



The People for People over 50

**Submission
Number 07 – 04**

**ACT Legislative Assembly
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment**

ACTION BUSES AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

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'Public Transport Meeting Community Needs'

Key Issues

Recent Performance – COTA conducted a major survey of older people that found significant gaps in the transport services available to older people. This was prior to the reduction and rescheduling of ACTION services.

Private Transport – The personal motor vehicle remains the principle mode of transport for older people in the ACT. Over 80% drive once a week or more and 25% are passengers in their own vehicle. The design of Canberra and limited alternatives make the ability to drive and the use of a motor vehicle critical for mobility.

Public Transport needs– Establishing effective alternative transport measures for seniors, and other groups such as young people and those with a disability, is necessary in order to meet the needs of the community. Effective public transport and alternate approaches are required in order to ensure those unable or less willing to drive can access medical and social requirements, as well as, the goods and services required for normal living.

Servicing Community Needs – in a little over a decade, older people will make up almost one quarter of the people living in Canberra. Thus, from this perspective it is extremely important that broad community transport needs are met, as the broad community impact of any deficiencies will be of import to older people.

Community Perspective – From a community perspective there are a number of important reasons, other than the personal need for transport, why it is critical to provide effective transport alternatives to the private vehicle. In addition, there are a number of more general reasons such as environmental and global warning.

Road Safety – From a road safety perspective it is important that effective transport options are available in order to facilitate the process of retiring from driving.

- To facilitate this process, it is recommended that Seniors Card concessions are offered on ACTION services at all times, without restriction

Social Isolation – A lack of transport options impacts adversely on those unable or unwilling to use private transport and this is a prime contributor to social isolation. Inadequate transport options has both a broad impact on the quality of life on many and a much more significant impact on those who become socially isolated

Community Responsibility – Road safety and social inclusions are not primary responsibilities of ACTION. These community obligations should be viewed as the responsibility of the broader community and be funded accordingly.

ACTION - is currently the primary source of alternate transport. However, it is not the only form of community transport. ACTION is vitally important but should not be seen as providing a solution to every transport issue. Effective community transport, taxi's and pedestrian systems are required. There is also the opportunity to supplement with new and innovative systems.

Strategy for the Future – Older people are generally concerned that the current programs and plans set the basis for systems that are appropriate in the future. Consequently, current decisions concerning ACTION need to be part of a longer-term sustainable transport strategy. Thus a long term agreed transport strategy for the ACT is required. Policies and programs need to be consistent with this strategy and performance measured relative to it.

“Public transport meeting community needs”

COTA (ACT) welcomes the opportunity to identify, and comment on what we consider to be priority transport issues for older people in Canberra.

COTA (ACT) is Canberra's peak organisation run by and for all older people. It is an independent consumer organisation concerned with advocacy, policy development and analysis, research, project management and information dissemination. Its work is to protect and promote the well being of all older people.

BACKGROUND

COTA has been involved in transport and road safety issues for many years with programs and publications in the areas of older driver training, retiring from driving and scooters. Two areas of transport related research have been our focus in recent times.

The first is the *Older Person Road Safety Needs Analysis*. This work involved a survey of around five percent of older people. In addition, a number of focus groups and other consultation were undertaken. In total, more than 1600 older people contributed to this effort. The full report is available at www.cota-act.org.au. Sections on transport options, needs analysis and keeping seniors mobile are most likely to be relevant to this inquiry. These are at Attachment 1.

It is important to remember that this information was collected when ACTION provided off-peak services more frequently than once per hour.

The second effort by COTA was to work with the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing to conduct community consultations on Seniors and Transport Needs. COTA has assisted this effort and is waiting until MACA finalise their report.

The consultations occurred around the time of the ACTION scheduling changes and resulted in COTA receiving a large number of phone calls outlining concerns and problems.

Given that the ACT's population is ageing faster than any other Australian jurisdiction, it is timely to review the effectiveness of current transport options, identify the transport needs of older people and also to establish systems to meet evolving transport requirements. It is hoped that this inquiry will provide longer-term benefit to the ACT community.

Transport Comparisons

COTA is interested in the study of transport options used in other parts of Australia. In our focus groups and discussions with older people, many have mentioned the systems used in other cities. An example of a transport system from every other capital has been provided at some time or another. Perth has its city bus service, the busway in Adelaide, Melbourne's trams, the monorail in Sydney, the Bus system in central Brisbane and the Arafura Taxis in Darwin are some examples quoted.

These examples have generally been used in the context of developing transport systems that will meet the needs of our community for some time to come. There is general recognition that the current level of dependence on the private vehicle is not sustainable from the perspective of both the increasing population and the larger number of older people. Future planning, parking and environmental factors have also been raised as concerns.

The important issue is not so much the technical capacity of the alternate systems but the ability to meet the attributes of Canberra and the needs of this community. This applies to both the immediate and particularly the foreseeable future.

Attachment 2 contains a note that was provided to us by a senior. It has been discussed by a number of groups and has some intuitive appeal. What underlines this note is the varying transport needs within our community. A core or backbone of frequent and fast transport, hopefully faster than the private vehicle, is needed in order to cater for peak flows and induce people from their cars. At the same time more responsive and flexible options are required to meet individual needs.

