



Pedal Power ACT Inc.

Standing Committee on Planning and the Environment
Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

18 May 2007

To the Committee,

Pedal Power ACT thanks the committee for the opportunity to make this submission to the inquiry into ACTION buses. Pedal Power is a non-profit organisation. Our mission is 'More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a better community'. We strongly support the ACT Government's Sustainable Transport Plan in creating a sustainable, healthier and more liveable city. Our submission focuses on ACTION's Bike'n'Ride service provided on Intertown 300 series buses.

Bike racks on buses are a well proven concept in the United States

We congratulate the Government on fitting bicycle racks to ACTION buses. Fitting bike racks to buses is standard practise in many American cities especially on the west coast of America (see our brief enclosed). Bicycle-friendly public transport goes hand-in-hand with the wider use of sustainable transport options by the community.

Fitting bike racks to Intertown 300 series buses was smart and the service is well-used

ACTION's decision to equipping buses on the Intertown 300 series routes was ideal for a city with distant town centres and the Bike 'n' Ride service is popular. The Intertown 300 series routes are particularly well-suited because the services are frequent, quick and in high demand. (Note buses with bike racks travel on routes other than the Intertown 300 series routes, but bicycles are not allowed to be carried on these routes.)

Pedal Power has conducted annual usage counts of the bike racks since the service was introduced. Our second report, produced earlier this year, is included with this submission. The study counted the number of bicycles carried by buses in the Civic Interchange only in five hours (morning and evening peaks) on a weekday in March. In both the 2006 and 2007 study, a total of 31 bicycles were counted in the counting period. This equates to probably between 200 and 300 usages for the week.

Reliability of the service is reducing patronage of the service

Unfortunately not all Intertown 300 series buses are fitted with bike racks. In 2006 81% of the buses on the Intertown 300 routes through the Bus Interchange we counted were bike rack equipped. In 2007, the

number was 84%. Our count is obviously a limited sample but it is consistent with what we have observed anecdotally.

Reliability of the service is important. Passengers, particularly female passengers, are concerned about personal security if they have to wait late into the night for a bike rack-equipped bus to arrive. Waiting for a bus only to find that it is not bike rack equipped discourages people from using the service in future. Notably, on three occasions in the five hour period we counted, two buses in a row (going in the same direction) passed through the Interchange without a bike rack.

ACTION says 100% reliability is possible

On 30 September 2006, Hamish McNulty, the then Acting Chief Executive of Territory and Municipal Services wrote to Pedal Power (letter sent via fax). He wrote that,

“It is ACTION’s aim to have every Intertown 300 series bus with bike racks on them and I am pleased to advise that all Intertown 300 series will be allocated with bike rack buses in ACTION’s new Network 06, due to commence in December. This is due to additional new buses to ACTION’s fleet and the reallocation of scheduled services from the north to the south region. However, there will still be occasions where a service will not have a bike rack due to operational issues, such as servicing or breakdowns.”

We have spoken to ACTION and they were unaware of any operational issues which caused poor reliability on the day of our count.

Conclusion – Bike racks are popular but increasing reliability will increase patronage

Experience thus far with the bike racks suggests that buses make long distance trips more feasible with a bicycle Likewise bicycles can make the bus network more appealing because passengers have the option of cycling to their nearest Intertown bus stop where high frequency bus services can be found. We estimate that 77% of Canberrans live within 5 kilometres of their town centre.

Based on our limited sample, 1 in 6 Intertown 300 series buses are not rack-equipped. Improving this will improve patronage.

Pedal Power would welcome the opportunity to speak with the committee if it wishes to seek more information about this submission.

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