

**SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES**

SUBMITTED BY THE ACT TRANSIT GROUP

APRIL 2007

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**SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES**

1. SUBMITTED BY the ACT Transit Group, an association of people with an interest in public transport, particularly from the perspective of users of ACTION services.

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2. PURPOSE OF THIS SUBMISSION

This submission considers ACTION services from a consumer perspective, particularly deficiencies that have arisen from the changes introduced in December 2006.

The submission also addresses the merits of public transport from a wider community perspective and recommends improvements to ACTION services that would be in accord with the principles outlined in the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan.

3. SUMMARY

ACTION has the potential to advance significant environmental and social benefits for the Canberra community which would be consistent with the ACT Government's Sustainable Transport Plan. These benefits are only possible if they are taken into account when formulating ACTION's funding. The cutbacks in service of December 2006 negate the aims sought by the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan.

There is a need for ACTION to consult with the community in developing a revised set of Standards of Service prior to seeking Government endorsement of these standards. The new service standards should then form the platform for a rigorous review of the bus network and development of a new route system and timetable.

4. BACKGROUND

The ACT Transit Group is an unincorporated association of people who maintain an interest in all aspects of public transport, particularly in the National Capital. The contributors to this submission are long time patrons of ACTION and travel out of choice or sometimes when private transport is not available.

We choose bus travel because in most cases it meets our transport needs and we are mindful of the social and environmental benefits of accessible public transport. Prior to 4 December 2006, we believed that ACTION provided a viable and sustainable transport option for Canberra and, while requiring additional resources for marketing and overall service improvement, offered a reasonably attractive alternative to the private car for most of the day on weekdays. Accordingly, we broadly support the thrust of the ACT Government's Sustainable Transport Plan in relation to initiatives proposed to enhance the role of public transport.

We applaud various recent statements by ACT Ministers in support of public transport in Canberra. These include:

- On 15 March 2007 the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services stated "ACTION buses provide an essential service to our older citizens, giving many people freedom and independence" (joint media release with the Minister for Ageing). Further, the Minister is reported as saying "I acknowledge that bus services are a matter of immense importance to the people of the ACT" (*Canberra Times*, 19 March 2007, page 7).
- On 17 January 2007 the Minister "announced the finalisation of an agreement with Adshel Street Furniture Pty Ltd for the supply, installation and maintenance of over 200 new bus shelters in the ACT" (Ministerial media release). These will be provided and maintained by the company but in return will carry advertising.
- In a message accompanying the release of the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan in April 2004 the Minister for Planning wrote "The Sustainable Transport Plan is part of the ACT Government's vision for a more sustainable Canberra. For Canberra to be a great place to live, work, invest in and visit, our transport system needs to enhance the city's accessibility and be based on greater use of more sustainable modes. ...Sustainable transport planning is central to good urban planning - it is about planning for people and their needs."

We also note that the ACT Planning and Land Authority's draft ACT Parking Strategy (updated 1 March 2007) is formulated "within a broader goal of sustainable transport which encourages more walking, cycling and use of public transport ... in line with key objectives of the Sustainable Transport Plan".

However despite these statements promoting the benefits of public transport, changes introduced on 4 December 2006 provided substantial cuts to ACTION services outside a narrow band of peak hours, resulting in substantial disruption to the travel arrangements of a large percentage of bus travellers. Various media reports indicate problems with overcrowding, late running and disputation on board buses. These service cuts appear to be contrary to the intention of the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan released in April 2004.

5. WHY GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS VITAL FOR CANBERRA

We believe that the provision of a comprehensive public transport system is a requirement for any community that seeks:

- an efficient and cost effective transport framework in an overall sense;
- a socially equitable society; and
- an environmentally sustainable future.

Accordingly, the provision of public transport in Canberra is an integral part of meeting these wider community goals:

- methods of transport which are the most environmentally and economically sustainable over time (as addressed in the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan);
- the reduction of congestion on our roads and the related ability to avoid unnecessary capital expenditure on road networks which are only fully used for 2-3 hours a day;
- reducing the need to devote large areas of our city to ugly and unproductive car parks;
- providing an attractive transport alternative for those who can afford a car and who use the bus for reasons such as environmental awareness, avoiding parking fees, and so on;
- providing transport to those without resources to provide their own transport for economic reasons, health, age and so on; and
- contributing to personal and business productivity by providing transport during which it is possible (unlike private motoring) to pursue other activities, such as reading or, catching up with work or study.

The problem for ACTION (and some other public transport enterprises in Australia) is that public transport appears to “lose” money, as the “losses” of the enterprise in a conventional business definition are very easily identifiable as a government budgetary item.