While we do not have the resources or expertise to undertake extensive analysis of options, we are particularly interested in improving both the service for older people and the general community benefits.

COTA Report

For COTA, the *Older person Road Safety Needs Analysis for the ACT* is important from a number of perspectives:

1. COTA believes that research is integral to good policy development. So we are pleased to be able to use it in relation to broader transport issues.
2. This report is based on a major survey, a series of focus groups and other research.
3. The survey aspect of this work draws together the input of a particularly large number of people
 - a. Actually 5% of people over sixty, in the ACT provided input.
 - b. These people provided a large mass of information –the questionnaire sought responses to 140 questions.
 - c. The potential was for over 200 000 information responses from older people.

Despite the time taken on this work, the results have proved relevant. Transport issues generally are critical in shaping our community and determining the degree to which future requirements are met.

We will briefly attempted to summarise issues from the report that relate to this inquiry. Attachment 1 contains a number of sections of the report that relate to ACTION. These extracts have been consolidated to facilitate your examination of this substantial report.

The private motor vehicle is the prime form of transport and walking is the second most popular transport option for older people in Canberra. However, ACTION is the main focus of public transport. Taxis, community transport and other public transport tend to be much more limited and target particular segments.

The survey responses from older people were obtained during 2005 and the consultation phase extended until early 2006. At this time ACTION was generally viewed as providing an effective service, particularly in the geographic 'core' areas of Woden, Inner South and Inner North Canberra. However, even then the nature and level of services outside the 'central' areas were frequently considered unsatisfactory. This was particularly the case in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin.

The telephone, focus groups and other feedback, since late 2006, is that many of the previous problems of the outer areas are now being experienced in the 'central' areas of Canberra. The nature and level of services are not inducing people to use ACTION and are having a detrimental impact on the social and everyday life of older people.

The study also revealed that ACTION could play an important role in the process of retiring from driving. It also indicated that older people who have had experience using ACTION buses are better equipped to make the transition from private vehicles to public transport. Facilitating this process is likely to be of increasing importance in the short to medium term when the above 85-year group will be the most rapidly expanding section of the community.

This point also reinforces the community need for easy access buses and the broader importance of the general adoption of easy access buses. They are one element in allowing many older and less mobile people to continue to live independently and to be engaged within the community for as long as possible.

Conclusion

ACTION is currently the key public transport provider within the ACT but there are also other important providers. The key issue is that the overall public transport system provides both timely and flexible transport options. These requirements are expected to increase rapidly during the coming decade.

In addition to direct transport outcomes, an effective public transport system benefits older people and the community through facilitating the transfer of older drivers to public transport, improving road safety and reducing social isolation. Either the transport provider or public transport should not solely finance these community benefits. The broader community should support them as Budget items.

Significant problems are currently being experienced, as many older people are not able to meet their needs with public transport. While those consulted wanted these issues addressed, there was also a high level of concern that the transport system should evolve to meet the needs of the next generation. It is recognized that this will require effective planning and considerable investment.

As promised some random thoughts.

- Given the layout of Canberra it is hard to envisage Action ever making a profit
- Brisbane is a bit like Canberra in that it has a lot of open space between many of the outer suburbs. They have established "busways"- dedicated tracks/roads usually with no traffic lights- that permit high-speed travel. Have they been considered at least for inter centre services?
- The auto-barn in Adelaide provides a high-speed bus service from CBD to Tea tree Gully. There are some pick up points along the special track to which feeder buses call and I think parking areas for commuters. Has such a system been looked at?
- Bus lanes do not solve the problem of providing fast services because of traffic lights. The inter centre service whether light rail, buses or auto barn if it is to be fast and dependable needs its own track or road.
- Has consideration been given to providing parking areas at say mid-way points on the inter centre route?
- What about regular feeder services from suburbs like Kambah to mid points? These would probably require small buses
- Is there scope for more special buses to major tourist venues? For example to Gallery & National Library or to War Memorial from Civic or Woden.

Nothing profound, which may prove I don't understand the problem.

Good luck
Angus

OLDER PERSONS ROAD SAFETY NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE ACT

For



NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust

By



**Connecting Over 50s Throughout
Australia**

Sections of the report for consideration

Page 63 - Background

Older Public Transport Patrons

The recent study, which in part examined the transport patterns of older ACT citizens, showed buses were the third most popular mode of transport after driving and walking.¹ Use of taxis (both full fare and subsidised) and community transport services were also utilised but by only a small number of survey respondents. An interesting finding in this study was the fact that women utilised these public transport services much more frequently than men. Reasons for this difference in usage patterns could not be determined from the data. However, looking across all transport forms it appears that men prefer more independent means of transport such as using their own vehicle, a motorised scooter or bicycle. Women were more likely to utilise lifts with family and friends and a range of public and community transport options. Further confirmation and study of this apparent gender bias may identify the barriers to men using public transport and point to solutions to encourage and support greater use of these options.

Although outside the time parameters for this project, in June 1998 the Council on the Ageing (COTA) conducted a survey of its members on transport issues. In terms of public transport, respondents indicated “significant dissatisfaction” with ACTION services and routes, and access to the buses (step height).

