

MINISTER'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

REFERRAL IN PROGRESS

REGIONAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT

1 Background

State and Local Government recognise the need for sustainable and integrated regional public transport services. The State Government gave an election commitment to develop regional infrastructure which is integrated and responsive to its economic and social policy directions. Local Government's Future Directions program Initiatives for 2002-03 highlight the need to work with Governments on this issue.

As part of its commitment the State Government has signalled its desire to work closely with Local Government authorities and their communities to ensure they are actively involved in the planning and development of regional passenger transport. In addition the State Government is committed to working with relevant Commonwealth agencies that provide funding support to regional transport users. Consistent with this commitment various projects are underway in regional areas to identify transport needs and issues and strategies to address them.

Generally the issues that have emerged are:

- the need for an integrated passenger transport plan to be implemented in regions and across the State;
- a lack of passenger transport services aligned to community need;
- local frustration with duplication of services and inefficient use of resources, particularly those that are Government funded or owned;
- the need for across government relationships to be built on so that consistent policies related to services can be developed across government;
- the need to continue with privately operated services;
- the need for continued targeted consultation to occur with Aboriginal communities, the elderly and youth; and
- the need for regional initiatives to be considered when developing future transport options.

2. Consultation

Persons contributing to the preparation of the Referral in Progress paper:

Heather Webster, Phil Saunders, Michelle Spagnoletti	Passenger Transport Board
Brian Clancey, Paula Victor, Wendy Campana	Local Government Association
Penny Crocker, Thu Anh Pham	Office of Local Government

3. Current Status of Work in Progress

3.1. Regulatory and Passenger Transport Board (PTB) Operational Issues:

A number of operational issues related to regional passenger transport such as the scope of services by community passenger networks, and the licensing and administration of regional taxi services/other small passenger vehicles, are regulatory issues that fall within the responsibilities of the Passenger Transport Board. Discussions continue to take place between the PTB, the LGA and a small number of affected Councils to jointly address these matters.

3.2. Passenger Transport Needs:

The Regional Services Group of the PTB has recently undertaken an analysis of passenger transport needs in regional South Australia. This indicates that the major needs that are currently not being met principally involve transport to local service centres (i.e. the nearest town where particular services are available), not long distance trips to Adelaide. The trips are for a range of purposes, including access for elderly people to a range of services (including health) and for youth to expand their cultural contacts.

3.3. Intra-Government Discussions

A significant issue is the need for State Government agencies to develop coordinated and integrated passenger transport services to meet the immediate and future needs of regional SA. The success of this strategy is dependent on the development of consistent policy directions and ongoing and effective collaboration between the various government funding and operating agencies concerned. Dedicated transport services currently provided in regional SA by agencies such as the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), the Department of Human Services, (DHS), the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Home and Community Care (HACC) and Local Councils provide a valuable opportunity to use these existing resources to meet the broader needs of the community.

3.4 Review of the Passenger Transport Board

The Statutory Authorities Review Committee of Parliament is currently conducting an inquiry into the operations and management of the Passenger Transport Board with particular reference to the integration of infrastructure and service delivery in regional areas of the State.

4 Issues

4.1 Coordination

There appears to be a need for the State Government to formalise informal arrangements that the PTB has in place with individual State agencies in order to progress whole of State Government co-ordination of regional passenger transport. Local Government does not need to have a formal role at that process stage but Local Government would need to be consulted on issues, strategies and related matters emerging from the State Agency deliberations and prior to implementation occurring.

4.2 Integrated Transport Plans

The recently completed Murray and Mallee Integrated Transport Plan has not been publicly released as yet. Following further discussion between State and Local Government, there may be an opportunity for other regions to use that plan as a basis for developing their own Integrated Passenger Transport Plans.

5 Recommendations

That the Forum members:

1. note the issues outlined;
2. identify any other key issues and priorities with respect to regional community needs for passenger transport; and
3. request that representatives from the State agencies involved in the support and funding of regional passenger transport services formally meet and explore the opportunities for more effective coordination and flexible use of available resources, and report back to the Forum.