



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment,
Planning, Transport and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+

Submission number: 012

Submitter: Name withheld

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MyWay+: Let's walk to Tuggeranong

I'm trying to get to Tuggeranong. I check the Transport Canberra website to check bus times. On the first page of results, it doesn't give me any bus times.

This is on a desktop computer, it is even more compressed on a phone. This is bad web design. I shouldn't have to log in or install an app to adjust the default settings.

The 'sorted by healthiest' as the default sort in the real-time journey planner reeks of a bureaucrat who has read up on nudge theory and thought they had a clever idea to push citizens towards better health choices and lower emissions transit.

Instead they have simply made public transport more difficult to use. I just want to know when the bus is coming.

I have lived in Canberra for 12 years, and used buses nearly daily for this entire period. The MyWay+ system has made the public transport experience worse by removing easily accessible real-time bus information and making it harder to plan trips effectively.

Many of the issues raised could have been avoided if Transport Canberra had properly tested and considered user needs before launching the system.

The screenshot shows the MyWay+ interface with the following details:

- Route:** City to Tuggeranong Interchange Arrivals.
- Leave:** 11/02/2025, 8:10 PM.
- Transport:** Transport Canberra.
- Sort:** Sorted by Healthiest.
- Route 1 (Cheapest):** 4hr 52min, arrives 1:02AM, 19.7 km (walking). Free, 721 kcal, No CO₂.
- Route 2 (Cheapest):** 1hr 9min, arrives 9:19PM, 20.9 km (93% cycle friendly). Free, 396 kcal, 0.2 kg CO₂.
- Route 3 (Recommended):** 16min, arrives 8:26PM, 23.2 km (cycling). \$5, 42 kcal, 2.6 kg CO₂.
- Route 4:** 22min, arrives 8:32PM.

What improvements do you feel the MyWay+ system still needs, if any?

I believe the Committee should recommend, in order of priority:

1. **Public Real-Time Bus API:** Transport Canberra should, as a matter of priority, make a public real-time bus times API available in line with the ACT Government's commitment to Open Government principles. This would allow the community and private sector to provide solutions that better cater to the needs of public transport users in the ACT.
2. **Validator Screen Information:** The MyWay+ validators should be reprogrammed to display on screen:
 - Recognition of whether the action was registered as tapping on or tapping off.
 - The current balance of the MyWay+ account.
 - A warning if the balance is low.
 - A 'change of mind' function if the user no longer takes that trip.
 - Faster screen clearing for the next person tapping on/off.
3. **Accurate Real-Time Bus Estimations:** Transport Canberra must ensure that real-time bus arrival time estimations are resilient to buses not running on schedule.

The Committee should investigate the accuracy of the real-time bus time data and its estimations on arrival times at close and far stops. This should be compared to the previous system, and other real-time data provided in other jurisdictions.
4. **Replicate NXTBUS:** Transport Canberra should develop a real-time bus times webpage replicating the previous NXTBUS functionality: the ability to simply look up a bus stop and receive a list of the next buses arriving.
5. **Debit Card Payment Logic:** When a user taps on with a debit card linked to their MyWay+ account, it should first use any available balance in the linked account before charging the debit card directly.
6. **Understanding the needs of bus users:** The leadership of Transport Canberra should improve their understanding of the needs of bus users by exclusively using public transport for a period of one month.
7. **Don't make me use an app:** Transport Canberra should make real-time bus information quickly accessible from a simple webpage without requiring a login or an app.

Scenarios where better real-time bus time information would makes it easier to cope with the deficiencies of the Canberra bus system:

A. It's late at night. I'm at a stop in a suburban street, it's incredibly dark, and I don't feel safe. I want to know if the bus is coming soon. The bus is running late, is it on its way soon? I don't know.

B. My boss usually understands that there can be a 30 minute approximate arrival window depending on what the buses are like on a given morning, but on this particular day I need to get to work at a specific time. But the bus is running late, and I don't know if it's coming soon. Should I just give up and take a taxi?

C. I'm leaving work, and need to be home as soon as possible. Should I go to the closest bus stop, or run to a different bus stop where there may be a bus arriving sooner or taking a more efficient route?

These were all questions that were easily and solved with the previous NXTBUS interface, that the MyWay+ system and real-time journey planner do not answer.