However, it is inappropriate for any Government to regard the provision of public transport as a business enterprise with a profit or loss outcome as defined in a conventional accounting forum. ACTION’s contract with the ACT Government to supply bus services should specify, on an annual basis, the revenue support for the provision of socially and economically essential community services, prior to the calculation of a profit and loss statement. After the appropriate revenue support has been taken into account, the enterprise is then able to declare a profit or loss in the same manner as do State Government Business Enterprises, such as Metro Tasmania and private enterprises contracting to supply Governments with bus transport.

On the other hand, the benefits of public transport can be huge, in that increased public transport usage contributes to a reduction in community costs in several areas:

- reducing high costs in trauma and health care of deaths and injuries through road accidents;
- reducing high costs of road network infrastructure construction;

- reducing high cost of stress on drivers;
- reducing high health and environmental costs of vehicle exhaust emissions (in this regard the latest CNG fuelled ACTION buses are environmentally friendly); and
- reducing high health and social costs caused by isolation and lack of mobility (and thereby helping to reduce actual expenditure in the Health budget).

6. ADDRESSING THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.1 EXAMINE HOW WELL ACTION MEETS THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY WHILE RECOGNISING THAT ACTION'S ROLE IS A MASS TRANSPORT PROVIDER

This submission concentrates on the services introduced in December 2006 but is also generally applicable to contemporary ACTION services.

6.1.1 What ACTION generally does well:

We believe that over the years, and within budgetary and other constraints, ACTION provided a reasonable service to the population of Canberra. ACTION has faced an ongoing lack of long term commitment to investment and recurrent funding, together with intermittent forward planning since 1992.

At the "front line", where ACTION interacts directly with patrons, we believe there is considerable goodwill. For example, we have observed a friendlier relationship between drivers and passengers than seems to exist in a large city such as Sydney. Within resource constraints, ACTION does attempt to minimise inconvenience to passengers from breakdowns or driver unavailability, although more recently the service does appear to have experienced more cancellations and late running due to overfull buses.

ACTION has excellent paper and Internet timetables and maps, although frequent small changes to services on some routes have led to out-of-date paper timetables offered for distribution. Unfortunately the current complexity of routes including separate weekday and weekend networks, has led to substantial complexity in route timetables and network maps, causing considerable confusion for intending passengers.

ACTION has generally attempted to expand its route network as the population becomes established in new suburbs, although in recent years the level of service has tended to be lower than in existing suburbs and some pockets of population have no service.

The introduction of low floor accessible buses fuelled by CNG and with bicycle racks has demonstrated a commitment to mobility restricted passengers and to the environment. A drawback is that, while some routes are advertised as having these buses, their limited numbers means there is no guarantee that they will operate each individual service.

6.1.2 Deficiencies in December 2006 Changes

6.1.2.1 Overview

Overall the new network gives regular passengers the impression that the new structure was the result of a panic reaction to a reduction in budget funding. Almost all aspects of the network were ill conceived and ineffectively launched onto the citizens of Canberra at a time when the Government was simultaneously attempting to generate demand for ACTION services through the TravelSmart program and the Sustainable Transport Plan.

It appears that there was:

- an absence of any serious consideration of pre-existing passenger loadings - individual trips carrying in excess of 30 passengers were deleted and yet peak period services carrying only a few passengers were retained;
- no consideration of the impact on passengers of an absence of connections between various services at town centre interchanges - there are now many instances where journeys within the one town, involving two local buses are well nigh impossible to undertake under 90 minutes and journeys involving three buses, including one intertown bus and local buses in adjacent towns, are almost impossible to complete in under two to three hours;
- no attempt to re-time bus routes, especially the intertown routes, to improve their reliability, prior to the introduction of the new schedules, thus compounding the late running and reliability difficulties and further impacting on the inability of many passengers to undertake cross town journeys by bus;
- no consideration of the types of journeys needed to be undertaken at lunch time between outlying office blocks and town centres; and
- no consideration of the level of information now required in order to plan a cross town journey - in some instances a passenger must carry up to five separate timetables for a weekday journey spreading from the afternoon into the early evening, where previously one comprehensive timetable was adequate.

6.1.2.2 Peak Services

Canberra has now reached a size where the provision of comprehensive peak bus services is vital. Without good peak services, traffic in Canberra, most especially around Civic but also increasingly around other employment centres, would virtually grind to a halt. Congestion on major Canberra roads is becoming visibly greater all the time. The costs in delays, driver frustration and exhaust emissions are considerable.

