location of the council's own offices. These techniques allow the council to quantify and monitor realistic and challenging targets at relatively little cost. For example, Surrey's Local Transport Plan (LTP) includes targets on ability to access town centres, secondary schools and colleges and railway stations, and it expects to continue to show improvements in the percentage of the population with good access to these services as a result of the delivery of measures set out in the LTP.

## Public Transport

### The current situation

Canberra is a highly car dependant city. The majority of ACT people who do use public transport use ACTION buses. In the 1999 ABS analysis of public transport usage in the ACT<sup>19</sup> 84.9% of persons who reported using public transport reported using ACTION buses, 20.6% reported using a taxi and 2.6% reported using other buses.

A key characteristic of Canberra is its low urban density and resultant urban sprawl. Canberra is about 10 times less dense than Sydney and Melbourne and about 40 times less dense than London or Hong Kong. This means Canberra is spread over a large area, meaning people often must travel long distances to get to work, school or services.<sup>20</sup>

The service level of ACT public transport (that is the vehicle kms per head) is actually comparable with that of Sydney, Brisbane, Paris or Amsterdam. However, because of the large distances that must be travelled, the high per capita service is spread very thinly over a large area and many routes, making the services provided on any particular route very low and irregular.<sup>21</sup>

The *Integrated Transport Framework* noted public transport and non-motorised forms of transport (walking and cycling) each accounted for around 8% of journeys to work.

A large number of people in the ACT with low incomes are unemployed or underemployed. Use of ACTION buses was high among casual workers, who are among those most at risk of underemployment, with 20% of persons who used ACTION buses reporting their working arrangements as being employed on a casual basis.<sup>22</sup> In addition, many casual and lower paid jobs involve working hours that make safe access difficult by any means other than private vehicle.

### Where to from here?

#### **ACTION Buses**

A representative of the consultancy firm involved in the ACTION08 reforms made the recommendation in a 2008 presentation to 'be on the way' and when planning new developments locate them between two places that already support public transport services.<sup>23</sup> This concept should be extended to ensure public and affordable housing and services, including schools, health services and social activities are not located in areas unlikely to support public transport, but located around high frequency transport corridors.

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19 ABS, *Public Transport Usage and Migration Patterns*, 1998.

20 Graham Currie, Monash University, *Sustainable Transport and Canberra – Challenges and Opportunities*, September 2008.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Jarret Walker, McCormick Rankin Cagney, *"Be on the Way!" Creating Attractive Public Transport for a Sustainable Canberra*, September 2008.

The temptation of governments may be to place public housing and community facilities on lesser valued land in outer suburbs or less accessible areas. By resisting this temptation, we are increasing public transport patronage and supporting people to achieve social inclusion and better outcomes. Obviously this concept feeds into the wider ideas, discussed above, of better 'accessibility planning' and land-use.

During consultations, participants identified a number of barriers to disadvantaged people accessing and using public transport in the ACT. In particular:

- The infrequency of accessible bus services;
- The difficulty in obtaining information about which routes and times will be serviced by accessible buses;
- The infrequency of bus services outside peak times and on weekends; and
- A lack of understanding and sensitivity by drivers to the needs of different groups of people.

A number of people with mobility related disabilities told of waiting for significant amounts of time at bus stops for accessible buses to arrive. One carer of an adult son requiring wheelchair accessible transport said his son is isolated from the community except when he is able to organise expensive transport, which involves contacting two taxi drivers personally and finding a time when they are available, then scheduling activities and appointments in those windows.

This carer suggested many of these problems could be minimised by adopting the model of public transport used in some areas of Sydney, where the transport company is able to mark on the normal timetable the services that are wheelchair accessible. It appears ACTION has now begun to provide this information through their website which is a positive step. There is the need for further work in this area, including provision of this information at bus interchanges and stops.

**Recommendation:**

Provide information about which routes will be serviced by accessible buses.

**Recommendation:**

Increase the rate of the replacement of the ACTION bus fleet with accessible buses.

### **Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Services**

Because of the relatively high cost of fares, it is often assumed users of taxis belong predominantly to the higher income groups. However, taxis are a very important form of transport for a number of low income groups, including people in wheelchairs and people with mobility difficulties, non-car owners and people who are unable to access public transport for a variety of reasons.

