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Barriers To Achieving A Single Integrated Future School Bus Transport Network – The WA Experience So Far

National travel to Learn and School Bus Summit – Canberra
ACT

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Student Transport Assistance Policy

The WA Government's student transport policy for rural students is to provide families with a reasonable level of Transport Assistance . Eligible rural students are entitled to transport assistance to travel to their nearest appropriate school in the form of access to a free "orange" school bus.

In metro areas or regional towns there is no specific entitlement – students (as with all residents) can use the public transport network if it suits their needs



Public Transport Boundaries/School Bus Services





Student Transport Assistance Policy - Mainstream

Eligibility

- Must reside outside a designated Public Transport Areas
- Must be enrolled at their nearest appropriate school
- Must be of school age in accordance with Education Act 1999
- Must reside more than 4.5km from their school

Spur Policy

- Routes can spur up to 5kms for up to 2 students or 7.5kms for more than 2 students

90 Minute Rule

- The total time on a one way journey should not exceed 90 mins

Complimentary Students

- Where a student is not eligible but given access as long as there is capacity and no cost to government. Removed when eligible students require access.

Note:

- Policy framework designed to minimise cost
- Dept of Education divested itself of school bus transport task in 1995 to the Dept of Transport as it was not “core” business
- *No change for a long time - Last Major School Bus Transport Reviews – Morrell 1999 & Guise 2002*



Rural Transport Task - Orange School Bus Network

- 21,404 Students
- 752 services
- Annual Budget - \$92.2M = Average Subsidy per child \$4,300 pa

Operational Statistics

- Average travel time per service per journey - 66 minutes
 - Shortest - 44 minutes Gascoyne Region
 - Longest - 92 minutes Goldfields/Esperance
- Average Daily Kms (loaded kms) - 115 kms per day (two trips)
 - Shortest - 79 kms Gascoyne Region
 - Longest - 171 kms Goldfields/Esperance
 - Longest school bus run - Esperance Lort Service 456km per day (loaded & unloaded am/pm bus run)
- Average Utilisation rate per service - 79.8% **(Possible Opportunities)**
- All School bus routes managed by GIS Mapping Database (MapNet)



Rural Transport Task - Network

- 10,658 Students
- 153 services - where 62.3% were student boardings
- Annual Budget - \$20.9M

Rural Transport Task - Intra Town Regional Bus Network

- There are 7 “Trans” livery regional town services (eg Transbusselton) that provide school bus timetabled services in addition to daily timetabled services (Smartrider cards are in use)
- There are 7 town services providing town school bus services only

Rural Transport Task - Inter Town Regional Bus Network

- **Transport choice is limited**
- Transwa network - State Govt entity with 23 five-star road coach services, and three regional trains operating in the southern half of WA (Timetables not conducive for daily student commute)
- Dept of Workforce Development - provides some relief with via daily fare subsidy for students attending regional apprentice training and tertiary facilities to a small number of commercial operators eg Southwest Coachlines in Busselton and Bunbury
- Some Regional Private schools charter bus services - cost part of school fees



Regional Town and Orange School Bus Profile

Regional Student Profile

- ◆ There are 95,678 students enrolled in schools in rural WA
 - ◆ 75.5% enrolled in State schools
 - ◆ 24.5% enrolled in religious/independent schools
- ◆ There are 4,598 students (18-22 year olds) enrolled at TAFE in three rural regions North, Central, South

Travel Profile

- ◆ 10.6% of school aged and tertiary students residing in regional towns are using town bus services
- ◆ 22.4% of all school aged students are using 'orange' school bus services
 - ◆ Reality nearly all families outside of town will use bus
 - ◆ Note: TAFE Adult students are not allowed on "orange" School bus network due to carriage of kindergarten/pre-primary students
- ◆ **67.0% students enrolled in education not using public transport for a variety of reasons**
 - ◆ Live close by and are likely walking, cycling to school
 - ◆ Convenience ie travel by family car





Barriers to Achieving a Single Integrated Future School Bus Network

What Choice do WA Rural Families Have?