In general, we believe that ACTION's peak period services are mostly adequate. Exceptions include services from the most distant suburbs such as Dunlop and the absence of an intertown trunk route between Civic and Gungahlin. Also, the Belconnen-Civic-Woden-Tuggeranong trunk route has so many intermediate stops (including several of a minor nature where alternative local services are available) that it does not provide a true express service in peak hours and results in a frustratingly slow journey for longer distance passengers. The

700 series Xpresso services do provide a good service where available and there is considerable scope to expand the number of Xpresso routes and services.

6.1.2.3 Shoulder Services

We define the “shoulder” period as being 0900 to 1030 in the morning and 1500 to 1630 in the afternoon on weekdays. Base 30 minute frequencies are vital for the increasing numbers of part time and casual employees whose period of engagement frequently requires around a 1000 start and a 1500 to 1600 finish. Some finish at 1400. At present the existing schedules on most routes are abominable. Considerable overcrowding and very late running are being experienced on the intertown routes and school students are not to blame.

6.1.2.4 Off-peak (Weekday Inter-peak) Services

The provision of good public transport services to the community includes off-peak services which are required by wide segments of the community at most hours of the day and evening for work, study and leisure. The growing number of part time workers on variable rosters, especially in retail has created a demand for work trips at all hours.

The provision of good off peak services is, however, also important to full time “nine to five” workers. Many commuters will not use peak bus services if they do not have the assurance that they can also use off-peak services. They need this assurance for example, if they are required to work late into the evening or if they are required to return home unexpectedly in the middle of the day to handle an emergency.

Good off peak services are also required to meet the numerous requirements of non-work related activities during the day. They also serve as a continuous visible reminder to the community of the provision of vital public transport services.

CAMPBELL PARK - HOW OFFICE WORKERS ARE UNABLE TO ACCESS CIVIC AT LUNCHTIME

A striking example of how the current ACTION timetable fails the Canberra community is in the non-provision of adequate services to the thousands of people who work at Campbell Park. Under the current timetable, they are unable to get to Civic and back in their lunchtime. Therefore, if they need to do any shopping or other messages, they have to bring a private vehicle into work, use it at lunchtime, and drive it home again in the evening.

6.1.2.5 Week night and Weekend Services

Week night and some weekend bus services are arguably the least well patronised but at the same time perform a vital role in ensuring mobility for those without alternative transport. Meanwhile, employment patterns have changed to incorporate seven-day trading for up to 18

hours a day, leading to increased demand for work related travel at any time, often by younger people or those on lower wages who do not have access to private transport.

The changes introduced in December 2006 have resulted in a substantial deterioration in the level of service and a considerably different route structure on week nights and weekends. Travel times in some cases are also extended considerably.

The ACT Transit Group observes that some of the changes to routes at weekends (but not frequencies) introduced on 4 December 2006 could be adopted on weekdays as they reflect changing demographics.

WEEKEND TRAVEL BETWEEN CONDER (CHARLES CONDER PRIMARY) AND CIVIC

On weekdays travel is by one bus, route 313 taking 60 minutes in the off-peak. On weekends the intending passenger must determine whether the next bus is a clockwise route 913 or anticlockwise route 914 to Tuggeranong Interchange, then change to a 300 bus for a total travel time of 70 minutes (913/300) or 75 minutes (914/300). For seven day travel between Conder and Civic, a passenger needs three timetables (313, 913/914 and 300 Intertown). A lack of timetables at most bus stops along the route can make travel a daunting affair.

6.1.2.6 School Services

Appropriate school services are essential to minimise excessive traffic and parking problems around schools. Adequate funding should come from Education budget.

6.1.2.7 Bus fares

While ACTION's bus fare structure is considered quite reasonable compared with car travel, the benefit is negated where services are infrequent or the travel time is excessive. The benefits to passengers of the 90 minute validity on single fares has been somewhat eroded by less frequent off-peak services and excessive waiting times when a change of bus is required. Contrary to the policy of one fare regardless of distance, in many cases it is not now possible to travel from one end of Canberra to the other on one single fare. What is more, off-peak passengers get little benefit from Off-peak Daily tickets because, with such long waiting times, return trips are likely to extend into the morning or afternoon peaks.

6.1.2.8 Causes of the Current Deficiencies

While we acknowledge that it is the role of Government to set funding priorities, we believe that ACTION does suffer from inadequate funding and, more particularly cuts to funding from 4 December 2006. We believe that ACTION's funding should be of a level sufficient for ACTION to meet its Standards of Service.

The ACT Transit Group recognises that with constantly changing town plans, demographics, employment opportunities and the overall urban form, there is a requirement for the provision of public transport to be amended. The 4 December 2006 network outcome suggests that the Standards of Service were substantially amended but the public was unable to comment on such a vital aspect of the service, in complete contrast to earlier reviews of ACTION's services.

We believe that the public should have the opportunity to comment on costed options for the Standards of Service. The costings should take account of the social, health and environmental benefits of public transport, in accordance with the aims of the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan.