There is little data available about the characteristics of taxi users, but the NSW Transport Population Data Centre Household Travel Survey found that approximately 18.5% of taxi trips in Greater Metropolitan Sydney were taken by people from households in the lowest income quintile.<sup>24</sup> This is a significant proportion. Given that in the ACT there are even less transport

options than are available in Sydney (trains, buses and ferries, as well as taxis), a similar or even higher proportion of low income people might be required to use high cost options, including taxis.

One of the primary concerns around Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Services (WATs) in the ACT is the difficulty many service users face in actually booking and relying on the service. Members of the WAT Action Group recently estimated although there are 26 operational WATs in the ACT according to official statistics, only about nine of them are actually operating as WATs. These nine operate predominantly on weekdays and during business hours. The Action Group is also concerned about the state of the equipment in these vehicles, which may not be up to acceptable standards.

There have also been reports of WATs preferring to take other fares over people with disabilities to save time and increase cost efficiency. This leaves people with disabilities waiting for extended periods of time for taxis or not receiving a taxi service at all.

**Recommendation:**

Explore alternative means of remuneration for WAT taxi drivers that ensure driving WAT is a financially viable and attractive alternative.

There is need for greater access to taxi vouchers for people with disabilities. Currently, in order to qualify for subsidised taxi vouchers, a person is required to demonstrate they are unable to use other public transport (i.e. buses). This is overly restrictive and difficult for people, who may, for example, not feel comfortable catching public transport in the dark due to mobility or other restrictions. There are also concerns about the limitations on subsidised taxi vouchers. Users reported the vouchers are only able to cover a limited distance or fare amount that is not enough, for example, for a trip from Gungahlin to the Canberra Hospital in Woden.

Another key theme highlighted during the consultation and development of this report was the lack of sensitivity and awareness among both taxi and bus drivers to the needs of vulnerable people. Both taxi and ACTION bus drivers must be required to undertake training in a number of areas to develop their awareness and understanding in the following areas:

- Cultural sensitivity around the needs of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds;
- Gender sensitivity around the differing needs of men and women;
- Disability awareness training around meeting the needs of people with a disability and gaining an understanding of different types of disabilities; and
- Privacy and Confidentiality training around protecting the rights of people who access services.

To better meet the needs of the diverse range of service users of WATs and other transport services, programs and options should be explored that support a diversity of drivers and staff. A suggestion made during consultations was the development of targeted programs to attract and support female taxi drivers.

**Recommendation:**

Ensure bus and taxi drivers access personal development and customer care training.

## Community Transport

### The current situation

Currently in the ACT most community transport is provided by either Home and Community Care agencies, or larger regional community organisations. The funding for these two sources of community transport comes from different sources, with HACC being a joint initiative between ACT Health and DOHA and the other organisations being predominantly funded by DHCS.

### Home and Community Care Transport

ACTCOSS works with the ACT Home and Community Care (HACC) and Disability Services sector to facilitate monthly Network meetings. At these meetings organisations provide information on their service capacity and waiting list lengths. During 2008-09, HACC agencies have continually reported they have little capacity in their transport services. One of the large regional services reported in September 2008 that there was a three week waiting list to access community transport.

The HACC Minimum Data set indicates in 2007-08 2,625 clients were provided with assistance in transport, including the provision or coordination of individual or group transport services. This is equivalent to 25% of all HACC clients in 2007-08.<sup>25</sup>

The recent 2008-09 HACC Growth Funding Round had a particular focus on HACC transport. Hopefully the funds allocated through this process will assist community organisations to meet the current demands on their HACC transport services.

There is a growing need for wheelchair accessible vehicles across the HACC program. There was some money for this purpose allocated to one community organisation through the recent HACC Growth Funding announcement, but it is not clear if this vehicle will be sufficient to meet the needs of HACC clients in the ACT.

### Community based transport

The Government and ACTION should be commended for the provision of a number of wheelchair accessible mini-buses to the regional community organisations. The ACT Regional Community Services operate flexible community bus services for ACT residents who are isolated because of a lack of other viable transport options. The buses are available for a variety of purposes, including social outings and shopping trips. Generally the buses are not used to access medical services, as HACC transport is available for this purpose.

One regional community organisation advised they had provided close to 3,000 trips in the first year of operation of the community bus program. The organisation estimated however, there is

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25 Department of Health and Ageing, *HACC Minimum Data Set 2007-08*, p 38.

sufficient demand for twice as many trips but the organisation is only funded to operate the bus service for 25 hours per week.

