Addressing Transport Issues for Older People

COTA TASMANIA

For older Australians
Contents

Resources ................................................................................................................................................................................................2
Introduction ...........................................................................................................................................................................................3
1: Greater Coordination ..................................................................................................................................................................4
2. Education and Promotion ........................................................................................................................................................5
3: Age Friendliness .............................................................................................................................................................................6

Resources

In 2011 COTA Tas produced three reports relating to the transport issues outlined in this paper:

- Access to transport for older people in Tasmania, February 2011;
- Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley, May 2011; and
- A Sense of Belonging: Social Inclusion Issues for Older People in Tasmania, September 2011

These publications are available on the COTA Tasmania website www.cotatas.org.au.
Introduction

COTA Tas is the peak body representing the needs and interests of older people in Tasmania. Our vision is an inclusive society which values, support and respects older people. Established in 1964, COTA Tas has a long history in advocacy, advice and policy development in Tasmania.

COTA Tas refers to “transport” in this document in relation to public transport (namely buses), taxis and community transport.

Lack of access to transport is one of the key issues older people highlight to COTA Tas as a major barrier in them feeling connected to their community and thus impacting on their quality of life.

As people age, their mobility may decline, but their need for transport does not. Access to transport has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of older people as they need to access social, cultural and recreational activities, health care and other service providers, shopping and a range of other activities. Lack of access to transport due to problems of affordability, safety, availability, convenience, lack of confidence and information, and appropriateness of the type transport available can act as a barrier to older people’s participation in the community. Health issues can affect desirability to use, afford and access transport.

When both access and mobility are constrained, transport disadvantage occurs. People on low incomes and pensions are more likely to experience transport disadvantage. With Tasmania’s rapidly ageing population, there will be a significant increase in the proportion of the community who are transport disadvantaged. It is important that transport is accessible, reliable and affordable and that older people feel safe and comfortable using it.

Key Issue Areas

1. GREATER COORDINATION: Currently Tasmania is not making the best use of existing transport resources for older people because of inadequate coordination.

2. EDUCATION AND PROMOTION: Older people are generally inadequately informed about their transport options and can have negative perceptions about utilising some forms of transport.

3. AGE FRIENDLINESS: Many seemingly quite minor aspects of the way in which transport systems operate make it harder for older people to use and deter them from travelling.
GREATER COORDINATION

COTA Tas believes that there are currently significant transport resources and services in the community. One of the major stumbling blocks for older people in accessing transport services is the lack of coordination of existing public and community transport services.

Public transport services are limited on weekends and after hours even in many urban areas of the state, and they are particularly limited in rural areas. As Tasmania has a large proportion of the population living in rural and remote areas, the limited nature of public transport is a significant aspect of transport disadvantage.

Some bus services from outlying areas into Hobart operate around the needs of school children and/or the working public which does not always meet the needs of older people who may wish to travel into town at a later time or spend less time in Hobart than the bus timetable allows. COTA Tas welcomes the Government’s recent increase in bus services in some non-urban areas, however there are still limited options for transport in many country towns, especially on the west coast.

There is a need for better coordination between community transport services and public transport. COTA Tas believes the most cost effective and practical way to increase older people’s use of public transport and to achieve greater coordination of public and community transport services is to create the role of a Community District Coordinator.

Options for action:

1. **Government (state)** to promote and fund greater coordination between existing transport providers including trials of linking services, producing timetables in similar format, similar ticketing systems, etc to eliminate confusion of, and duplication between services. COTA Tas welcomes the Government’s funding of Metro to develop a business case on integrated ticketing and supports further development of such initiatives.

2. **Government (state) and other key stakeholders (TasCOSS and transport providers)** to encourage and support greater links between community transport services and public transport services to provide transport for older people to and from public bus stops.

3. **Government (state)** to fund community district coordinators in local areas throughout Tasmania to coordinate all community transport, in conjunction with relevant providers, to promote community and public transport, taxis and car–pooling and to educate older people about public transport, community transport, taxis and car pooling.

These coordinators could also further investigate the initiatives that operated in two Melbourne municipalities aimed at supporting older people and people with disabilities to develop the confidence to use public transport. These initiatives involved older people and people with disabilities being matched with a volunteer buddy/mentor for a short period of time to support them in accessing public transport by showing them how to read the timetable, how to buy a ticket and accompanying them on their first few trips on public transport.
2 EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

The viability of public transport relies on regular patronage. Older people would use public transport more once they were more confident about using it and knew that it is reliable, safe and accessible.

Many older people have never accessed public transport and to do so would be very daunting and intimidating. For older people who have not previously used public transport, to become familiar with it would require tailored information, promotion and individual assistance. There is a need for greater promotion and information about existing services and how to access them.

Additionally, many older Tasmanians have certain perceptions about modes of transport that impact on their willingness to use those forms of transport. For example, many older people will not catch taxis as they consider it something only “rich people do”, while others fear getting in a taxi with a stranger, ie the taxi driver.

Options for action:

4. COTA Tas to develop a peer education proposal to the State Government for COTA Tas to deliver a peer education session to educate and inform older people about public and community transport options, use of taxis as an alternative method of transport, car pooling, getting about without a car once they give up their driver’s licence, etc.

Note – greater education and promotion would also occur through option 3 on page 4.
AGE FRIENDLINESS

COTA Tas welcomes the Government’s changes that no longer require older drivers to undertake on road assessments at age 85 years and over. However older drivers are still discriminated against in Tasmania as they are required to undertake an annual medical assessment. This is based purely on age, not on any driver accident statistics and is therefore age discrimination.

Not all public transport is accessible thereby limiting access for many older Tasmanians. Public bus stops often lack seating, protection from the weather, signage, and lighting and are not places older people want to frequent.

Access around central city areas is difficult for older people because of distances between key facilities and services, eg post office, hospital, shops and things like hilly terrain. There is also an issue with access for some non-Metro bus depots because of this terrain, and distance from key facilities and services.

Options for action:

5. **COTA Tas** to promote and lobby for transport accessibility for all, including wheelchair access vehicles and bus stops, incorporating universal design principles.

6. **Hobart City Council** facilitates a potential partnership between HCC, Tassielink, Metro, other bus providers and tour operators to trial a small, accessible shuttle bus to shuttle passengers in Hobart between the major bus depots and key destinations such as the hospital, post office and the major shopping precinct.

   This service could be trialled on two or three days per week, including pension days, between the core hours of 10am to 2pm. A similar service is currently being trialled by Hobart City Council on Saturdays for access to the Salamanca Market to and from the Hobart CBD undercover carparks. The City of Launceston operates the free Tiger Bus around key services and facilities in Launceston.

7. **Local community district coordinators** (as proposed at option 3) investigate the potential for local taxi services to offer shared taxis at scheduled times for older people who find it difficult to get to their local shops and services. Such a service operates through the Brisbane City Council.