The future of community transport – directions for change in NSW

Community Transport Organisation NSW State Conference
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Outline

1. Introduction
2. Community Transport and the accessibility gap
3. Challenges for Community Transport in NSW
4. Changing times
5. Options for the future
1. Introduction

› My perspective of Community Transport in NSW
  - Based on a knowledge of CT in the UK and US
  - Based on an ‘interested’ but not ‘involved’ perspective

› This conference takes place at a time of uncertainty
  - Possible changes at the Commonwealth level could have big impact on the sector
  - Changes within public mass transport could have on-going consequences

› Presentation covers general principles to highlight possible ways forward
2. Community Transport and the accessibility gap

› Understanding
   - The role of transport generally
   - The role of *conventional* public transport
› Identifying the ‘accessibility gap’ which Community Transport fills

Source: Parramatta Advertiser, 13 Jan 2009

Maitland Community Care Services
Role of transport

› Transport is an enabler
  - Provides access to allow participation in society and life opportunities: work, education, health, shopping, social/recreation, volunteering

› Transport provides accessibility
  - Provides independence and choice in social inclusion

› Public transport has a wider role
  - Health and environmental benefits
  - For all members of society

Bankstown Bites Festival
Accessibility is multi-dimensional – and gaps exist

**Conventional public transport**
- Spatial gap
- Time gap
- Cost gap
- Physical accessibility gap
- Information gap
- Attitudinal, Cultural and Behavioural gap

**Community Transport**

Source: Bankstown Community Transport
Spatial gap

The gap between conventional public transport and community transport

Conventional public transport
- eg Service Planning Guidelines for Sydney
  - 90% of households within 400 m of rail or bus in daytime
  - But not everyone can walk 400 m
  - Many factors affecting use of public transport

Community transport
- Eligibility criteria
Conventional public transport in NSW

› How well is the NSW government meeting its guidelines?

› 86% of Sydney households are within 400 m

› 11 out of 15 contract regions don’t meet 90% of households criteria

› 200,000 households in Sydney not within 400 m

Assumptions
- Straight line distance to bus stop
- Households from 2006 Census
- Bus data from April 2010

Source: Bureau of Transport Statistics, Transport NSW, Request No. 10/287
Spatial gap – topography
› Frequency of services
› Hours of operation: night time and weekend services
› Travel time: length of trip
Physical accessibility gap

RailCorp
Information gap
Commuters uneasy about using night trains
Clay Lucas
August 14, 2010…. The Age
MELBOURNE commuters are increasingly scared about using the city's trains at night, with only 40 per cent of commuters saying they are happy with the number of staff on the rail system, new research shows.
Community Transport

Community transport

› Closes the accessibility gap where provided
  - Door-to-door transport
  - Personal assistance
  - Truly flexible transport service

› Very specific program
  - HACC eligibility + “transport disadvantaged”
  - For specific types of travel

› Very small program
  - Budget: approx $36 million pa (NSW)
    + $3 m for transport disadvantaged
  - Clients: 150,000 pa (NSW)
  - Passenger trips: 2.5 million pa (NSW)
Accessibility issues can still exist, even with Community Transport operating.

**Conventional public transport**
- Spatial gap
- Time gap
- Cost gap
- Physical accessibility gap
- Information gap
- Attitudinal, Cultural and Behavioural gap

**Community Transport**

Source: Bankstown Community Transport
3. Challenges of Community Transport in NSW

› Community Transport is outside the Passenger Transport Act 1990
› Community Transport is based in the local community
› Community Transport – features of demand
› Community Transport – features of supply

Source: Tablelands Community Transport
Community Transport providers are not recognised as transport operators

Community Transport providers cannot be accredited as bus operators
- a perception/reality of insufficient safety standards in CT
- Restricts the ‘business’ of Community Transport to mainly HACC clients
- Unmet demand stays ‘unmet’ because of regulations on the legal status of Community Transport
Grass roots origins means
- Community Transport groups understand and relate to community needs
- A large number of groups in NSW, based on LGAs
- Groups vary in size, operation (including scheduling), throughput/scale, expertise
- From funder’s perspective, Community Transport associated with social care, not with transport provision