There was a diverse range of people who accessed the community bus service. One regional community organisation reported their service had been accessed by people from 26 different cultural backgrounds. Many older people used the service for social outings, but also mothers with young children who found it difficult to navigate the public transport system with a pram and other isolated or disadvantaged groups.

There is some concern among the community and the regional community organisations in particular these community buses are being considered as the answer to all accessible transport problems in the ACT. For example, an ACT carer wrote to ACTION about the problems he has been having obtaining accessible transport for his wheelchair bound son from their home to medical and social services. ACTION responded by referring the carer to the community bus service to assist with the son's specific travel needs.

While it is certainly important the community and public transport operators communicate and work together to meet the needs of socially isolated people in the ACT, it is also important the limitations of the community bus services are recognised.

Currently the community organisations have been allocated only enough funding for the buses to operate for five hours on a weekday, with one driver to support the service. No funding has been made available for administrative support. Consultations confirmed the need for more funding for these buses, to enable them to operate for longer hours, provide greater flexibility and streamline booking processes across the organisations. A number of users of the buses who attended our consultations remarked on the booking processes in particular, noting they vary between different organisations and can be difficult where there are financial limitations or language barriers. ACTCOSS is also concerned that the providers of the community bus service have not yet received information about the continuation of the program after the pilot stage is completed.

## Where to from here?

To truly meet the goals of social inclusion, people must have the opportunity to not just attend medical appointments, and be employed if appropriate, but make social appointments, be involved in community projects and be heard. Therefore services are required on weekends, in the evenings and in non-peak periods to assist people to access a wide range of opportunities.

It is very important the community bus trial project receives ongoing funding to continue this vital service to isolated people. The project requires additional funding to increase the hours they are able to operate. Additional funding is also required to support the administrative side of the services, as currently funding is adequate only to pay a driver.

### **Recommendation:**

Provide increased and on going funding to the pilot community bus program through the regional community services, to allow for longer operating hours, greater flexibility and streamlined booking processes.

**Case study: Sheffield – South Yorkshire social inclusion and transport project**

A large residential area in the north of Sheffield was connected to the city (about 12km away) by privately operated bus services. However, the bus services were limited to profitable radial routes to and from the city centre. Travel opportunities in the area itself were limited. After considerable consultation with local people, a service was developed which linked up key sites in the areas, operating hourly until late in the evening. The initiative was developed and implemented by a local community group, in collaboration with other stakeholders including the Government, local authorities, community transport providers and service users. The collaborative approach shows how new methods of service delivery can be developed, through effective consultation, to reflect the needs of a local population.

The service continues to operate with Government funding, employing local residents to assist unemployed people in the area to gain valuable qualifications and training opportunities.

**Case study: Siilinjärvi – Bus service for older people and people with disabilities**

The Finish municipality has implemented a dial-a-bus service for older people and people with limited mobility or disabilities. Siilinjärvi has a lower population density than Canberra.

The service relies on a telephone booking system. It has one fixed stop, a bus station that it passes once every hour. Bookings are made by calling a travel dispatch centre. The staff at the centre enter the bookings into a special computer programme which determines the most appropriate route and informs the drivers. Fares are equivalent to a normal bus tickets but 50% concessions are available for many people, and people with wheelchairs ride free.

Canberra is currently piloting a successful community bus program through the regional community services. A frequent concern raised by users of the service is the inefficient and variable booking systems across the services. For some services, a message must be left for the driver who will return the phone call at a later time. This is an inefficient and frustrating administrative process for both the drivers and the service users. Siilinjärvi is a good example of where computer-controlled systems have been used to streamline processes and optimise transport routes, resulting in an increased efficiency of the bus service.

A number of other European cities, including Copenhagen in Denmark and Gothenberg in Sweden have put in place similar demand-responsive mini-bus services, with far more sophisticated technology systems in support than is available to ACT community organisations. Examination of these options could increase the efficiency of the ACT community buses.

Another issue discussed during consultations was the problems of appropriate parking and storage of community vehicles. Many community organisations reported vandalism of their vehicles, and some reported having petrol stolen from their tanks. A possible solution to this could involve members of the organisation or the drivers of the vehicles storing the vehicles at their homes at night or on the weekends. However, it appears this arrangement would likely attract fringe benefit taxes for the person involved, effectively a disincentive.

**Recommendation:**

Investigate possible changes to taxation law that would remove disincentives for people storing community vehicles out of office hours.