Recommendation - Replicate NXTBUS

Transport Canberra should develop a real-time bus times webpage replicating the previous NXTBUS functionality: the ability to simply look up a bus stop and receive a list of the next buses arriving.

What issues have you experienced with the new MyWay+ system, if any? *

I am only including issues that continue to cause a detrimental experience daily:

1. The validator screen only displays a generic green tick, giving no information about the charge or balance.

If someone taps off before you, it is unclear if your tap was registered due to slow screen changes. The sounds have gotten louder since launch, but there is no visual indicator that something has happened on screen.

There is no indication of low balance or whether the validator registered the action correctly.

There is no clarity if a tap-on has been cancelled if you change your mind within minutes. A recent scenario: The light rail vehicle is there. I have made it to the stop, but I need to tap on. I tap on. I get to the door but it doesn't open. The light rail vehicle leaves. I tap my card again to try to cancel the trip. I don't know if it did.

The old MyWay validators provided all of the above features.

Recommendation - Improve validator screen information

The MyWay+ validators should provide clear, immediate feedback on tap actions, balance information, low-funds warnings and a change of mind feature.

2. I linked a debit card to my MyWay+ account. Using a debit card to tap on always charges the card directly, and does not use the existing balance in my connected MyWay+ account.

What was the point of linking a debit card?

Recommendation - Debit card payment logic

The MyWay+ system should prioritise using the MyWay+ balance before charging a linked debit card.

**What issues have you experienced with the new MyWay+ system, if any?
[continued]**

I am only including issues that continue to cause a detrimental experience on a day-to-day basis:

4. The Real-Time Journey Planner is clearly designed by people who do not use public transport. It is cumbersome and unhelpful.

The old NXTBUS system had always efficiently answered the questions that I needed when using the bus. The below are two questions where the real-time journey planner does not help me plan my journey in real time:

Question I. I've turned up to the bus stop. When is the bus coming? I don't know if the bus is late (or worse, it's left earlier than scheduled).

The real-time journey planner is too annoying to use. The NXTBUS system would let me quickly open a webpage, look up the number of the bus stop that I was at, and then tell me what buses were coming.

The real-time journey planner makes it a pain to look up the particular bus stop, and then tells me to walk to Tuggeranong as the highest result (see attachment at the end of this document).

On many of my journeys, I'm not limited to a single bus route – so I want to know all the buses arriving next at a particular stop. The timetable does not provide me this information, because I can only look up one route at a time.

Question II. I'm on the bus already. How far away is my stop?

The display does not tell me this. It's either too crowded on the bus and I can't read it from the back. Or my stop is not in the next five or so stops, so it's not appearing on the display.

The real-time journey planner does not tell me this. The bus I am already on has already departed, the real-time journey planner instead only tells me the bus times for the next scheduled route. The NXTBUS system would let me SMS the number of the bus stop to a phone number, and tell me when the bus was expected to arrive.

Recommendation - Replicate NXTBUS [repeated for emphasis]

That Transport Canberra develop a real-time bus times web page that replicates the functionality of the previous NXTBUS web page: the ability to look up a bus stop, and receive a list of the next buses arriving.

How do you think the public launch of MyWay+ in November 2024 could have been done better?

1. I don't want to use an app. I wanted a physical card, but it was so difficult to get one.

Transport Canberra should have anticipated demand for physical cards. Using a debit card to tap on is not a substitute - when tapping on with a debit card it does not use the balance in the connected account. Once the app was evidently buggy, it was clear that more people wanted physical cards.

For better or worse, sometimes riding a bus or waiting at a bus stop by yourself at night in Canberra does not feel safe. Some Canberra bus stops are isolated and dark. I don't want to be pulling out my debit card (to get ready to board the bus and efficiently tap on) if I'm already feeling unsafe. A physical MyWay+ card feels much less risky to be pulling out in these situations.

When you could text and receive real-time bus information via the NXTBUS SMS system, you did not need to carry a smartphone to get around Canberra. I should not need to register and log into a website to customise the journey planner settings to return sensible results.

Recommendation - Don't make me use an app for a non-clunky experience

That Transport Canberra ensure that real-time bus information is quickly accessible from a simple web page, without needing to log in or use an app.