We also believe that the Network Review should be undertaken after the review of the Standards of Service. It is important that systematic review of the network take place to simplify the complex route structure and eliminate wasteful duplication of services. We believe that current services suffer from inadequate planning and analysis, preventing optimal use of funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The ACTION Standards of Service be reviewed publicly, preferably by the Committee on Planning and Environment.*
- 2. The Network Review should be based on the Review of the Standards of Service.*
- 3. That ACTION be funded to meet its Standards of Service.*
- 4. That all public costings of ACTION include an assessment of its social, health and environmental benefits.*

6.2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OTHER BUS TRANSPORT OPERATORS IN AUSTRALIAN JURISDICTIONS

On 24 March 2007 the *Canberra Times* published a report quoting Dr Paul Mees, Senior Lecturer in Planning at the University of Melbourne, as saying that "Canberra has the worst public transport system of any Australian city" and "has slipped below Hobart". In fact we believe that many aspects of the service offered by Metro in Hobart (the equivalent of ACTION in Canberra) have been superior to that in Canberra since the early 1990s. Large parts of the Hobart metropolitan area are serviced by routes operating on trunk roads at headways of between 10, 15 and 20 minutes during the off-peak periods and the spread of operational hours on Friday nights and at weekends is much greater than in Canberra.

6.3 FOCUSING ON ACTION'S SERVICES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PLAN WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO (i) THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE PLAN ESPECIALLY TARGETS; (ii) PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION; (iii) MEASURES NEEDED TO ENSURE TARGETS ARE MET

6.3.1 Overview

We endorse the ACT Government's far sighted and responsible approach in endorsing the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan. The Plan provides a comprehensive framework for incorporating public transport as a crucial element in meeting Canberra's overall transport needs. The Plan, under "Targets", indicates that achieving targets for increasing the non-car percentage of work trips "will depend on the level of travel demand as a result of population growth, urban consolidation and *Government investment in sustainable transport*" (italics ours).

Unfortunately, it appears that the commitment to the principles of the Plan is not reflected in ACTION's current standards of service, nor in the financial and planning resources currently available to ACTION.

RECOMMENDATION:

5. *ACTION's Standards of Service reflect the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan.*

6.3.2 Planning

For the attainment of goals within an organisation there needs to be, as a basis, a planning function. Attainment of the organisation's goals further involves using the results of planning to bring policies into practice.

We understand that there is no network planning currently undertaken by ACTION in association with ACTPLA and NCA. Accordingly the particular measures taken recently to implement network changes through service cuts and route alterations appear to have occurred without the benefit of planning and research. We consider this is not a satisfactory way for ACTION to conduct its business, especially where the ramifications for passengers have been profound.

We also understand that there is significant data potentially available from the electronic ticket system. This includes numbers of people travelling, on what routes and at what times. However, we understand that this data is not analysed by ACTION.

The consequence was apparent in the December 2006 timetable changes. Changes were made across the board, apparently without regard to the effect of individual cutbacks on the community. The cutbacks in the morning shoulder period were particularly severe.

MANUKA TO CIVIC - AN EXAMPLE OF BAD PLANNING

There is a major trunk route between Manuka and Civic, shared by three services. Under the timetable introduced in December 2006, the off-peak services were cut in such a manner that, at the main bus stop, there are three buses within four minutes, and then no services for the next 56 minutes.

We believe that it is essential for ACTION to undertake appropriate and adequate planning. This is necessary, not only to provide an optimal service at present, but also to enable the future implementation of the public transport initiatives detailed in the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

6. *ACTION be financed to enable it to have an ongoing planning function.*
7. *The data available from the electronic ticket system be analysed for planning of services.*

6.3.3 Passenger Information

Regardless of how good the bus services are, they are of little use to intending passengers who are unaware of the routes and times that the buses operate.

ACTION has a variable record in providing this passenger information. Paper timetables and route maps are of a high standard when available. However the timetables tend to be reprinted infrequently and often become out of date due to more frequent changes to service times, or where services are added or deleted. Network maps unfortunately suffer from the extremely complex route network on weekdays (and the need to consult a separate map on week nights and weekends); also their existence is poorly known among the population.

The ACTION Internet site is generally comprehensive and “user friendly”, as is the telephone inquiry line (although sometimes slow to answer). The SMS service is also helpful.

However, the provision of timetable information at bus stops is patchy at best. While some trunk routes, for example Northbourne Avenue between Civic and Dickson, are well catered for, there are many stops in the suburbs that lack this essential information. This situation is made worse by having a largely different route network on week nights and weekends.