- Eligible versus Complimentary
 - Approx. 85% of students (21,404) are eligible - nearest appropriate school
 - **Approx. 15% of students (3,840) are complimentary - exercising choice of school**
- School Accessibility
 - 85.7 of services (780 buses) travel to 1-4 schools (mainly in the same town)
 - **14.1% of services (128 buses) travel to 5 -13 schools (bus transfer points)**
- Regional town students not only have limited choice of education facilities but limited intra-town services

Conclusion: Network is mainly inflexible due to geographic isolation, lack of educational facilities and small population densities

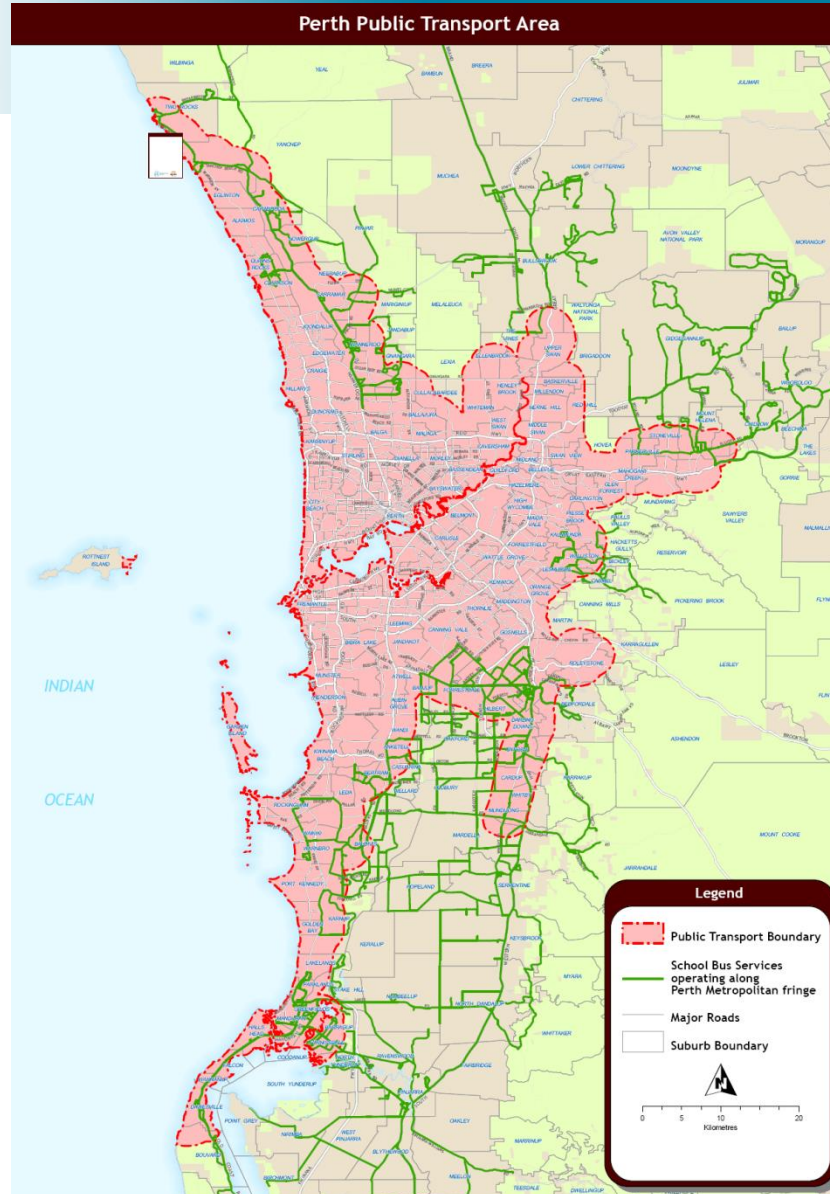
Any growth in patronage will be incremental only for rural/regional families





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Perth Public Transport Area





Metropolitan Perth - Student and Tertiary Enrolments and Public Transport Usage

Metropolitan Perth - Students versus Public Transport Use (Snap shot)

- Annual Budget - \$635.3M
- There are approx. 515,000 students accessing educational facilities
- School Enrolments: 359,508 students (69.8% of total enrolments)
 - 65.4% enrolled in State schools
 - 34.6% enrolled in religious/independent schools
- University Enrolments: 138,000 students (26.8% of total enrolments)
 - Five major universities (Uni of WA, Curtin Uni, Murdoch Uni, Edith Cowan Uni, Uni of Notre Dame)
 - Student enrolment is 73% local, 27% International
- TAFE Enrolments: 16,765 students (3.4% of total enrolments)
 - 18-22 years old
- **Travel patterns on Transperth Network (Area for improvement)**
 - 44,000 students (12.2% of total enrolments) travel on the network on any given day.
 - 13,692 students ((3.8% of total enrolments) travel on the network every day.
 - 62,300 Tertiary students travel on the network on any given day with similar travel usage as students





Barriers to Achieving “Travel to Learn” Transport Networks in WA

What Drives Transport Demand for Accessing Education?