With input from COTA and a range of other stakeholders, the ACT Government, in May 2000 developed and published an Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT. This plan was updated in 2003 to create the *Updated Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT 2004-07*. This update incorporated evaluation of the initial plan and again consulted widely with stakeholders. In working to overcome key barriers to public transport use, the focus has been on improving physical access to transport vehicles and infrastructure. Although the focus of this plan is to improve access to services for people with disabilities, such access and mobility issues also echo the difficulties faced, and raised, by older public transport users. The key objectives of the Updated Plan include:

¹ Booklet Evaluation Project Report on *Retiring from Driving*, COTA National Seniors ACT, 2004

For Buses & Coaches:

- ◆ ACTION will continue to roll out new easy access buses. The goal is for one quarter of its fleet to be compliant by 2007. The ACTION fleet currently has over 30 easy access buses in operation. These buses are equipped with an extendable ramp, a wide front entrance and space in the bus to accommodate wheelchairs and prams.
- ◆ From November 2003 regional bus services are planning and providing services which are wheelchair accessible and include improved mobility and safety features.
- ◆ The relocation of bus interchanges in Woden and Belconnen (in progress) and all future interchanges will include measures to meet Disability Transport Standards.
- ◆ Funding for a study into the introduction of “real time” information to interchanges and major bus stops, including assessing the provision of information in various formats.

For Taxis

- ◆ The re-designed Taxi Subsidy Scheme will be evaluated.
- ◆ Funding in the current budget year allowed for increases to subsidies, full coverage of the “lift fee” for wheelchairs and an information program to inform other people who may be eligible for the scheme. (Note: 80% of scheme members are over the age of 60.)
- ◆ Improving WAT (wheelchair accessible taxis) service standards.

Given the strong reliance on private motor vehicles for travel around Canberra, older people may not be experienced public transport users and thus lack familiarity with fares, routes, timetables and travel protocols (eg. ticketing machines, flagging a bus or taxi, selecting stops) which may deter their use of these forms of transport.

Buses are recognised as the safest form of travel.² Combine this knowledge with the increased vulnerability of older road users and there is compelling argument for focusing research on the motivators and disincentives for our older citizens to more frequently utilise buses, for both local and distance travel.

Whilst ACTION undertakes regular surveys of customer satisfaction, and in this assesses both the barriers and motivators to using buses, it does not specifically examine the issues relating to older bus patrons. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that the three most commonly cited incentives for using buses more regularly are more direct bus routes (31%), more regular services (30%) and loss of current transport (18%). The two key barriers were the perceived inconvenience and having access to a car.

² Road Safety in Australian – A Publication Commemorating World Health Day 2004, ATSB

Page 101 – Survey Outcomes

When asked to indicate the use of their own vehicle as a passenger, 49.3% (n=721) of respondents answered this segment of the question.

Own Vehicle as the Passenger	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	222	30.8%	15.2%
1-per-Week	121	16.8%	8.3%
1-per-Month	29	4.0%	2.0%
Irregularly	192	26.6%	13.2%
Never	157	21.8%	10.8%
No-Response	739		50.6%

Figure 24 – Frequency of Use – Own Vehicle as Passenger

Passengers in their own vehicle at least once a month totaled 372 or 25.5% of all respondents; including 15.2% (n=222) of respondents who were a passenger in their own vehicle 3 or more times per week. Most passengers in their vehicle once a month or more also indicated that they had a driver's license (86.5%, n=192). Some 208 or 93.7% of those who were a passenger in their own vehicle 3 or more times per week also lived with a spouse or partner. Two-thirds of these are female (66.8%, n=139) compared to one-third male (33.2%, n=69). In couple relationships, women are twice as likely to be the passenger.

When asked to indicate frequency of travel with family or friends as a passenger 51.6% (n=754) of respondents answered this segment of the question.

Travel with Family & Friends	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	70	9.3%	4.8%
1-per-Week	102	13.5%	7.0%
1-per-Month	63	8.4%	4.3%
Irregularly	449	59.5%	30.8%
Never	70	9.3%	4.8%
No-Response	706		48.4%

Figure 25 – Frequency of Use – Travel with Family & Friends

As shown in Figure 25, almost half of respondents, 46.9% (n=684), indicated that they do use family and friends for transport, only 16.1% (n=235) indicated that they do it regularly – 1-per-month or more. Of those who use family and friends regularly, 62.6% (n=147) also indicated that they drove their own car 3 or more times per week.

47.1% (n=687) of respondents answered the section on the use of taxis as full-fare customers. Only 2.7% (n=39) of all survey respondents indicated that they regularly used Taxis and paid the full fare, see Figure 26.

Travel using Taxis paying Full Fare	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	3	0.4%	0.2%
1-per-Week	13	1.9%	0.9%
1-per-Month	23	3.3%	1.6%
Irregularly	345	50.2%	23.6%
Never	303	44.1%	20.8%
No-Response	773		52.9%

Figure 26 – Frequency of Use – Travel in Taxis Paying Full Fare

About one quarter (23.6%, n=345) of respondents use taxis irregularly. Interestingly, the overall regular use does not increase for people who use the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (see Figure 27). The reasons seem to relate to the cost and this will be analysed when we examine responses to questions 27-33, see section 4.5 Transport Options.

