



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–24

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Jo Clay MLA

Addressed to: Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Transport

In relation to: Location of timing points for buses and guidelines for drivers

Hearing: 19 February 2025

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Answer Due: 03 March 2025

Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Transport took on notice the following question(s):

MR BRADDOCK: Yes, I have got a question about earlier running buses, which can have a greater customer impact than actually a late running bus. So I am trying to understand why on earth we allow buses to actually run early?

Mr Steel: There are a range of reasons, but in terms of treating the symptoms, there has recently just been an update over the last couple of days where we have improved the data feed coming through, with the real time data being displayed both in the MyWay app and through other sources to provide much better information about earlier running of buses, so that if there is an earlier running bus, a customer can see that on the app and actually be able to take that into account when they are planning their journey. So that will help, but certainly in terms of the operational issue that your question goes to, I will hand over to Transport Canberra.

Mr McHugh: Yes, I might just touch on it lightly and potentially, Ian McGlinn, who runs our bus operations, might have a more detailed question, but as you have stated, early running buses can be more problematic than late running buses for customers, so getting the information out there is our primary objective.

Drivers are also trained to run to time and to timetable, and the new driver console that has been introduced as part of the new MyWay Plus system helps identify how they are travelling against the time, the timetable and the frequencies, and they are trained to pause at particular stops to ensure that they do not get too far ahead. Sometimes if you have got a long break between stops and traffic is flowing and the timetable might have allowed for some congestion, then you can get ahead of time. And typically, we would train our drivers to try and hold at stops, align again with the timetable and continue.

MR BRADDOCK: Well, if I use an example, I will look up at the Legislative Assembly bus stop right now. There are quite a number of buses running significant times ahead, like, for example, up to 12

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minutes ahead. Obviously, they are not stopping for whatever reason to ensure they are keeping to the network timetable.

Mr McHugh: Yes, it might be that the interchange would be the best opportunity for them to pause. There are places on the network where we have lots of buses running through stops that might not be an ideal safe place for a bus to pause and wait for that timetable.

But again, in the work we do in planning the networks, we allow for congestion in the network and every time we update the network, we review the run times, and we use all that data that you are talking about to refine those run times and get them as close as possible to the actuals. And then we just, obviously, have to manage the variances in the network on a daily basis. Sometimes you have busy days, sometimes you do not. So yes, we just need to work through that. But yes, I take that point.

Mr Steel: If you are referring to the live, real time data, so I think that one of the sort of points that we had been discussing earlier in the week was the earlier a bus is within its sort of run—and that data is provided in relation to a future stop—the longer between stops, the greater variance there is likely to be. But as it gets closer to the stop that it is meant to pick up the passenger, it might come down quite significantly. And so it is about, I think, providing some guidance about how to read that information to the community, so they might want to read it once the bus is coming a little bit closer, to get a better understanding about how early it is running.

Mr McHugh: And for that particular point, Mr Braddock, we are looking at introducing additional timing points in the system to provide more accurate information. At the moment, most of those are aligned with bus stops, physical stop locations, but we are looking to add, potentially, some more timing points to make that information that is shared on the app more accurate.

MR BRADDOCK: Well, let us put it minister—I am glad to hear that, but, for example, there is a bus which is literally arriving now which is listed as 15 minutes early, so obviously it has not had that narrowing impact.

Mr Steel: And it is at the stop? It is showing it at the stop?

MR BRADDOCK: It is saying now at the moment. Let me pull it up. And it is just one block away from the stop. So pity the poor customer—

Mr Steel: But that might be a case, if it is one block away from the stop, which is effectively the Civic Interchange, vis a vis the Legislative Assembly stop, it may pause in the interchange for a number of minutes.

MR BRADDOCK: Actually, no, it has just turned into London Circuit and literally 100 metres away. So I just want to come back and also, I have noticed there are instances where the bus is literally scheduled and saying, it is coming now, yet it already might be a few minutes down the road beyond the stop, which of course is another issue.

Mr Steel: There is some, I mean, similar to—

THE CHAIR: Minister, please just wait for the question to finish.

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Mr Steel: Sorry. Yes, thanks. Yes, similar to, I guess, apps like Uber, there is a slight lag in when you actually see the icon of the bus moving, so it gets updated, I think there is a number of seconds.