Another alternative might be developing partnership with private firms that could store the vehicles at nights and on weekends at a discounted rate. The community sector could work together to make these connections and build the partnerships.

**Recommendation:**

Investigate alternative methods for storing community vehicles that reduce the risk of vandalism.

During consultations for the 2009-10 ACTCOSS Budget Submission<sup>26</sup> the need for greater assistance and funding for volunteers was raised. Volunteer labour is essential to the continuing operation and service delivery of many ACT community organisations. Many of the HACC and Community Bus services rely heavily on volunteer labour to provide services to isolated people in the community. The use of volunteers is not costless and community organisations need to provide supervision, management, training, travel allowances and other support to volunteers. Community sector organisations have reported they do not feel adequately supported in engaging volunteers. The additional funding allocated for volunteers and carers in the *Second Appropriation to the 2008-09 Budget* is welcome, but this was only intended to address recent increases in living costs and will not address the underlying problems facing community organisations reliant on volunteer labour.

**Recommendation:**

Resource community organisations to better support their volunteers through supervision, training, management and allowances.

Janet Stanley of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Monash University has expressed concern about community transport as a means of addressing social inclusion, suggesting it can in some cases exclude particular groups of people.<sup>27</sup> For example, community transport caters for some groups of people at risk of social exclusion, including older people and people with disabilities, but usually is unable to cater for other groups at risk, including younger people, new migrants and in some cases, people on low incomes. Community transport can also be exclusive or restrictive, as due to resource limitations it can operate only on limited availability and for limited purposes (such as medical appointments). Services also operate in isolation, rather than as a single service delivery system – there is little integration between different community transport services, and community transport and other means of transport in the ACT.

26 ACTCOSS, *Prioritising People: A People Centred Approach to Today's Challenges*, 2009, p 18.

27 Janet Stanley, *Social Exclusion and Public Transport*, 2006, slides accessed at <http://www.monash.edu.au/cemo/Transport2006/Transport%20paper%20Janet%20S%20notes%20free%20April%2006.ppt>

ACTCOSS believes there is a need for some level of community transport, as it provides a social and flexible alternative to public or other means of transport. It is also a community led alternative.

A means of addressing some of the concerns about community transport is enhancing the collaboration and communication between different community transport providers, to better integrate different services. This was supported by many of the community representatives consulted for this report, who felt there was a need for greater communication between agencies about the services they provide.

**Recommendation:**

Support community transport providers to improve collaboration and information sharing between agencies.

## Private Transport

### The current situation

Transport is a substantial part of the expenditure of low income households in the ACT. A recent NATSEM report, commissioned by ACTCOSS, demonstrates transport costs make up a greater proportion of low income households' expenditure than the ACT average, and the proportion spent on transport items by low income households has increased over the period 1998-99 to 2003-04. The research shows the proportion of expenditure on automotive fuels for low income families is 11% greater than the ACT average. During this period the overall Canberra CPI rose by 19.5%, but the price of automotive fuels rose by 34.6%.<sup>28</sup>

One particular group at risk of social exclusion through lack of access to transport is people who are unable to drive a private motor vehicle. This could potentially include young people, older people, people who cannot afford to run a car and people with disabilities, many of who are also experiencing income disadvantage. To put this in perspective, the NRMA estimates it costs \$150 per week to run a new small-sized car. A household in the fourth income quintile (the second lowest) has an average weekly disposable income of \$414, indicating how unaffordable \$150 can be for a low income family or household.<sup>29</sup> Non-car owning households in Canberra are overwhelmingly concentrated in the lower income quintiles.

The data also shows it is often low income households that own and run two cars.<sup>30</sup> Therefore the households that can least afford to own two or more cars are forced to do so for reasons including the limited and inaccessible nature of public transport for some people or areas. This may be because of location disadvantage, in that buses are too far from their home or place of work, or other barriers to access, including accessible buses for people with disabilities or young children with prams or a fear for personal safety.

### Where to from here?

While there is an urgent need to reduce Canberra's dependence on motor vehicle transport, using price signals is an inequitable way to promote public transport use. Raising parking prices or imposing congestion taxes/tolls disproportionately affects low income residents. Low income residents often live in fringe suburbs with poor public transport services. They are forced to rely on cars to get to work and school. They are then forced to pay increased tolls, for which they have the least capacity to pay. In comparison, people with higher incomes, in higher socio-economic areas generally have the greatest access to transport, but also the greatest capacity to pay increased parking costs or tolls.