40.0% (n=584) of respondents answered the question about use of subsidised taxi services. .

Travel using Taxis with Subsidy	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	12	2.1%	0.8%
1-per-Week	17	2.9%	1.2%
1-per-Month	9	1.5%	0.6%
Irregularly	63	10.8%	4.3%
Never	483	82.7%	33.1%
No-Response	876		60.0%

Figure 27 – Frequency of Use – Travel in Taxis Utilising Subsidy

Figure 27 shows that only a small number of people use taxis regularly even when they have access to the subsidy scheme, although interestingly there is a slight increase in the number using a taxi 3 or more times per week when they have the subsidy available.

Overall, there appears to be no linkage between access to a vehicle, or possession of a license and use of taxis. It could be useful to further investigate the reasons for use (and non-use) of taxis by older people.

Almost two-thirds of respondents, 63.0% (n=920) completed the section on ACTION buses.

Travel using ACTION Buses	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	90	9.8%	6.2%
1-per-Week	71	7.7%	4.9%
1-per-Month	75	8.2%	5.1%
Irregularly	419	45.5%	28.7%
Never	265	28.8%	18.2%
No-Response	540		37.0%

Figure 28 – Frequency of Use – Travel on ACTION Buses

Almost half the people, 44.9% (n=655), use ACTION buses. However, the number of people using buses regularly (16.2%, n=236) is similar to the number of people who regularly use transport provided by family and friends. The Sustainable Transport Plan³ suggested that in 2001 only 6.9% of people used buses as their primary method of travel to work. While not directly related, 6.2% of older people use buses 3 or more times per week indicating that the usage pattern of younger and older Canberrans is

³ Sustainable Transport for the ACT An Issues Paper, Planning and Land Management, June 2003

possibly similar. This is of some concern given that we would expect that older Canberrans might be more likely to use buses and that usage would increase as people reduce their driving or give up their licenses.

One-third, 33.3% of those who do not have a car use buses 3 or more times per week (see Figure 33) compared with 3.0% of those with a car.

Information on the Community Transport Services was completed by 41.0% (n=598) of respondents.

Travel using Community Service Transport	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	1	0.2%	0.1%
1-per-Week	14	2.3%	1.0%
Irregularly	29	4.8%	2.0%
Never	554	92.6%	37.9%
No-Response	862		59.0%

Figure 29 – Frequency of Use – Travel using Community Service Transport

Only small numbers of people use Community Service Transport options; with 1.1% (n=15) of people indicating that they use it regularly and a further 2.0% (n=29) irregularly (see Figure 29).

When asked to indicate frequency of travel using a motorised scooter 40.1% (n=588) of respondents answered this segment of the questionnaire.

Travel by Motorised Scooter	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	6	1.0%	0.4%
1-per-Week	4	0.7%	0.3%
Irregularly	5	0.9%	0.3%
Never	573	97.4%	39.2%
No-Response	872		59.7%

Figure 30 – Frequency of Use – Travel using Motorised Scooter

As indicated in Figure 30, only small numbers (0.7%, n=10) of respondents regularly use a motorised scooter as a mode of transport. This is from a total of 15 users of motorised scooters. About half, 46.7% (n=7), of those who use a scooter also have access to a car. Of the six people who use a scooter “3-or-more-per-week”, only 1 has a license to drive. Similarly, only one of the four “1-per-week” scooter users has a license to drive. All five (5) of those who use a scooter “Irregularly” retain a license to drive.

Responses on bicycle use were provided by 41.9% (n=612) of respondents.

Travel by Bicycle	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	29	4.7%	2.0%
1-per-Week	21	3.4%	1.4%
1-per-Month	8	1.3%	0.5%
Irregularly	78	12.7%	5.3%
Never	476	77.8%	32.6%
No-Response	848		58.1%

Figure 31 – Frequency of Use – Travel using a Bicycle

More people indicated that they used a bicycle as a mode of transport regularly (3.9%, n=58) than those using a taxi regularly (full fare). Of the 58 people who use a bicycle regularly only 19 % (n=11) are female compared to 81% (n=47) male.

66.2% (n=967) of respondents answered the question about walking as a form of travel.

Travel by Walking	Total	% Of Respondents to this sub-question	% Of All Survey Respondents
3-or-more-per-Week	547	56.6%	37.5%
1-per-Week	148	15.3%	10.1%
1-per-Month	31	3.2%	2.1%
Irregularly	182	18.8%	12.5%
Never	59	6.1%	4.0%
No-Response	493		33.8%

Figure 32 – Frequency of Use – Travel using Walking

With 37.5% (n=547) of respondents indicating that they walk 3 or more times per week, walking as a regular mode of transport is second only to driving their own vehicle. Overall 62.2% (n=908) of all respondents indicated that they walk as a mode of transport at some time. Given the high risk of injury as a pedestrian, this makes pedestrian issues a major road safety concern.

The transport experience of those without access to a motor vehicle is interesting. Ninety (90) people identified that they did not have a vehicle (figure 33).