LACK OF TIMETABLE INFORMATION ON ROUTE 14/314 FROM TUGGERANONG INTERCHANGE TO LANYON MARKETPLACE

This portion of the long 314 route serves the large suburb of Gordon. The stops also serve (in a counterclockwise direction) route 788 Xpresso on weekdays and route 913 at night and weekends, meaning that “inbound” passengers on these three routes board from stops in both the “inbound” and “outbound” directions. A count reveals that of the 19 stops in Gordon, only three “inbound” have timetable information, while there is only one “outbound”. Conversely, most stops still display stickers advertising the week night Flexibus service which was abolished in December 2006.

The standard of information at bus stops, where provided, also needs improvement. Typically only the route number and time of departure are given, with no indication of major intermediate stops, ultimate destination or any form of simple map or diagram. Eventually it might also become possible to have real-time information at major bus stops and on line.

In addition, there are many transport nodes in Canberra where bus routes pass close to each other, for example at medium size shopping centres. Timetable information (if provided at all) at these stops does not refer the intending passenger to other stops nearby which may offer an alternative route to their destination. As a result, prospective customers go away thinking there are no services available, when in fact alternative services are just a short walk away.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. *The program for the provision of detailed information specific to each bus stop be augmented to encompass all stops.*
9. *Bus stop specific information be expanded, where appropriate, to also include information about alternative bus services from nearby stops.*
10. *The current generally high standard of timetable brochures, system map, internet and SMS information should continue to be provided.*

6.3.4 Publicity

While detailed passenger information for existing patrons (routes and times) is essential, it needs to be complemented by more general publicity to raise awareness of bus services among potential patrons. As indicated in the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan (“Improving Public Transport”), “marketing of services to key niche markets, such as commuters, tertiary students and others will improve system utilisation at relatively low cost”.

In addition, there is scope for campaigns to raise public awareness of the role of public transport within the broader context of improving the environment, providing accessible travel for all in the community and so on.

RECOMMENDATION:

11. *A general advertising campaign be provided stressing the social and environmental advantages of Public Transport.*

6.4 PROVIDING GUIDANCE ON PRINCIPLES AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE SERVICE PLANNING

A key ingredient to future service planning is the devising of *Standards of Service*. These standards should be subject to public scrutiny and adequate consultation. (See section 6.1.2.8 above).

The higher level detail should be the responsibility of the ACT Government and should form the basis of the contract between the Government and ACTION to meet community needs and expectations. Elements should include but not be limited to:

- the existing long standing requirement for 90 per cent of the population to be located no more than 400 metres from a bus stop;
- providing services that will attract passengers who would otherwise drive, thereby reducing road congestion and offering environmental and health benefits; and
- meeting social service obligations to provide access to all sectors of the community.

The operational detail should be the responsibility of ACTION and should include but not be limited to:

- a route network that is not overly complex and minimises inconvenience to passengers in terms of journey time and the need to change buses;
- frequency of service that adequately reflects potential demand according to the time of day and day of the week;
- good passenger information delivered through printed and Internet timetables, telephone enquiries, timetable and route information at every stop, interactive SMS and mobile on-line enquiries, and real-time information at major stops and via on-line means (see section 6.3.3 above); and
- good, safe and comfortable buses accessible to all passengers. Contemporary standards require air-conditioning and comfortable seating. Nothing else will induce many people out of their cars.

The ACT Sustainable Transport Plan encompasses the use of standards on which to base planning and execution of public transport initiatives. For example, under “Improving Public Transport” the Plan notes the importance of progressively implementing accessible transport standards across the bus fleet.

Any service organisation, especially if dependant of a large number of staff, should guard against unreliability. Any unpredictable element will deter patronage, and hence needs to be guarded against by maintaining some reserve capacity. Reserve capacity also provides the ability to meet unexpected patronage demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 12. Thirty minute frequencies are essential on all local routes between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. supplemented by additional 700 series Xpresso routes.*

- 13. In the main, each residential suburb should be connected to the nearest town centre by at least one bus route operating every 30 minutes on weekdays during the day. That connection may be made by way of linking two or more suburbs together to form one route. In the case of heavily patronised routes, such as no. 38, the off-peak daytime frequency should be every 15 minutes.*

- 14. Evening services, operating at least hourly, should commence at 8 p.m..*

- 15. Weekend daytime services operate at least every 40 minutes.*

- 16. Where multiple services substantially overlap, for example, the 36 and the 39 routes, or Manuka to Civic, the timetables be arranged to provide equal frequency over the length of the common portion.*

- 17. Sufficient spare capacity should be available at all times to minimise the need for cancellation of services due to breakdowns and staff unavailability, and to provide extra services when overcrowding means that passengers are left behind.*