The community is also concerned about the lack of disability parking available, in particular in Civic. There was support among community representatives for a system whereby some of

28 Alicia Payne and Quoc Ngu Vu, NATSEM, *Expenditure of Low Income Households in the ACT*, November 2008, p 10.

29 NRMA, *2008-09 Car Operating Costs*, accessed at [http://www.mynrma.com.au/cps/rde/xchg/mynrma/hs.xsl/operating\\_costs.htm](http://www.mynrma.com.au/cps/rde/xchg/mynrma/hs.xsl/operating_costs.htm)

30 Coalition for People's Transport, *The Place to be on PT*, 2004, p 5.

the parking in Civic around the Legislative Assembly and Canberra Theatre that is designated for Government officials during working hours could be re-allocated as disability parking on weekends or in the evenings. This concept of 'part-time disability parking' could be an effective way to increase options for people with disabilities and limited mobility.

**Recommendation:**

Consider implementing a system of 'part-time' disability parking spaces in Civic and other areas with limited disability parking.

There is also a need for more parking for community vehicles in the city area. Consideration should be given to allowing community vehicles to use public transport or other designated parking areas.

The risk of social exclusion is greater where people are unable to access private motor vehicle transport. This is particularly the case for people who do not have a car or who are unable to drive. Specific learner driver or Road Ready courses targeting population groups are one way vulnerable people could be assisted to become more socially included and independent.

During the ACTCOSS 2009-10 ACT Budget Submission Consultation process, representatives from the multicultural community noted that programs tend to be most effective when they are coordinated by small community groups that worked with specific ethnicities. An example of such a program was the Muslim Women's Group driving classes which were offered to women to assist them to learn a skill for living in Canberra. Programs such as this can be funded under the existing ACT Multicultural Grants Program, however it is often difficult for small community groups to undertake vigorous grant application processes. It was suggested the grants program could include improved communication strategies and further avenues for assistance, including in project development and the preparation of applications.

**Recommendation:**

Fund community organisations or small groups to provide targeted driver education programs to people from CALD backgrounds or with disabilities.

## Transport Information

Navigating the public, community and private transport system can be challenging for anyone. A key theme emerging from consultations was people's lack of knowledge about the range of services available to them and the ways to access information about these services. It is particularly difficult for people with lower levels of literacy, disabilities or from CALD backgrounds to access relevant information about transport services available to them.

There is a need for co-located information that supports service users to make informed choices about the transport options available to them, including community and public transport as well as any other options.

### Public Transport services

In whatever form information is made available, it should meet the following four criteria:

1. Clear;
2. Concise;
3. Accurate; and
4. Timely.<sup>31</sup>

#### Case Study: Sweden – Transport Information

An Internet based timetable information system is being developed and extended, with detailed information on design, accessibility, service and quality of stations and bus terminals. The system covers all regional public transport services. The extended system includes information about taxis, car parking (including disabled parking spaces) and accessible toilets. Other national rail systems in countries such as Germany and Italy, have websites which provide information specially prepared to meet the needs of travellers with disabilities.

Another example is the Accessible Transportation Portal website, sponsored by the Canadian Government and a variety of private partners, which provides information on accessible transportation and travel across Canada.

It is important, however, that access to information is not solely available on the internet as not all people on low incomes will have access to the internet. Currently ACTION bus information is available on their website and at the interchanges. Information about ACTION bus services should also be available at post offices, Government shop-fronts and at shopping centres. The ACT Transit Group stated in their submission to an ACT Legislative Assembly Committee Inquiry that information currently displayed at bus stops in the ACT 'assumes that the potential traveller has an intimate knowledge of the network, as the display lists a series of times against a series of route numbers without indicating the direction of travel or the route to be taken, or destination, by each

31 European Conference of Ministers of Transport, *Improving Transport Accessibility for All: Guide to Good Practice*, OECD Publications Service, 2006, p 15.

route number. They go on to suggest each display should contain references to other services in the area with directions to other stops.<sup>32</sup>

Another issue often overlooked is the importance of providing information in other languages, for people from CALD backgrounds, and information which can be understood by people with learning or cognitive difficulties or with lower levels of literacy. Inclusion Europe has produced some documents on this topic. Recommendations they have made include:

- Using symbols and illustrations to make timetables more understandable;
- Clear and simple signage to help people find places such as ticket offices and information centres.<sup>33</sup>

## Concessions

In 2007, the ACT Government undertook a review of the current concessions scheme. Concessions aim to promote equity in the standard of living and access to essential services for all members of the ACT community.<sup>34</sup> The review produced 24 findings on the current status of concessions in the ACT.