Bottom up organisation does not lend itself to efficient organisation
- Community Transport needs to work harder to be efficient
- Different socio-economic catchments means different client mix so sharing of best practice more difficult
Community Transport – features of demand

› Demand for services mainly one client group: HACC clients
  - A perception/reality that clients are not assessed uniformly leading to inequity in provision

› Community Transport is specialised in the needs of HACC clients
  - Reinforces the ‘social care’ categorisation
  - Makes it more difficult to ‘outsource’ trips when capacity is reached
Community Transport – features of demand

› Are all the trips provided ‘right’ for Community Transport?
  - Medical trips – do some require ‘unreasonable’ level of care?

› Significant evidence of unmet demand
  - Difficulties of prioritisation
  - Situation likely to worsen with ageing population

Source: www.w3.org/WAI/WAI-AGE/Drafts/slides/AU-pop.png
Source: Sutherland Council Annual Report
Evolving over time and in response to needs
- Vehicle size/fleet mix may not be best matched to demand
- Groups vary in how they operate – taxis, shuttles, dedicated services

Understanding of costs
- True costs of volunteer versus paid drivers
- Identification of cost variation – by time, by vehicle, by distance

‘Spare’ capacity at certain times of day
- Difficulties of vehicle sharing and brokerage
4. Changing times

› Changes in HACC funding have been proposed
  - Will the Commonwealth be willing to have separate contracts with each Community Transport group?

› Will the funding model focus on the care of the individual?
  - Community Transport groups will have different and maybe multiple ‘funders’
  - May need to contract with care providers directly
5. Options for the future

Community Transport groups need to take charge of their own destiny
- Management Committees need to think seriously about their objectives

Focussing on a single client group makes viability sensitive to changes in demand
- Groups may need to become more business focussed
  - Diversifying income implies diversifying customer base
  - Outcome good for both Community Transport groups and passengers
- Groups may need to become bigger spatially
  - To exploit economies of scale
  - To become recognised as more ‘professional’ with more specialised functions
Operational Models

Forming alliances

Agency model

Social enterprise
Joining groups with adjacent geographical boundaries

› Advantage
- Fewer groups in NSW might mean Commonwealth would contract transport services direct to Community Transport

› Disadvantages
- Difficulty of multi-management committees with potentially different objectives
- A cohesive ‘front’ would be required to be convincing to the Commonwealth
- How much bigger does bigger need to be?

› Practical aspects
- How would scheduling and allocation of passengers be carried out? Would technology help?
- Effective sharing of vehicles may be needed
- How would the revenue be allocated to the groups?
Area based agency approach

› Requires technology to be successful
› Requires strong governance model between different providers making up the virtual enterprise
› Requires education and culture shift on demand side for passengers to understand

Flexible Transport Agency in Florence

Social enterprise is well established in UK and emerging in Australia

› Key message is the use of ‘enterprise’ to provide for community need

“... Social enterprise is a means by which people come together and use market-based ventures to achieve agreed social ends. It is characterised by creativity, entrepreneurship, and a focus on community rather than individual profit. It is a creative endeavour that results in social, financial, service, educational, employment, or other community benefits.”

Could Community Transport be a Social Enterprise?

- Community Transport is
  - Non-profit making
  - Has a social purpose

- Could be structured to be owned with profits for social purpose
  - A governance feature, but very important

Source: http://www.socialenterpriseworks.org/resources/thinking-of-social-enterprise-2/
Issues in becoming a Social Enterprise

› Main mission is providing community based transport to
  - HACC clients
  - Transport disadvantaged (filling in accessibility gap)

› Main issues
  - What alternative ‘business’ could be developed to support core aims?
  - What alternative skills might be necessary?
  - Would Government might support the transfer to social enterprise?

Conclusions

› Community Transport is hampered in filling the accessibility gap
  - By legislative framework
  - By perception of social care focus
› The future requires decisions – no change is not an option
› There are models for future working but no ‘one size will fit all’