- 18. ACTION be allocated increased funding to facilitate the acquisition each year of air-conditioned, easy access buses fitted with fully-padded, bench-type seats.*

7. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ACTION Standards of Service be reviewed publicly, preferably by the Committee on Planning and Environment (para. 6.1.2.8).
2. The Network Review should be based on the Review of the Standards of Service.(para. 6.1.2.8).
3. That ACTION be funded to meet its Standards of Service (para. 6.1.2.8).
4. That all public costings of ACTION include an assessment of its social, health and environmental benefits (para. 6.1.2.8).
5. ACTION's Standards of Service reflect the ACT Sustainable Transport Plan (para. 6.3.1).
6. ACTION be financed to enable it to have an ongoing planning function (para. 6.3.2).
7. The data available from the electronic ticket system be analysed for planning of services (para. 6.3.2).
8. The program for the provision of detailed information specific to each bus stop be augmented to encompass all stops (para. 6.3.3).
9. Bus stop specific information be expanded, where appropriate, to also include information about alternative bus services from nearby stops (para. 6.3.3).
10. The current generally high standard of timetable brochures, system map, internet and SMS information should continue to be provided (para. 6.3.3).
11. A general advertising campaign be provided stressing the social and environmental advantages of Public Transport (para. 6.3.4).
12. Thirty minute frequencies are essential on all local routes between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. supplemented by additional 700 series Xpresso routes (para. 6.4).
13. In the main, each residential suburb should be connected to the nearest town centre by at least one bus route operating every 30 minutes on weekdays during the day. That connection may be made by way of linking two or more suburbs together to form one route. In the case of heavily patronised routes, such as no. 38, the off-peak daytime frequency should be every 15 minutes (para. 6.4).
14. Evening services, operating at least hourly, should commence at 8 p.m. (para. 6.4).
15. Weekend daytime services operate at least every 40 minutes (para. 6.4).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

16. Where multiple services substantially overlap, for example, the 36 and the 39 routes, or Manuka to Civic, the timetables be arranged to provide equal frequency over the length of the common portion (para. 6.4).
17. Sufficient spare capacity should be available at all times to minimise the need for cancellation of services due to breakdowns and staff unavailability, and to provide extra services when overcrowding means that passengers are left behind (para. 6.4).
18. ACTION be allocated increased funding to facilitate the acquisition each year of air-conditioned, easy access buses fitted with fully-padded, bench-type seats (para. 6.4).

CURRENT ACTION SERVICES FROM A PASSENGER PERSPECTIVE

CASE STUDIES

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1. Travel from Ainslie to Kambah Village and to Fyshwick
2. A Canberra Mother with a Two Year Old Child in Downer
3. Off-Peak Services in the Inner South and North Woden
4. Student at Australian National University
5. Student at University Of Canberra

1. TRAVEL FROM AINSLIE TO KAMBAH VILLAGE AND TO FYSHWICK

This passenger lives in Ainslie and is a “Senior”.

Travel from Ainslie to Kambah Village and Return at Night

Travel is from Ainslie to Kambah Village for dinner with friends in a restaurant, meeting at 7.30pm. On a weeknight, there are two alternatives: a 1 hour 25 minute trip, including waiting times between buses of 25 minutes, getting there 20 minutes early, or a 1 hour 5 minute trip, getting there 20 minutes late. On Saturday or Sunday only the first of these options is available. To get home on a weeknight or Saturday night, it is necessary to leave the restaurant very early (about 9.30 to 9.35) as the last connecting bus leaves Kambah village at 9.40pm. The trip home takes 1 hour and 30 minutes, including 45 minutes waiting time in Civic for the direct (937) service. The service the other way around the loop (936) which leaves Civic half an hour earlier, only gets to Ainslie shops 4 minutes earlier, and so is of little value. On Sunday night there is no service and so a lift from a friend or a taxi (very expensive) is required. The equivalent car journey from Ainslie to Kambah takes about half an hour.

Return Travel from Ainslie to Fyshwick - Weekday Daytime Off-Peak

The trip from Ainslie to Fyshwick takes 1 hour 15 minutes including a 30 minute wait in Civic (from an earlier route 38) because route 80 leaves 2 minutes before the later route 38 arrives. There is a minimum time in Fyshwick of 1 hour, because the route 80 runs hourly. The return trip takes 50 minutes because there is a connection with the 38 in Civic. Note that an

alternative, using the route 38 to link with route 83 in Kingston is not possible because there is no connection in either direction. Minimum overall time for the visit is three and a half hours, i.e. half a day. By car, this return trip can be conveniently made in a little over an hour.

2. A CANBERRA MOTHER WITH A TWO YEAR OLD CHILD IN DOWNER

This passenger works and uses childcare but currently does not have alternative private transport. The cuts to ACTION's off-peak services have forced her to curtail her activities.

