



Youth Coalition Briefing to the Bus Services Roundtable

This briefing is for the information of the Bus Services Roundtable held on 19 March 2012, hosted by Ms Katy Gallagher MLA. It provides information relating to young people's experiences of bus services in the ACT.

Background

The Youth Coalition is a not-for-profit organisation, and is the peak body for youth affairs and young people aged 12 – 25 years in the ACT. Comprised of over 100 organisational and individual members, the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the interests and wellbeing of people aged between 12 and 25 years and those who work with them.

The Youth Coalition recognises that access to affordable, safe and timely public transport is essential to the ability to participate and a key socio-economic determinant of health and wellbeing for young people. The Youth Coalition acknowledges that young people are among the greatest users of public transport options in the ACT, and that transport services need to be further developed in order to facilitate young people's participation in their community through employment, education, recreation and social activities.

Feedback to the Roundtable

The Youth Coalition has engaged in policy and advocacy relating to public transport for a number of years. In 2007 we consulted with over 200 young people regarding their experiences of ACTION Bus Services. In 2010 we developed a Policy Platform, *Youth Participation in Community*, which discusses the impact that public transport has on young people's ability to participate in the community. We also recently consulted with members and with young people to specifically inform our feedback to the Roundtable on 19 March 2012. These consultations highlighted that:

- Frequency of bus services remains a top issue for young people:
 - Young people identified that there is a need for additional evening, late night and weekend bus services. This is particularly important for young people who are more likely to be engaged in part-time employment or recreational activities during the evenings and weekends.
 - The Night Rider bus service was identified as a positive initiative, in that it takes people 'back home'. However, it was identified that it is important that bus services are available that can transport young people from their homes to other areas of the ACT during the evenings.

- Members provided positive feedback on the implementation of the Red Rapid Bus Service, but expressed a need for more of these services to be available during peak traffic times.
- Availability of student fares to young people engaged in Alternative Education:
 - A local member program providing alternative education to young people disengaged from mainstream education identified that although their students are studying full time, the complex nature of their enrolment means that their students cards are given part-time status. They are therefore not eligible to access student fares. The Youth Coalition will be pursuing this issue with the program and with ACTION to seek to resolve this issue.
- Buses at full capacity are skipping bus stops:
 - Young people identified that buses are driving past their bus stops if the buses are at full capacity. This has a particular impact upon young people who are less likely to have alternative means of transport to travel to school or work, and can result in young people arriving late at their education institution or workplace.
 - While the Youth Coalition acknowledges that this is not an easy issue to resolve, it is vital that data is collected from bus drivers on missed stops, in order for ACTION to be able to review the need for larger buses or more frequent services in these areas.
- Free Bike'n'Ride:
 - Young people identified that Bike'n'Ride is a positive initiative that supports their ability to access public transport. However, they identified that bus fares are no longer free for patrons that utilise the Bike'n'Ride service, and asked that these free fares become available again.
- Smoking at Bus Stops and Interchanges:
 - Smoking at bus stops and interchanges was identified as an issue by non-smokers who are at risk of inhaling secondary smoke. The Youth Coalition strongly supports exploring strategies to address this.
- Reviewing 'Children in Seats' Signs in Buses:
 - It was identified in consultations that some older ACTION buses still include signage that requires children and young people to give up their seats if an adult would like to sit down. While the Youth Coalition supports signage that supports people with disabilities, pregnant women and elderly people to take priority seating, we support the need to review these signs to ensure that young people aged 12 – 25 are not otherwise being unfairly discriminated against.

The Youth Coalition thanks Chief Minister Ms Katy Gallagher for the opportunity to provide input into the Bus Services Roundtable. For more information on this briefing, contact erin@youthcoalition.net.