Mr McHugh: Yes, every three seconds and then updated again at the timing point. So at each stop, it resets to now. So sorry, was your question that the bus has already left the stop, even though it says it is there now?

MR BRADDOCK: It has already left the stop and is several minutes down the road, according to what the app is telling me. So I suppose all this comes back to is how can the average user, who you seem to indicate needs a bit more education on how to actually read the information in order to be able to utilise a public transport service system. Is that the best system?

Mr McHugh: I am not sure of the question.

Mr Steel: I think the view is that we want to provide as much information as possible to people that they might find useful in planning their trip. And so, yes, we could have made the decision not to provide any information on early running. For the early stage of MyWay Plus that was the case; we did not provide that information to people, but we have worked through the data feed to be able to provide that information for people. But there may be a need to provide some extra information so that people can understand what it actually means. But I will hand over to Ms Sturman.

Ms Sturman: Thanks minister. I think, first, there is also the point which I think Ian might be able to touch on, which is the time that was built into the timetable predicting delays with infrastructure works, both at Woden and London Circuit, which has inadvertently caused longer journey times, which has caused this impact which is actually not really to do with the system, more to do with the timetable that we run to.

MR BRADDOCK: So can I just clarify? Is this more about the driver guidelines and training and compliance in order to be able to effectively keep to the timeframe, if they can, and not run early?

Ms Sturman: I might hand to Ian to provide that.

Mr McGlinn: Good afternoon. Ian McGlinn, Executive Branch Manager of Transport Canberra's Bus Operations and I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Tick. All right, just in relation to the driver behaviours, at Transport Canberra, we have always had a philosophy, for many years, of one minute early to four minutes late is on time.

Now Ms Sturman just referred to, we have built in some additional travel time into the city precinct due to what was foreseen as additional construction times for travel. Now, on certain days and at certain times, that time is not required, but I cannot take it out of the timetable. It is not a flexible timetable. I cannot make it and change every day. Now, some days you will come into the city precinct and you will take all that time up. Other times it will go through.

Now, yes, we do actually ask the drivers to wait in the city interchange, but our transport officers in the city interchange as well will actually ascertain where the—you know, let us say it was a northbound route 2, how far the next route 2 is behind it, to keep that journey moving, because it is very frustrating for our customers that are actually on the bus then to sit in the city and wait for 12 minutes, as per your example.

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The reason we cannot change and have a flexible timetable, a network is a big brick wall, and every brick in that wall is a journey with that journey time. Now, if I needed extra time, I cannot take that brick out and make it longer or make the journey longer because that bus has got something else to go and do. So then I would need to then go and put that journey somewhere else.

So to do that, the easiest way is to collapse the wall or collapse the whole network, and build a new network, which I am undertaking it at the present time, and we have some new realistic run times based on the data that we have been able to achieve, that you do not need as much time to come through the city precinct.

You know, through the Parliamentary Triangle, Parkes, Barton at different times of the day, it takes a little bit longer, just due to the 451 when everybody knocks off in that precinct. It becomes quite congested; it takes me a little bit longer. So we have more realistic run times, therefore you are deriving savings. Using the existing bus fleet, we have been able to invest in more services.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: You have mentioned the timing points and the guidelines. I wonder, is that something you can take on notice and provide to the committee, the timing points and the guidelines? Can that be provided on notice?

Mr McGlinn: Yes. Look, it certainly can be, noting that the stop out the front of the Assembly is not a timing point. It has got a timetable on it, but it is actually the city interchange, is it not?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is all right. We would love to see them. Thank you, Mr McGlinn.

Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Transport: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Transport Canberra measures on time running as one minute early to four minutes late at timing points.

A drivers shift card has the applicable timing point recorded on it for each individual service they undertake.

An example of a timing point on a drivers shift card 7001 is provided at [Attachment A](#), which operates on a Sunday, Route 3, Spence Terminus commencing 11:23am.

- Belconnen Interchange – Platform 1 11:46am
- City Interchange – Platform 4 12:05pm

An example of a bus stop poster for the ANU Rimmer Street, is provided at [Attachment B](#), indicates that the service is due at 12:04pm which would align with the service being due in the City Interchange at 12:05pm.

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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services

Signature:



By Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Transport

Date:

3/3/25