- In essence, where you live and how do you get to your institution of choice
- Cost and time considerations of getting there

Current Educational Barriers to Improving School Bus Access and Demand

- Today we have Greater Access to Education offline
 - Internet and access to university courses and lectures on line - disincentive to travel
 - Rollout of NBN network facilitates higher internet speeds and higher volumes of data
 - Lecture/tutorials timetables (eg early/late evening lectures and tutorials) don't match peak, weekday & weekend service schedules
 - University libraries opened 24 hrs, 7 days a week - Usually no services after midnight
 - More before and after school activities eg music lessons, sport training, debating etc
 - The removal of catchment areas for students means longer travelling distances for families requiring transport options that minimise travel time.

Cost and Technology Barriers

- WA Government already heavily subsidises transport cost. Current focus is budget repair not on education
- Business happy to pick up the slack but needs to be profitable. Therefore tend to focus on niche markets not necessarily optimal transport solutions for education
- Technology helps to drive cost efficiency but start up costs can be prohibitive thus delaying reform/improvement



Barriers to Achieving “Travel to Learn” Transport Networks in WA

Cost and technology Barriers -Cont.

- Too much choice dilutes cost efficiencies - Need optimisation solutions to be successful
 - Services such as charter vehicles, taxis, small capacity omnibuses providing a reliable, rapid service will meet needs but can come at considerable cost to the user (disincentive)
- Ride optimisation solutions would need to offset current public transport subsidies rather than compete (ie need a redistribution of savings).

Limitation of On Demand Transport

- Currently On demand Transport lacks Maturity - Focus Perth centric
 - Transport (Road Passenger Services) Bill 2018 to be introduced into WA parliament in July 2018
 - Uber proposes further expansion in Bunbury/Busselton in second half of 2018 - first regional foray
 - Experience tends to show On demand services tend to gravitate to holiday/tourist destinations. No linkage to education
 - No incentive to operate outside of peak demand due to lack of sustained patronage - limited use for current core school hours

Limitation of Transperth Network

- Focus for the last 10 years has been to reduce ‘school bus specials’ in favour of services that benefit the whole community



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“Travel to Learn” Solutions to Increase Access to Education via Better Transport Solution

Moving Forward - Practical Solutions that would improve student travel outcomes

Orange School Bus Network

- Remove the provisions for nearest appropriate school and allow school of choice
- Allow adult aged tertiary students access to bus network
- Bus Contract does not prevent bus being used for charter work outside of main school bus run. Provide incentives to provide travel subsidies for tertiary students attending education facilities outside of the standard school hours

Regional Town Services/Transperth Networks

- Better marketing of the 70 cent one way fare
- Reduction of the discounted tertiary fare to something more comparable to the student 70 cents one way fare



“Travel to Learn” Solutions to Increase Access to Education via Better Transport Solution

Enablers to increasing travel choices and student travel outcomes in WA in the future (Perth Focus initially)

Technology

- Need technological investment that would make more meaningful optimisation possible
 - GPS tracking, student movements eg SmartRider Cards to collect data
 - Software packages to design better routes eg TRIS, Mapnet, commercial software
- Communication Solutions – Use of 5G network wireless services where mobile ‘classrooms’ are created for students to do homework on laptops/tables while travelling to and from home.
- Supporting companies that facilitate vehicle management and utilisation via matching supply and demand technology
 - Eg Uber for school apps
 - Self help - bigger focus in schools to coordinate carpooling arrangements for parents
 - Coordination of commercial bus services
- Use of Transport Brokers (NDIS Model) to match demand with services whether this is done via school communities or independent providers
- Federal Government Policy to facilitate the introduction of driverless vehicles from 2020. Ability to provide services on a 24/7 basis without being constrained by human resourcing implications eg wage costs, driver fatigue

Financial

- Consideration to provide a subsidy that is linked to future benefit ie via the HECS Option to pay for Transport Services (Federal and State Government Initiative)

Education

- Coordinated approach by WA Government to offer greater flexibility with core school hours to coincide with better timetabled peak/off peak service outcomes



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Questions