Transport Mode	Number using regularly	Percentage using regularly
ACTION Buses	43	47.8%
Walking	38	42.2%
Family and friends	26	28.9%
Taxis (subsidy scheme)	16	17.8%
Taxis (full fare paid)	11	12.2%
Community Service Transport	6	6.7%
Motorised Scooter	5	5.6%
Own Vehicle (as passenger)	4	4.4%
Bicycle	3	3.3%
Own Vehicle (as driver/rider)	2	2.2%

Figure 33 – Transport Usage when no Car Available

The importance of ACTION as a principle mode of transport is clear and for independent travel over any distance its importance cannot be understated. While walking is also important, it is difficult to believe that it is being used for any purpose other than short, close to home, journeys. Nearly one third rely on family and friends for some of their regular transport needs.

Issues – Transport Experience

As we might expect, the car remains the principle mode of transport and driver safety and the contribution of passengers to driving safety must remain a key target of road safety measures.

In addition, walking is highly rated and given that 25% of all road fatalities for those aged 65 and over are pedestrians, greater attention to road safety messages and strategies for older pedestrians is needed.

From a road safety aspect, the total number of journeys per month (see Figure 22) is an important measure of the relative importance of any one category of transport and therefore the targeting of the road safety dollars. Consider that extrapolating this response to the total ACT population aged 65 and over suggests that older drivers make around 280,000 journeys per month. Similarly, older pedestrians make over 145,000 journeys per month.

The total number of journeys for less used methods with smaller numbers involved must also be considered. For example, while in this survey, only 10 respondents indicated use of a motorised scooter at least once per week this equates to more than 1830 journeys per month for this population overall. Similarly, this age group makes over 9000 bicycle journeys each month.

Page 137 - Transport Options

A series of questions were asked to identify factors influencing choices relating to types of transport used.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Driven my Own Vehicle	1250	85.6%
Often been a passenger in own vehicle	534	36.6%
Often been a passenger with family/friends	766	52.5%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	457	31.3%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	105	7.2%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi	18	1.2%
ACTION Buses	697	47.7%
Community Transport Services	67	4.6%
Motorised Scooter	17	1.2%
Bicycle	159	10.9%

Figure 76 – Transport Options Used in the Last Five Years

Figure 76 shows the usage of transport options within the last five years. The majority (85.6%, n=1250) has driven their own vehicle in the last five years, while 89.1% (n=1300) have often been a passenger either in their own vehicle or with family and friends.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Drive my Own Vehicle	772	52.9%
Be a passenger in own vehicle	438	30.0%
Be a passenger with family/friends	710	48.6%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	284	19.5%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	157	10.8%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	14	1.0%
ACTION Buses	692	47.4%
Community Transport Services	107	7.3%
Motorised Scooter	25	1.7%
Bicycle	81	5.5%
Walking as a major means of transport	246	16.8%

Figure 77 – Transport Options that might be used more in next Five Years

Figure 77 shows the transport options people think they may make more use of in the next five years. While 85.6% of respondents have driven their own vehicle in the last 5 years, 52.9% believe they will use the car more. Half of all respondents expect to be driving more in the next 5 years.

Interestingly, 16.8% (n=246) of respondents indicate that they expect to walk more as a major means of transport. Yet previously only 49 people had indicated that they

currently walk as their main mode of transport and 44.5% of respondents considered their health and fitness as a factor of concern in relation to them being a pedestrian! While these factors are not directly related, the differences appear incongruent. Perhaps this suggests an unrealistic expectation about walking in the future.

Less people consider that they may be a passenger in a vehicle in the future (78.6%) than indicated that they had been in the previous five years (89.1%).

Previous experience of a transport option may be a significant factor in future expectations of usage. Consider that 77.8% (n=542) of those who indicated that they might use ACTION buses more in the next five years had already indicated that they had used ACTION in the previous five years. Only 22% of people who had not used a bus in the past five years suggested that they might use this transport in the future.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Driving my Own Vehicle	170	11.6%
Be a passenger in own vehicle	37	2.5%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	940	64.4%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	149	10.2%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	50	3.4%
ACTION Buses	44	3.0%
Community Transport Services	34	2.3%
Motorised Scooter	35	2.4%
Bicycle	32	2.2%

Figure 78 – Transport Options avoided or minimised due to cost.

Figure 78 shows the transport options avoided or minimised due to cost. The significant areas are the use of Taxis (64.4%, n= 940) and Taxis with subsidy (10.2%, n=149) along with the motor vehicle (11.6%, n=170). While it has been argued that for many it may be economic to dispose of the private vehicle and substitute taxis, this result indicates very strong resistance to increased dependence on taxis. In addition, the number avoiding use of taxis even for those with a subsidy voucher is significant. This is particularly interesting given that only those meeting strict criteria are entitled to taxi subsidies.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Driving my Own Vehicle	1228	84.1%
Being a passenger in own vehicle	531	36.4%
Being a passenger with family/friends	739	50.6%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	243	16.6%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	86	5.9%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	9	0.6%
ACTION Buses	503	34.5%
Community Transport Services	44	3.0%
Motorised Scooter	12	0.8%