2. I wasted much of my time trying to get a MyWay+ card before the launch

I turned up to multiple convenience stores only be told that they didn't have any in stock. I ended up ordering a MyWay+ card a week before the launch. It did not arrive until mid-November. When it was received, it was evident from the postmark on the letter it had not even been mailed out until 9 December 2024. Why was the card not sent out the day after I paid for it?

3. Why did the ACT Government make such a big deal about ensuring your MyWay (old) was registered so that your balance would transfer, and then the balance transfer was not automated (or secured)?

Why could they not have taken my address details from my registered MyWay, and just mailed me a physical card?

4. Why do the MyWay+ validators at the light rail stops break so often? Why do some buses in February 2025 still not have MyWay+ validators installed?

I understand if there are complexities with installing validators on buses. But why does a validator that is in a fixed location at a light rail stop have so many issues?

How do you think the public launch of MyWay+ in November 2024 could have been done better? [continued]

4. Transport Canberra procured a real-time journey planner that no one wanted, and failed to deliver real-time information that bus users needed (and had been using for over a decade with the old system).

The displays on the bus at the top told you where the bus has come from. If I'm getting on the bus in the City, I don't care if the bus came from Kippax. I want to know where it's going. This has been fixed.

However, the estimations on next stop arrival time were clearly incorrect. The real-time displays also failed to recalculate when the bus was not running as scheduled; not an uncommon occurrence. I am not sure if this has been fixed.

Recommendation - Ensure that real-time bus information is accurate

That Transport Canberra ensure and provide confidence that the real-time bus arrival time estimations are resilient to buses not running on schedule.

5. Transport Canberra failed to make an API with real-time bus information ready for use to private app developers and the public on launch. A public API is not available.

If the ACT Government made their data readily available, local citizens and the private sector could have created a real-time bus journey solutions that actually addresses public transit users needs.

Instead, developers of apps that already covered ACT public transport (such as the iOS app Nextthere.com) had received no information on the MyWay+ transition and a real-time API is still not publicly available.

If I had this data, I could build a service for myself that provides the information I need, without having to wait for Transport Canberra to get their ducks in a row.

I have looked on <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/contact-us/information-for-developers> and https://www.data.act.gov.au/browse?Contributing-Agency_Directorate=Transport+Canberra+and+City+Services&anonymous=true&ederation_filter=182&q=performance&sortBy=relevance&page=1&pageSize=20, and as at 10 February 2025, I cannot see such an API yet being available. The only thing that is available are listings of the scheduled bus routes, which doesn't matter if buses don't reliably run to schedule.

Recommendation - make a public real-time bus time API publicly available

That Transport Canberra, as a matter of priority, make a public real-time bus times API available; in line with the ACT Government's commitment to Open Government principles, and to allow the community and private sector to provide solutions that better cater to the needs of public transport users in the ACT.

How do you think the public launch of MyWay+ in November 2024 could have been done better? [continued]

5. I wasted a lot of time trying to link my debit card.

There are two different payment processors for linking a debit card to an account, and linking a debit-card to top-up. It took multiple days of attempts before it worked.

The website was evidently insecure, storing the details of an entire debit card number. The full read-out of my entire debit card number was readable in the system (under travel history, clicking on the details) between the months of November, December and early January. Only in February did I notice that the debit card details were finally obscured.

Have these issues affected your confidence in any aspect of the public transport system? If so, how? *

Yes. I do not believe Transport Canberra understands the needs of public transport users. The poor design of MyWay+ suggests its leadership is out of touch. The errors on launch were so severe that they indicate no real-world testing occurred.

The statements made by Transport Canberra spokesperson for the rollout, Ben McHugh, further demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of the needs of Canberra's bus users. A public transport system designed with this mindset is not how we make Canberra better place to live.

The system errors on launch were so unusable that I strongly suspect that Transport Canberra do not use the public transit system themselves, not even on a token trial basis to test how the system is functioning immediately on launch.

What was the point of the ACT Government bearing the cost of two months of free public transport for the switch-over, when basic testing of the system did not occur?

Recommendation - Demonstrate understanding of bus users needs

That the Transport Canberra leadership should be required to exclusively use public transport for one month to understand the needs of bus users firsthand.

As an aside, without the Journey Planner prompting me to do so, I have walked to Woden from the city before, and also cycled to Tuggeranong from the city. I wouldn't recommend anyone do it on a whim as the Journey Planner so readily suggests Canberrans do - adequate hydration, clothing and food supplies is important on such trips.