Route 39 Watson to Civic

I used to catch the 39 that left Watson shops at 9:24, and it always seemed well patronised. Now there is an 8:50 and not another bus until 9:50, among other things this has made it almost impossible for me to go to my 10am appointments. More generally, the off peak 39 buses all reach Civic shortly after the hour (7 mins past according to the timetable) which, given a lot of appointments etc are on the hour, is annoying.

Route 48 to Belconnen

The 48 service has been cut way back to the point where it's fairly useless, this means that (except for work) I don't really bother trying to go to Belconnen any more (because if I have to go through Civic anyway I may as well just go to Civic). It also means that unless I get the timing right (difficult with a toddler and childcare drop-off, if I miss the 8:29 from Dickson there's not another 48 until 9:59 - an earlier bus is not an option as the childcare centre opens at 8am) that taking the bus to work takes ages as I need to go through Civic (from Downer to Bruce). The 80 also doesn't run that often and I have a bit of a walk to get to it.

Route 32 Connections in Civic with Routes 39 and 36

I've been doing a course which is held at Yarralumla starting at 10am. Fortuitously there is a 32 from Civic that gets me to Yarralumla on time. However the 39 (and 36) from Downer do not connect with the 32 (because they arrive shortly after the hour and the 32 leaves at 9:40), Coming back from Yarralumla I get to Civic around 1:10, the 39 to Downer has left Civic at 1:03 and the 36 at 1:06.

Weekend Bus Services

Since the new timetables came in I have actually not gone places in the weekend (Downer to Manuka, Downer to Evatt) because of having to keep changing buses and coordinate all the different routes and connections (and figure out which routes I need because all the numbers are different now), while travelling with a toddler, was too difficult. With a toddler plus associated paraphernalia (eg stroller) changing buses can be non-trivial.

Bus Connections and Circuitous Routes

Buses don't connect well (I had problems with this before the changes too) and some of the routes are really long and circuitous, which means travelling by bus takes way longer than it

needs to and acts as yet another disincentive for people to use public transport, eg the bus from Belconnen interchange to Evatt, which weaves all through McKellar. And the wonderfully circuitous 34. And no 48 in the weekend, so going anywhere in Belconnen (from Downer) takes ages.

Of course what is going to happen is that **we plan to get a car later this year, as getting around Canberra by bus/bike is no longer really feasible** and we are fortunate enough to have that option.

3. OFF-PEAK SERVICES IN THE INNER SOUTH AND NORTH WODEN

Services for workers at Parliament House and the Parliamentary Triangle

Parliament House has a large workforce and the building is staffed on a 24 hour, 7 day basis. As a result many (if not most) staff need to work shifts outside of the usual 'nine to five' time frame.

Off peak access to Parliament House from North Woden (Lyons and Curtin) is now non-existent with the elimination of all route 30 and 31 off-peak services. The supplementation of route 32 services under the December timetable is of no use as this route completely omits Parliament House and the other major employment and tourism nodes in the Parliamentary Triangle.

Fred, a senior Parliamentary Officer, works to a 1000 to 1800 working day. In the past, he caught the 0928 Curtin to Parliament House, Monday to Friday service, an approximately 16 minute run. The new timetable gives him two options:

(a) start his day half an hour earlier and take the last morning peak route 31 service departing Curtin Shops at 0851, getting him to Parliament House 30 minutes prior to when he wants (and needs) to be there and disrupting his morning schedule

(b) taking the first of the off-peak services out of Curtin, the 0952 route 32 service which arrives in Civic on Platform 9 at 1011, then transferring to one of the few remaining route services still serving Parliament House in off-peak;

- one option here is the 1012 route 34 leaving from Platform 2, not a realistic option given the tightness of the connection and the change in platform involved – even if the connection was guaranteed, it would still get Fred to work over 25 minutes later than he needs to be
- if he took the following route 34 service, his arrival time at work would be 55 minutes late
- the other main route alternative would be the route 39 service leaving Civic at 1107 which would inconveniently drop him at his workplace some 75 minutes after he is required to be there.

Clearly all of these alternatives are very unsatisfactory.

Tourism services to Parliament House and the Parliamentary Triangle

Parliament House is also a major tourist attraction. There have been very big cuts in service frequencies to Parliament House and other attractions in the Parliamentary Triangle such as the National Gallery, National Archives, National Library, Old Parliament House and Questacon. These institutions comprise the main tourism district of the National Capital; numerically they collectively account for the majority of tourism attractions.

Railway Station and Parliamentary Triangle Tourist Attractions

Route 39, which travels between Canberra Railway Station, Parliament House, Parliamentary Triangle, Civic and Watson has been eliminated entirely on weekends. The alternative service by route 80 links the railway station with Civic via Russell.