Bicycle	93	6.4%
Walking as a means of transport	401	27.5%

Figure 79 – Transport Options found to be Convenient

Figure 79 shows the transport options which people find convenient. As we might expect, the motor vehicle is considered the most convenient with 84.1% (n=1228) of respondents indicating this. Other transport options considered convenient include: being a passenger in a vehicle, ACTION Buses and Walking. Surprisingly, taxis scored relatively low, especially when compared to buses.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Driving my Own Vehicle	1214	83.2%
Being a passenger in own vehicle	534	36.6%
Being a passenger with family/friends	655	44.9%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	336	23.0%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	189	12.9%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	21	1.4%
ACTION Buses	717	49.1%
Community Transport Services	87	6.0%
Motorised Scooter	56	3.8%
Bicycle	109	7.5%
Walking as a means of transport	461	31.6%

Figure 80 – Transport Options to maintain independence.

Figure 80 shows the transport options which would be considered as a means of maintaining independence. Once again, the car is the most important option. ACTION buses are also significant. Other transport options that rated highly include: being a passenger in a vehicle and walking.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Being a passenger in own vehicle	95	6.5%
Being a passenger with family/friends	141	9.7%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	237	16.2%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	131	9.0%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	96	6.6%
ACTION Buses	594	40.7%
Community Transport Services	178	12.2%
Motorised Scooter	110	7.5%
Bicycle	154	10.5%
Walking as a means of transport	367	25.1%

Figure 81 – Transport Options avoided because of time factors

When asked to indicate which transport options would be avoided because of the time taken to complete a journey (including the time to organise it), ACTION buses rate the most avoided at 40.7%, more significant than walking at 25.1%. Taxis (16.2%) are avoided more than Community Transport options (12.2%). The avoidance of Taxis due to time taken is somewhat perplexing and warrants further investigation.

Transport Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Driving my Own Vehicle	112	7.7%
Being a passenger in own vehicle	81	5.5%
Being a passenger with family/friends	182	12.5%
Taxis as a full fare passenger	80	5.5%
Taxis using subsidy vouchers	16	1.1%
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	9	0.6%
ACTION Buses	53	3.6%
Community Transport Services	9	0.6%
Motorised Scooter	56	3.8%
Bicycle	128	8.8%
Walking as a means of transport	185	12.7%

Figure 82 – Transport Options which sometimes feel unsafe

When asked to indicate which transport options sometimes feel unsafe, walking is the most significant at 12.7%. Interestingly, traveling with family or friends is also considered unsafe (12.5%).

Issues – Transport Options

Over half (52.9%) of respondents indicated that they expected to use their car more in the next 5 years while nearly the same number (48.6%) expected to travel more frequently as a passenger with family or friends. It was expected that this question would show trends for the future and that these trends would be away from the car, but if the response is to be believed, then existing modes of transport will continue to dominate. This is cause for some concern and warrants further investigation and action.

ACTION buses (47.4%) provide the alternative transport option with the highest expectation of increased usage. However, the expected increase was mainly by those who had already used ACTION. Only a small percentage of people who had not used buses indicated an expected increase in patronage.

Overall, the question about increased usage may not have elicited a true response. It may simply have revealed that people have not, and are not, thinking about future transport options which are significantly different from their current use; particularly if they only thought about the issue in response to the question itself. If this is the case, it is cause for concern as road safety can be significantly increased, particularly for those aged over 75, if they increase their patronage of the safer alternatives such as bus travel and use of family transport.

While people indicate that they avoid Taxis because of cost, this is not the issue for other alternatives. Taxis are not considered to be convenient by most respondents with only 16.6% rating them to be so.

While 34.5% indicate ACTION buses are convenient, almost all of these respondents are existing ACTION users (94.0%). When asked to indicate what options they might avoid due to time taken to complete a journey, ACTION buses also rated highly. 40.7% (n=594) indicated that ACTION takes too long. Interestingly, over half of the people who believe ACTION takes too long (52.6%, n = 313) had not used buses within the last 5 years. Only 23.6% (n=169) of those who indicated that they would use ACTION to maintain independence had not used it in the last 5 years.

These issues about patronage and previous experience of usage are significant because they point to a problem with the use of public transport by this age cohort. From a road safety perspective, buses are generally considered the safer alternative to either driving or being a passenger with others, or even walking. Clearly for ACTION, from a patronage perspective, and the ACT Road Safety office, from a road safety perspective needs to better understand why older people consider use of buses to be so time consuming.

Transport options which respondents sometimes feel unsafe using are “walking as a means of transport” (12.7%, n=185) and “being a passenger with family or friends” (12.5%, n=182). This could equate to over 2,500 people in the ACT aged 65 and over who often feel unsafe while being a passenger with family or friends. Of those who indicated that they felt unsafe with family or friends, 69.8% (n=127), lived in a couple relationship, raising the possibility that they felt unsafe while a passenger with their partner. This is an area that could benefit from further exploration.

Given the high level of response regarding broken and uneven paths, and other issues related to paths, it is not difficult to see why so many respondents do not feel safe while walking.