The review found there are 30 ACT Government concessions across six agencies. Community submissions to the enquiry indicated the system was viewed as difficult by service users, with inconsistencies and different eligibility requirements across concessions and departments.<sup>35</sup>

The review found every Australian jurisdiction except the ACT has a comprehensive guide to concessions available through the one source. The review also found information about concessions is not available in languages other than English (although most information does refer to an interpreter service being available). In its response to the review the ACT Government undertook to develop a communication strategy to better inform the community of the range of concessions available to individuals.<sup>36</sup> It appears DHCS is currently working on this action with a new website launched in July 2009, but as the Government response was over 18 months ago, it is important outcomes are delivered soon.

### **Recommendation:**

Follow through on the actions in the ACT Government response to the Concessions Review, in particular around making information about concessions more accessible to service users.

32 ACT Transit Group, *Submission to Standing Committee on Energy, Climate Change and Water Inquiry into ACT Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets*, 2009.

33 European Conference of Ministers of Transport, *Improving Transport Accessibility for All: Guide to Good Practice*, OECD Publications Service, 2006, p 26.

34 ACT Government, *Review of ACT Government Concessions*, 2007, accessed at [http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/concessions/concessions\\_review](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/concessions/concessions_review)

35 Ibid, p 19.

36 ACT Government, *Review of ACT Government Concessions – ACT Government Response*, 2008, accessed at [http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/concessions/concessions\\_review](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/concessions/concessions_review)

## Community Transport

It became clear during consultations many of the organisations participating in the forums were unaware of the nature or extent of the services provided by other organisations. Many participants noted they valued the opportunity to meet and discuss issues around transport services and the unmet needs of ACT people.

The community sector, and in particular those organisations involved in the provision of transport services could work together better to share information about the services they provide, and where there might be opportunities for collaboration or referrals.

The monthly HACC Network meetings operate by giving organisations the opportunity to share their current levels of unmet need, in terms of capacity to take new clients and lengths of waiting lists. There is the opportunity for other community organisations to do this also.

**Recommendation:**

Support community organisations to develop mechanisms to share information about transport services they provide, including current capacity and opportunities for collaboration with other agencies.

Considering the gap in information available to community sector agencies, it can be assumed it is even more difficult for consumers to navigate the system. This is particularly the case around the provision of HACC and community transport, where funding comes from different sources and the two types of transport are available to meet different needs. Few consumers are likely to understand either the need or the details of this distinction. There is a need for increased information and support for consumers trying to access community and HACC transport for different purposes.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of planning policies and initiatives is as important in transport as in any other area of Government spending. The ability to measure the success of current projects can assist governments and communities to use their limited resources most effectively.

Transport initiatives can have a range of benefits that should be evaluated, including:

- Benefits to the individual in terms of travel cost and journey time savings or whether the service has allowed them to make additional trips or access additional services they would not otherwise have been able to access;
- Benefits to wider society, such as greater community involvement; and
- Benefits to the economy, such as if someone is able to undertake work.

One of the problems with measuring effectiveness of various transport policies is the difficulty in evaluating these policies. Performance indicators are practical ways to monitor effectiveness, but social inclusion is not a concept that lends itself easily to any particular means of measurement. However, other jurisdictions and organisations have suggested performance indicators that may be relevant to evaluating transport system quality and its impacts on social inclusion.

Performance measures used for this purpose must combine both quantitative measures of mobility and access and qualitative measures of user acceptance and satisfaction. A good performance indicator:

- Tells how goals and objectives are being met;
- Is meaningful, logical and repeatable;
- Is unambiguously defined;
- Is suitable for comparison and trend analysis;
- Uses data that is economical to collect.<sup>37</sup>

A few examples of performance indicators that could be relevant to a socially inclusive transport system include:

- Land use accessibility – through average number of basic services within walking distance of residences;
- Transport diversity – variety and quality of transport options available in a community;
- Consumer Transport costs – portion of household expenditure devoted to transport;
- Basic Access – people’s ability to access activities such as medical appointments, education, employment and shopping; and
- Mobility for people with disabilities.<sup>38</sup>

Indicator results should compare information between higher and lower income households, physically able people and people with disabilities and between members of particular population groups (such as people from CALD backgrounds) and the general population.