Visitors have rightly questioned why route 39 which links the railway station with the major tourist attractions in the Parliamentary triangle was done away with on weekends and replaced with route 80 which serves Russell, an employment centre largely devoid of employees on weekends and not generally considered a tourism draw card, nor conveniently located within walking distance to most of the Parliamentary Triangle tourist attractions.

The reduction in off peak frequency of route 39 from 40 minutes (not considered adequate in itself) to hourly in off peak has substantially reduced its value to potential tourists and locals alike and jeopardizes the longer term sustainability of the service; a minimum of 30 minute off peak frequency is required.

Weekday Off-peak Services in Curtin

Woden Valley has the oldest age profile in Canberra, resulting in residents being more reliant on public transport and increasingly so. In Curtin there have been substantial cuts to routes 30 and 31, such that there are no services in most of the weekday off-peak, offset by only modest increases in route 32. The effect is a 75 per cent reduction in Curtin services for most of the off-peak with some parts of the suburb having no services at all in off peak.

Parts of Curtin are not served by route 32 nor does it provide a satisfactory off-peak alternative to routes 30 and 31 as it omits the necessary links between the Woden Valley, the Parliament and the Parliamentary Triangle. In addition, route 32 does not serve major employment nodes and tourism attractions in Barton, Parkes and the southern parts of the Parliamentary Triangle. Also, suburbs on the northside including Kaleen and Giralang are affected by the cuts to routes 30 and 31.

An illustration of the cuts to weekday services in Curtin by routes 30, 31 and 32 is provided below:

Impact of Skeleton Timetable on ACTION Services linking Lyons and Curtin and inner Southern Suburbs to the Parliamentary Triangle and Civic

Notes: Services in *italics* are those which are in the new skeleton timetable from 4 December 2006
 Services in **bold and shaded** are former services which have been eliminated.

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND DISTRICTS SERVED - WEEKDAYS

Depart Woden	Route No.	
Time zone: 0600 – 0800 (100% service frequency retained)		
<i>0627</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
<i>0650</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
<i>0701</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
<i>0721</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
<i>0731</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
<i>0744</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
<i>0757</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
Time zone: 0800 – 1000 (43% cut in frequency of services)		
<i>0809</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
<i>0831</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
<i>0844</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
0903	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
0921	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
<i>0941</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
0943	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
Time zone: 1000 – 1200 (75% cut in frequency of services)		
1001	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
1023	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
1041	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
<i>1041</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1103	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
1121	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
<i>1141</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1143	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
Time zone: 1200 – 1400 (75% cut in frequency of services)		
1201	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
1223	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
1241	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
<i>1241</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1304	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell
1321	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
<i>1341</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1343	30	Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell

Time zone: 1400 – 1600 (14% cut in frequency of services)		
1401	31	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes
1423	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1440	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
1500	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1514	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
1532	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1544	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
Time zone:1600 – 1800 (100% service frequency retained)		
1603	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1614	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
1630	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1647	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
1700	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1714	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
1730	30	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Parliament House (State Circle), Barton, Russell</i>
1741	31	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Parliament House, Barton, Parkes</i>
Time zone: 1800 – 2000 (25% cut in frequency of services)		
1814	32	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1839	32	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>
1907	32	Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave
1939	32	<i>Curtin, Deakin, Yarralumla, Commonwealth Ave</i>

4. STUDENT AT AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

I am a student at the ANU. I own a car but I rarely use it, preferring to walk or take the bus. In February I had a daytime appointment at Weston. Before December I would have taken the bus, in spite of the roundabout route. On this occasion I discovered that the new timetable was so inconvenient that I would have to use my car. As a consequence I drove my car to and from the University in the morning and afternoon peaks, adding to peak hour congestion near the University and occupying scarce University parking.

5. STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

My daughter lives in Conder and attends UC as a full time student. She occasionally has access to our family car but usually catches the bus. She appreciates the low cost of bus travel in being able to use a school term ticket.

However the reduction in off-peak service frequency since December 2006 has inconvenienced her considerably. Most UC classes commence on the half hour and last year she was typically able to catch a route 313 bus in Conder about 90 minutes before the start of a class. With travel time of about 70-75 minutes this was a long journey but manageable. A 30 minute frequency in the off-peak provided flexibility if she needed to arrive earlier before a class.

Under the current timetable in the off-peak there is a 60 minute frequency and the times have changed. Consequently she now has to leave Conder 110 minutes before a class and arrive at UC with 40 minutes to spare. The 313, being an Intertown route, also suffers from delays and overcrowding during the off-peak as has been documented in the media.