Page 170 - Public Transport

Discussion on public transport tends to focus in on ACTION Buses. Many were happy with buses and found them efficient and very economic, especially given the fuel and parking costs associated with using their own vehicles. Often the regular and satisfied bus users recognised they had easy access to a local bus stop and the routes offered were direct and efficient. (These tended to be people who lived in inner areas e.g. Woden, Hughes, and Ainslie.) Most were satisfied with fares, especially with seniors' discounts, but some felt adhering to the "off peak" restrictions was difficult. They said this was unfair, discriminatory and unnecessary, particularly if greater bus use was to be encouraged. At "off peak" times often the frequency of buses was unacceptable thus a bind was created i.e. buses are affordable at off peak times but less services are available.

The input from the Tuggeranong residents differed from that of the other groups. They advanced a range of barriers to their use of buses including frequency, lack of shelters, walking distance to bus stops, circuitous routes, the need to change buses to get to their destination and concern about safety both on, and whilst waiting for, buses.

Most groups indicated that a "shoppers bus" between home and town centres would be of interest to them. Some people had access to such a service via their local community service.

Page 190 - Safe Systems

The shortcomings identified in this study include:

- a. When considering older people, there is a need for a holistic road safety approach. The issue is not just drivers and passengers, but also includes: pedestrian safety, personal fitness, and alternative transport strategies.
- b. Older people are not a single homogenous group and as such, road safety messages need to take account of these differences in order to be effective and to reach the right people at the right time.
- c. Traffic authorities need to consider alternatives to the private motor vehicle as a road safety initiative. Providers of such services need to view the provision of services to older people as an essential service (as opposed to one of a number of alternatives). To this end:
 - i. ACTION as the key public transport provider has a key role to play in this issue.
 - ii. There are significant opportunities for ACTION to design timetables and systems to encourage and maximise use of buses by older people.
 - iii. Strategic early marketing could increase potential ACTION usage both as an adjunct to driving, and when driving is no longer an option.
 - iv. This should be seen as a community service obligation.
- d. Initiatives are required to encourage and enable drivers to retire from driving at appropriate times. This includes:
 - i. Information about continuing to drive when no longer safe.
 - ii. Provision of adequate alternatives.
 - iii. Developing familiarity with use of alternative forms of travel.
 - iv. Assistance in identifying and utilising alternatives at the point at which they retire from driving.
- e. General Practitioner's remain the major instigators of retiring from driving and older people believe that their health professionals, particularly their GP will tell them when it is time to retire from driving.
 - i. GP's would benefit from greater ongoing support and encouragement in this difficult role.
 - ii. GP's are limited in their ability to identify skill deficits and attitudinal issues with older drivers.

- iii. GP's need to be able to refer drivers to skills refresher programs to enable the individual to confirm or revise their on-road skills.
- f. The existing educative methods lack important and specific information and approaches to road safety. The messages provided to older people about road safety are only minimally meeting their purpose.
 - i. There is a need to develop a coherent strategically designed process to maximise the impact.
 - ii. Issues that need to be addressed include:
 - 1. Content
 - 2. Presentation
 - 3. Tone
 - 4. Volume of material
 - 5. Mode of delivery
 - 6. Repetition
 - 7. Timing of delivery
 - 8. Consistency.
- g. The ACT Office of Road Safety needs a broader brief to enable it to provide integration of policy and operational systems.
- h. The ACT needs a Strategic Plan for Road Safety for Older People.

Page 192 - Discussion

Integration

Road safety in the ACT generally focuses on the specific needs of road users such as drivers, motorcyclists, pedestrians and cyclists. For older people, the linkage between road safety strategies and their total transport needs is crucial. Older people need a road safety strategy to encompass a range of transport options and take into account the potential impacts of transferring from one option to another. For example, encouraging people to walk more increases their risk as a pedestrian. Against this, walking improves fitness and health and reduces fragility resulting in both potential improvements in driving ability and greater resilience in the event of a road trauma. We need to create safe environments for them to walk for pleasure, exercise and as a means of getting around.

Likewise, public transport, which is widely recognised as the safest form of road use, appears to be under-utilised by older people in the ACT. Encouraging more people to use public transport could enhance the willingness of older people to consider retiring from driving at the appropriate time. However, this needs to be weighed against the increased pedestrian activity. Any holistic strategy to address road safety must take into account barriers, real or perceived, to increased utilisation of both public transport and other alternatives to the private motor vehicle.

The statistics show that those aged 65 and over are a vulnerable set of road users. As a result there is a tendency to treat them as a single, homogenous group – “older road users”. However, in reality, they are not an homogenous group and the survey results clearly demonstrate a range of variations in: health and wellbeing, travel patterns, mobility needs, income, education, gender, and level of frailty. For example, those aged around 65 are likely to be more mobile, undertaking more long distance trips and are healthier; whereas those around 80 are more likely to undertake short local trips, less frequently and to have increased levels of frailty and health issues.

We need to recognise the sub-sets and target messages appropriately. These include: younger seniors compared to older seniors, gender, healthy and fit compared to health compromised, those open and engaged in their own road safety compared to those who are closed and defensive. We also need to recognise that there can be considerable overlap between groups, particularly in relation to age (chronological age is not a good determinant of functional ability).

Road safety messages should be designed with possible sub-sets in mind and the methods of presentation and engagement adapted to each of them.

