



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

File No: 04/109

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA
Chair
ACT Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

Dear Mr Gentleman

INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES

Thank you for the opportunity of providing a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into ACTION Buses.

It is noted that the Terms of Reference mostly focus on the role and performance of ACTION as the service provider for bus services in the ACT in meeting community needs. The National Capital Authority (NCA) submission primarily relates to identifying a set of principles, actions, and targets which should be considered in meeting the Inquiry's brief.

The NCA submission does not address the performance of ACTION as the service provider for public transport in Canberra.

National Capital Plan

The *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (the Act) prescribes the matters to be covered in National Capital Plan. This includes "general policies for land use, and for the planning of national and arterial road systems throughout the Territory". In accordance with the Act, the Plan includes the 'General Policy Plan – Metropolitan Canberra' which governs the metropolitan structure of Canberra.

Chapter 6 of the Plan includes principles, policies and standards for transport:

'6.2 Principle for Transport

Transport planning and provision will:

- *reserve a route for the development of a public transport service to link major employment nodes. As far as practicable the service will be segregated from other transport systems and will operate with priority of right-of-way*
- *incorporate nationally recognised practices and standards consistent with the role and function of each road, or additional standards set out for the Designated Areas of this Plan.*

6.3 Policies and Standards for Transport

(a) The National and Arterial Roads System will:

- *generally not provide frontage access to development except where such access will meet appropriate design standards and road safety needs*
- *generally intersect with the local road network through distributor roads.*

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- (b) *A corridor between Civic, the town centres and major employment nodes, suitable for priority or segregated right-of-way for use by public transport services will be reserved against a possible future need to develop a system of inter town and express routes suitable for buses or other technologies as appropriate.*
- (c) *Transport strategies should promote the convenience and efficiency of public transport use.*
- (d) *The final alignment of proposed arterial roads shall be subject to consultation with the Authority and to a determination by the Authority that proposals are not inconsistent with the Plan.'*

Metropolitan Structure

The Plan maintains the 'Y' plan as the metropolitan structure. The 'Y' plan provides for a linear arrangement of towns, each separated hills and ridges or open space; networks of freeways in the form of a ladder, with peripheral parkways forming the uprights. The Plan also reserves a linear inter-town public transport spine (IPT) in the shape of a 'Y' which connects the town centres (containing employment, retail, education and community uses and higher density residential uses).

This urban structure is ideally suited to public transport in that it clusters major trip attractors into nodes (or centres) and locates these in a linear arrangement which can be efficiently and economically served by public transport.

The NCA notes with the submission by Dr Paul Mees which refers to the recent HiTrans best practice guide *Development of principles and strategies for introducing high quality public transport in medium sized cities and regions*. The NCA concurs that the key principles for an integrated network for a dispersed settlements include:

- A single agency in charge of the network;
- A frequent service at all times;
- A simple, legible and stable route structure;
- Provide a limited number of direct routes relying on transfers/interchange to allow for increased frequencies and lower costs; and
- High quality passenger transfer/interchanges and coordinated timetables and fares.

These foundations are evident in the metropolitan plan and should guide the ACT Government and ACTION in enhancing the service.

Griffin Legacy Amendments

On 30 November 2007 the Griffin Legacy amendments to the Plan were approved. While the amendments are predicated on continuing commitment to completing the peripheral parkways and City by-pass routes they also reinforce the intended role of Griffin's main avenues as multi-use boulevards. They are intended to have the following functions and character:

- They were linear corridors of higher density and mixed use development connecting nodes of activity;
- They had a processional role carrying relatively slow moving traffic, the highest volumes of pedestrian traffic and main public transport routes (street cars/trams);
- Their general radial and triangulated pattern connected lower density neighbourhoods to centres of activity while protecting these neighbourhoods from through traffic.
- They were broad parkways that connected the life of the city to the landscape. Their 60 metre width is comparable to the greatest international examples of boulevards. The width accommodates multiple avenues of trees, generous side walks, vehicular traffic and transit.

The major finding of the Griffin Legacy project is that this original vision is relevant to the 21st century Canberra and provides a model for a sustainable city with compact urban form, transit orientation and a more walkable and diverse city. As the city matures consolidation along the main avenues and provision of transit within a right-of-way will reinforce their intended role in the city's structure. Currently the dominant role of the main avenues is for efficient and frictionless traffic movement. The completion of the peripheral parkway network (that forms part Canberra's metropolitan plan) will allow the main avenues to mature in the way Griffin intended.

Targets

The NCA generally supports the 2004 Sustainable Transport Plan and the targets set within the plan as a vital initiative which together with the Canberra Spatial Plan provides a policy framework to guide land release programs and infrastructure programs which have short, medium and long term horizons. However, targets need to be carefully set with these programs in mind and within a budgetary context.

To be truly effective and to establish serious and credible suite of policies and targets need to sit within an overarching framework and be integrated with a spatial plan. The approach taken in the Canberra Plan goes some way in achieving this however more needs to be done. Within this framework an urban development program and an infrastructure program which are set within a budgetary context are critical elements of a successful transport plan.

The 2004 Sustainable Transport Plan appears to be focussed on transport with the crucial relationship with the timing and location of urban development, urban form and transport infrastructure is not adequately integrated. Once these factors are identified the costs and benefits of achieving these targets can be evaluated and the crucial allocation of funds can be programmed within a budget context. In other words both the Government and the community are aware of the costs and benefits (direct and indirect) of achieving the targets. Such a program would ideally have a twenty year time frame.

Any target set in isolation of these factors could be criticised as arbitrary. Benchmarking has an important role in establishing targets and provides useful data to compare ACT with other states in terms of mode split, travel speed, congestion etc. It would be useful to benchmark with other appropriate international medium sized cities.

Actions

Actions which should be considered to assist in delivering improved services for public transport include:

Integrated transport, urban development infrastructure program – this will establish the timing and location of urban development/redevelopment and the transport infrastructure required to serve this development over the short, medium and long term.

Transit oriented development - adjacent or within existing centres and in key locations along the IPT route. Through techniques such as value capture improvements to public transport, bicycle paths etc can be made.

Bus priority/HOV along the IPT routes - in principle this should not be implemented by adding lanes as it sends the wrong signal and encourages more dispersed settlement patterns.

New and improved passenger transfer facilities – focusing on civic and town centre interchanges (with real time information) as well as providing new facilities on IPT routes. An example is on Adelaide Avenue near Deakin local centre (where NCA has amended planning policies to increase

densities adjacent the IPT route) where it would be appropriate to provide a new stop in the central median adjacent Hopetoun Circuit

Park and ride – identify opportunities for new park and ride facilities which are combined with other services and facilities. Locations such as the town centres as well as other on the IPT route should be considered (e.g. Mitchell, Bruce, Deakin, Mawson, and Erindale). This should be consideration as part of planning for Molonglo.

City Circulator – consider a free circulator within the city (e.g. CATS service in Perth and Fremantle). This could be a frequent service routed around London Circuit.

New transit technologies - the NCA supports the ongoing investigation of new transit technologies.

Should you have any further queries, please contact me directly on 6272 2966.

Yours faithfully

Ian Wood-Bradley
Planning and Urban Design

24 July 2007