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37 Todd Litman, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, *Social Inclusion as a Transport Planning Issue in Canada*, 2003, p 11.

38 Ibid, p 12.

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Currently the ACT uses the percentage of trips to work as the benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of its sustainable transport plans (including the *Sustainable Transport Plan* and the *Integrated Transport Framework*). This is concerning as it excludes many of the people discussed in this report, who are more likely to travel outside of peak times and to use public transport for reasons other than getting to work. There is a need to develop additional benchmarks to measure the use and success of sustainable means of transport.

## Conclusion

The key concern ACTCOSS has about the ACT transport system is its fragmented nature. There is little coordination and collaboration between the Government agencies who provide the different services. This fragmentation means no single department or organisation is responsible for improving access to work, learning, healthcare, cultural activities and other services. Because transport is not considered core business of many of these organisations, transport considerations can sometimes be given low priority by agencies when making decisions to open or close facilities and services.

Greater cross-government communication and whole of government and whole of community measures are required to address the needs of Canberrans at risk of social exclusion. Accessibility has too often at an ACT level been thought of as a transport planners problem, rather than one that can be influenced by other organisations, for example, by locating, designing and delivering services so they are easily and conveniently available to people at risk of social exclusion.

ACTCOSS would like to see more innovative approaches to transport and land-use planning that encourages Government and the community to 'think outside the box'. We have provided examples of other jurisdictions who have worked to implement creative initiatives that are both environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. Through the development of the *Sustainable Transport Action Plan*, the *Frequent Public Transport Network Plan* and the review of the *ACT Social Plan*, the ACT has the opportunity to implement new and innovative ideas that consider and address the needs of people experiencing disadvantage who often have the least transport options.

Some of the recommendations made in this report are long term and will require a significant allocation of resources. It is ACTCOSS' hope that this report demonstrates, however, that people without access to transport are unlikely to be able to access support, education, employment and social activities. The ACT can do more to promote the social inclusion of all members of the ACT community and ensure that human rights of all are being protected, promoted and fulfilled.

## Recommendations

1. Support Government and the community to work together to ensure there is community involvement in transport policy development, right through from the initial planning stages.
2. Improve planning to ensure residential and community facilities are located in areas that are accessible by different means of transport.
3. Provide information about which routes will be serviced by accessible buses.
4. Increase the rate of the replacement of the ACTION bus fleet with accessible buses.
5. Explore alternative means of remuneration for WAT taxi drivers that ensure driving WAT is a financially viable and attractive alternative.
6. Ensure bus and taxi drivers access personal development and customer care training.
7. Provide increased and on going funding to the pilot community bus program through the regional community services, to allow for longer operating hours, greater flexibility and streamlined booking processes.
8. Investigate possible changes to taxation law that would remove disincentives for people storing community vehicles out of office hours.
9. Investigate alternative methods for storing community vehicles that reduce the risk of vandalism.
10. Resource community organisations to better support their volunteers through supervision, training, management and allowances.
11. Support community transport providers to improve collaboration, information sharing among agencies.
12. Consider implementing a system of 'part-time' disability parking spaces in Civic and other areas with limited disability parking.
13. Fund community organisations or small groups to provide targeted driver education programs to people from CALD backgrounds or with disabilities
14. Follow through on the actions in the ACT Government response to the Concessions Review, in particular around making information about concessions more accessible to service users.
15. Support community organisations to develop mechanisms to share information about transport services they provide, including current capacity and opportunities for collaboration with other agencies.

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## **Appendix 1 – Organisations Consulted**

ACT Disability Advisory Council

Adult Migrant English Program (Canberra Institute of Technology)

Chief Minister's Department

Citizens Advice Bureau

Community Inclusion Board

Companion House

Gungahlin Regional Community Service

Nican

People with Disabilities

Sharing Places

Special Education Advocacy

Woden Community Service

Women's Centre for Health Matters

YWCA of Canberra

NB. A number of transport service users were also consulted through ACTCOSS and other networks.



## The Path Less Travelled



- Level 1, 67 Townshend St, Phillip ACT 2606 •
- PO Box 849, Mawson ACT 2607 •
- ph 02 6202 7200 • fax 02 6281 4192 •
- [www.actcoss.org.au](http://www.actcoss.org.au) •