Viewing road safety, in its broadest sense, requires that technical, administrative, social and health policy implications are considered in a holistic and strategic manner. While we note that there has been some attempt to do so in recent years, this approach has not been consistently applied and the current attempts are not sufficiently broad. We believe that an Older Persons Road Safety Strategic Plan needs to be developed to ensure that the wider policy considerations are fully recognised and incorporated into a “whole of government” approach. This is needed to ensure that an appropriate focus is developed to manage the road safety implications of the ageing ACT population.

This plan needs to meet older persons road safety needs covering maintenance of driving, riding and pedestrian skills; transition to alternative transport options and the facilitation of the process of retiring from driving. Older road users need to actively participate in their own road safety decisions. This approach entitled “Keeping Seniors Mobile” is outlined below.

Recommendation: A holistic, integrative approach to road safety and transport needs for older people in the ACT be applied in the ACT Road Safety Strategy and the ACT Road Safety Action Plans.

Recommendation: Road safety strategies are developed with the specific needs of older road user sub-sets in mind. In particular: women, men, young older road users, old older road users, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, IT literate/non IT literate be recognised as sub-groups.

Recommendation: The ACT develop a specific Older Persons Road Safety Strategic Plan in order to develop and guide road safety planning and ensure incorporation of the broad mobility needs of this group.

Recommendation: The “Keeping Seniors Mobile”⁴ model be adopted and its approach incorporated into the proposed Older Drivers Strategic Plan and the ACT Road Safety Action Plans.

Transport Options

Older people need a range of transport options. While for most (more than 80% of survey respondents), the private motor vehicle is the preferred and most used means of transport, not all older people can or do rely on this as their sole form of transport. Further, the need to ultimately retire from driving means that alternatives must be available. Ideally, there will be a transition from driving to alternative transport in order to ensure that independence; social connections and psychological wellbeing are maintained.

While walking, traveling with friends, taxis, community service transport, and bicycle use are possible alternatives to driving; the principle alternative for any reasonable distance is public buses. However, older people perceive that public transport has generally not been designed to accommodate their specific needs.

On the other hand, regular users of ACTION buses were satisfied with their service. The survey showed that those who had used a bus were more likely to consider its use

⁴ (See section 5.7, pages 205-208)

in the future and most focus group participants indicated that buses were affordable and increasingly attractive, given mounting fuel and parking costs.

Nevertheless, considerable numbers had little or no experience of using ACTION and these people were unlikely to consider it. They were more likely to indicate the time taken for a journey as a disincentive for using buses. Unless people were familiar with their local routes, they were uncertain about how to determine suitable routes for any one journey, how to access a timetable or how to pay fares.

The survey suggests that older people in the ACT are not as IT literate as some studies have suggested and are less likely than their younger counterparts to access information via the web. ACTION's reliance on the web for route and timetable information is a disincentive for potential older users.

While it is noted that the ACTION fleet is upgrading to provide for disability access, focus group participants noted that they believed this conversion has been very slow and that it is not always clear whether a particular route will be serviced by an accessible bus. Some participants were not aware of the existence of these buses.

Very few survey respondents nominated alternatives to ACTION, such as community transport offered by local community service agencies, as a regular form of transport (1%). It is understood that these services often run with very limited resources and usage is prioritised to assist those most in need. Taxis, where full fare was paid were used regularly by only 1.1% of respondents and when subsidised by 2%.

There is an opportunity for ACTION to develop a fuller understanding of the needs of older patrons and, in addressing these needs, improve their patronage and provide older people with a safe and effective transport alternative.

Strategic early marketing of ACTION services could increase potential usage by older people and assist them to appropriately consider this alternative to driving. Provision of public transport options for older people who may no longer drive is a community service obligation.

Recommendation: ACTION Buses undertake a review of the needs of both existing and potential older patrons to identify barriers to their greater utilisation of public transport.

Recommendation: The ACT investigate expanding alternatives to public transport such as community buses and "on-demand" transport options for older people and consider the benefits of such alternatives in the context of road safety, reduction in road trauma and its associated costs.

Retiring from Driving

Most people will come to a point in their lives when it is no longer safe to continue driving. The precise timing of this depends on the individual's circumstances but it is also influenced by the availability of alternatives.

The message about when and how to retire from driving is not clearly understood by older road users. Focus group participants indicated that they recognised that the day would come when they could no longer drive, but beyond the advice of their GP, or someone in authority telling them they could no longer drive, they were unable to articulate a process by which they could identify this need. Survey respondents overwhelmingly expected their GP to tell them if they could no longer drive (80%).

Only 10% of survey respondents were aware of the "Retiring from Driving Handbook". It is apparent that much of the information in the RFD Handbook is not reaching older drivers. In particular, older drivers are lacking information to support them to successfully retire from driving.

Older people need to be informed and advised about options for retiring from driving. Self-assessment of driving skills and abilities needs to be encouraged, as does a graduated transition to other transport options. Participation in skills refresher programs should also be promoted (see below). The availability of evaluative assessments of on-road skills is also required.

It is important to identify when people should retire from driving. Too early and we place an undue burden on the older people themselves, limit their social involvement and constrain healthy living. Too late and we risk injury or death for either themselves or others.