



Proposed Bus Network Feedback
Network Planning and Development
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

14 October 2013

Dear Ian McGlinn,

On behalf of the Youth Coalition of the ACT (the Youth Coalition), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed bus services for 2014.

The Youth Coalition reviewed the proposed network changes, and commends the community consultation process for seeking discussion regarding the network. However, we were disappointed that there did not seem to be consultation options specifically for young people, or an acknowledgement of the particular transport needs of young people. We believe that it is essential that young people are actively involved in the designing, planning and evaluating of public transport systems. As a result, the Youth Coalition has chosen to respond to the community consultation by providing information that young people have told us about their public transport needs.

About the Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. Comprised of 100 members, programs, and individuals the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the interests and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25 years and those who work with them.

The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT Government advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on youth issues, along with providing information to youth services about policy and program matters.

A key role of the Youth Coalition is the development and analysis of ACT social policy and program decisions for young people and youth services. The Youth Coalition facilitates the development of strong linkages and promotes collaboration between the community, government and private sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people in the ACT.

Response to the Consultation Process

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. Young people are among the greatest users of public transport options in the ACT, and transport services need to be further developed with this fact in mind. In the 2012 *Rate Canberra* survey conducted by the Youth Coalition, 60% of survey respondents aged 12 – 25 identified that the bus was one of their most common forms of transport,ⁱ making it a vital service for young people in the ACT.

Access Issues

The affordability and availability of public transport can cause barriers to young people's participation in the community.

The Youth Coalition has engaged in policy development and advocacy relating to public transport for a number of years. In a 2007 Youth Coalition submission that surveyed over 200 young people in the ACT on public transport, the frequency of services was highlighted as the most important issue.ⁱⁱ Also, in a 2012 consultation, 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 than the general population to be engaged in part-time employment or recreational activities during the evenings and weekends, or those who live in Canberra's outer suburbs.ⁱⁱⁱ

In our 2012 survey of young people, *Rate Canberra*, young people frequently identified 'I can't travel there' as a barrier to participation in activities.^{iv} With this existing barrier in place, we are concerned that the decision to increase walking distances to bus routes may further isolate young people and solidify the barriers to participation in activities.

Increases in the cost of public transport fares can make it even more difficult for young people to participate in their community. In our 2012 consultations, many young participants referred to the cost of public transport fares as presenting an additional barrier to accessing public transport services.^v For young people who are on very limited incomes or allowances, increasing the cost of public transport may disproportionately affect their ability to engage in education, employment or social inclusion activities.

It is essential that Canberra's public transport system is accessible and affordable for young people, including adequate evening, late night and weekend bus services.

Vulnerable Young People

Vulnerable young people, including young people engaged in alternative education, and young people with disabilities, require flexible transport arrangements to suit their individual needs. Although alternative education students are classed as full time, the complex nature of their enrolment means that their student cards are given part-time status, therefore inhibiting them from accessing concessional fares.

Young people also 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.

Youth Participation in Decision Making

As the majority of young people use public transport as their most common form of transport, decisions made about the design of bus routes can have a significant impact on young people's lives. As young people are a key consumer group, we encourage ACTION to ensure that young people have the ability to participate in consultations about the bus network. Without specific youth participation measures, young people's voices are unlikely to be heard in discussions about the future of the bus network.

The Youth Coalition would welcome the opportunity to work with ACTION to support young people to provide input into the further development of the bus network.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6247 3540 or at director@youthcoalition.net if you wish to discuss this letter further.

Sincerely,



Emma Robertson
Director
Youth Coalition of the ACT
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Email: director@youthcoalition.net

ⁱ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Rate Canberra 2012: Findings from the survey of Young People aged 12-25 in the ACT, Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

ⁱⁱ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2007) Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Planning and Environment, Canberra

ⁱⁱⁱ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Youth Coalition Briefing to the Bus Services Roundtable. Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

^{iv} Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Rate Canberra 2012: Findings from the survey of Young People aged 12-25 in the ACT, Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

^v Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Youth Coalition Briefing to the Bus Services Roundtable. Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.