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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT
NO 9 OF 2015**

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: THE FREQUENT NETWORK

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Government Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - Governance and Administration (High Priority)

The Environment and Planning Directorate should improve governance and administration of *Transport for Canberra* and therefore the Frequent Network by:

- a) developing a short term (e.g. 5 year) whole of government public transport implementation plan with specific targets and timelines;
- b) identifying an appropriate whole of government group and charging it with responsibility for coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of *Transport for Canberra*, including and especially the delivery of the Frequent Network;
- c) establishing an accountability mechanism so the whole of government group undertakes its responsibilities; and
- d) developing an aggregated cross agency risk assessment and management mechanism for *Transport for Canberra*, including and especially for the delivery of the Frequent Network.

Government response: Agree. The creation of Transport Canberra by the ACT Government will ensure that future cross-agency transport operational functions are coordinated and integrated

- a) Agreed. A whole of government transport coordination group will develop a short term (e.g. 5 year) whole of government public transport implementation plan with specific targets and timelines.
- b) Agreed. A whole of government transport coordination group of senior executives will coordinate, monitor and report on the implementation of *Transport for Canberra*, including the delivery of the Frequent Network.
- c) Agreed. A whole of government transport coordination group will establish an accountability mechanism to ensure it undertakes its responsibilities.
- d) Agreed. A whole of government transport coordination group will develop a cross agency risk assessment for *Transport for Canberra*, including the delivery of the Frequent Network.

Recommendation 2 - Transport for Canberra Monitoring and Reporting Framework (High Priority)

The Environment and Planning Directorate should improve reporting on the implementation of *Transport for Canberra*, in the annual *Transport for Canberra* Report Card by:

- a) using the measures and targets identified in the *Transport for Canberra* Monitoring and Reporting Framework;
- b) developing the necessary baselines, measures and systems so that the required data can be collected, recorded and analysed; and
- c) all summary comments on progress being accurate, and including information that justifies claims of 'On track to be achieved'; and specifying what 'needs improvement'.

Government response: Agree in principle.

- a) Future *Transport for Canberra* report cards will report against the measures and targets identified in the *Transport for Canberra* Monitoring and Reporting Framework, where data is available.
- b) The whole of government transport coordination group will examine other baselines, measures and systems that can be implemented so that the required data can be collected, recorded and analysed.
- c) The whole of government transport coordination group will review the criteria used to assess the transport performance measures in *Transport for Canberra* and provide additional detail to justify the progress comments.

Recommendation 3 - Household Travel Survey

The Environment and Planning Directorate should undertake a periodic household travel survey to provide detailed data on travel behaviours in the ACT and use the information to inform transport policies and their planning and performance measurement.

Government response: Agree in principle.

The ACT Government undertakes a number of surveys and data collection processes that provide important transport data, including road traffic volumes, bus patronage, bicycle counts, customer transport preferences and car travel time. While they provide important information which is used where possible, they do not provide the statistically significant travel characteristics and behaviour data required as input into the strategic transport model. The Environment and Planning Directorate will consider additional opportunities to obtain data on travel behaviours in the ACT to inform transport policies, planning and performance measurement.

Recommendation 4 - Periodic Performance Review of Frequent Network

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should periodically review the performance of the Frequent Network using quantitative analysis of the data available from ACTION business systems including MyWay, HASTUS and NetBI to better inform overall management of the Frequent Network.

Government response: Agree

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (Transport Canberra from 1 July 2016) will develop a reporting framework within its existing business systems, to review the performance of the Frequent Network that is currently implemented.

The reporting framework will also note areas of the proposed frequent network that have not yet been delivered, and provide an explanatory statement on why it has not been achieved.

Recommendation 5 – Embedding Transport Corridors in Urban Planning Documents (High Priority)

The Environment and Planning Directorate should provide certainty with respect to the location of the Frequent Network by:

- a) embedding its long term corridors in the Territory Plan as a matter of priority; and
- b) working with the Australian Government to also embed these corridors in the National Capital Plan.

Government response: Agree in principle.

- a) The Environment and Planning Directorate had commenced a Territory Plan variation to update the Intertown Public Transport Route overlay to ensure that it aligned with, and therefore embedded, the rapid transport corridors of the Frequent Network. This work was put on hold until the Transport Canberra - Light Rail Network Plan is completed, as it was possible that changes to the rapid corridors of the Frequent Network may arise from this new plan. It is expected that the Territory Plan variation process will recommence following finalisation of the Transport Canberra - Light Rail Network Plan in mid 2016.

Any risks associated with a delay in the Territory Plan variation process are considered minimal as:

- i) the Territory Plan currently includes the Intertown Public Transport Route overlay, which broadly aligns with the rapid corridors of the Frequent Network
- ii) the Environment and Planning Directorate's strategic land use planning projects (e.g. all town and group centres master plans) have incorporated consideration of potential land use changes arising from the Frequent Network since the adoption of *Transport for Canberra* in 2012.

- b) At a policy level, Government does not accept that the National Capital Plan (NCP) should have any role in establishing or documenting public transport routes. This should be the sole domain of the ACT Government. However, noting the draft NCP still proposes identification of inter-town routes, the Environment and Planning Directorate is working with the National Capital Authority to include an overlay which reflects the rapid corridors of the Frequent Network in the Draft National Capital Plan (Draft Amendment 86). The revised National Capital Plan is expected to be finalised in mid 2016.

Recommendation 6 - Addressing Action's Operational Risks (High Priority)

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (ACTION) should address key operational risks to the implementation of the Frequent Network by:

- a) identifying and providing options to the ACT Government for overcoming the adverse effects of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) on the ability of ACTION to manage in a more flexible manner to meet demand; and
- b) identifying and providing options to the ACT Government for funding an increase in bus numbers and expanding the number of depots. (This could be done as part of a short term (e.g. 5 years) whole of government public transport implementation plan – refer to Recommendation 1).

Government response: Agree

- a) The ACT Government announced the creation of a new agency, Transport Canberra, which will be responsible for identification and options for delivery of the Frequent Network. The new agency will be part of the whole of government public transport coordination group referred to in Recommendation 1.
- b) Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (Transport Canberra from 1 July 2016) will work closely with the Public Sector Workplace Relations area of Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate to identify and provide advice on areas of the existing ACTION EBA that limit the flexibility of service delivery and demand management on the ACTION bus network.

Recommendation 7 – Cost Benefit Analysis of the Frequent Network

The Environment and Planning Directorate should update its cost benefit analysis of the Frequent Network in light of revised assumptions associated with its delivery. In particular, the updated analysis should consider: the impact of the inclusion of the light rail into the Frequent Network; revised estimates regarding investments required in new buses and an extra depot to meet forecast future peak demands; and risks associated with the achievement of mode share changes expected under *Transport for Canberra*.

Government response: Noted.

Comprehensive cost-benefit analyses require significant government funding and resources to complete and are undertaken to support government consideration of transport infrastructure investments, such as light rail, roads, bus fleet and depots. A project specific cost-benefit analysis for the ACT Strategic Public Transport Network Plan (February 2010) was completed to support Budget Cabinet's consideration of the *Transport for Canberra* budget initiative for the 2010-11 Budget. A revised cost-benefit analysis for the ACT Strategic Public Transport Network Plan is not required as future transport budget initiatives will be supported by comprehensive project specific business cases, including revised assumptions.