



# Public Transport Policy

February 2021

# RACT Policy – Public Transport

## Mobility Strategy Pillar: Sustainability

Sustainability is the third component of RACT's mobility strategy. Within this pillar, one of RACT's vision statements is to encourage multiple passenger transport options.

## Public transport policy statements

### Public transport explained

- Public transport and associated infrastructure, such as buses, trains, trackless trams and ferries ensure commuters have access to multi-modal transport options that ease traffic congestion.
- As well as benefitting congestion levels, public transport can also benefit human and environmental health as commuters engage in more physical activity by walking to and from public transport stations.
- Public transport can also provide economical transport options and increase access for individuals with mobility issues.

### Purpose of this policy

- Tasmania's population is growing and as a result, RACT has a strong focus on sustainability through public transport advocacy.
- This policy addresses the co-existence of public transport, cyclists, pedestrians and private vehicles through improved infrastructure, incentives and education.

### Relevance to RACT

- RACT, like all Australian automobile clubs, has transitioned from a sole focus on the motor vehicle to all forms of mobility. This is part of a new outlook that centres on sustainable transport, including public transport options.
- The integration of public transport with cyclists, pedestrians and private vehicles through better infrastructure, incentives and education is an ongoing challenge for all road authorities and stakeholders, including RACT.

## Background, evidence and position

### Background

- A shift of investment towards public and active transport and away from roads and parking can create equal mobility while reducing transport costs, congestion and greenhouse gas emissions (Climate Council, 2016).

- Public transport offers opportunities to increase healthy outcomes as trips can be multimodal through walking or cycling to or from transit (Heart Foundation, 2018).
- However, the dominance of car journeys are a result of current limitations on other modes of transport, notably public transport, but also walking and cycling (City of Hobart, 2018).
- Tasmania's public transport network has few bus priority measures, such as transit lanes, meaning buses are subject to localised congestion and delays (Tasmanian Government, 2012).
- The Tasmanian Travel and Physical Activity Study shows that bus frequency, timetables, complex trips and delays are the main barriers to public transport uptake (Menzius Institute of Medical Research, 2018).
- Tasmania's small and highly dispersed population makes it difficult for the state's public transport system to meet the needs of users in regional and urban fringe areas (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).
- Growth in urban fringe areas across Tasmania has resulted in dispersed, low density residential development, making it difficult for people to access public transport. This poses significant challenges to the provision of fast, frequent and reliable transit services and establishing high patronage routes (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).
- Bus services in regional and urban fringe areas are less frequent, slower and service fewer stops compared to urban and suburban services (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).
  - First and last mile issues are prevalent for Tasmanians living or working in outlying areas, where the nearest bus stop is beyond walking distance. This makes it less likely that a person will use public transport.
  - People who live or work in these areas are forced into vehicle ownership due to a lack of transport options. They require park and ride spaces to connect to public transport routes.
  - Furthermore, Tasmanian commuters often need transport outside the hours in which buses operate, as well as better coordination between connecting services (TasCOSS, 2014).
- However, alternative arguments suggest transit networks that provide wider spatial coverage to low population areas, at the expense of services operating frequently in high population (urban and suburban) areas, are poorly patronised and an inefficient use of resources (Tasmanian Government, 2012).
  - Frequency and reliability of services is an important factor to increasing patronage as this reduces waiting time, travel time and costs for commuters.
- The Tasmanian Government and Metro Tasmania are developing an integrated ticketing system for all bus service providers. It will include real time journey information to improve travel experiences.
- Australian Automobile Association data also shows that public transport fares are quite high when considering the network is solely based on bus services (AAA, 2020). RACT research also shows that concessions are not available to those on low wages.
- Public transport offers opportunities to increase healthy outcomes as trips can be multi-modal, with people walking or cycling at both ends of the public transport journey to get to and from the point of origin and destination (Heart Foundation, 2018).
- Tasmania has the fastest ageing population in Australia, meaning there are more elderly people facing barriers in accessing transit services due to mobility limitations, particularly for those living in outlying areas (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).
- Tasmania's tourism growth has generated increased demand for bus travel (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).

## Evidence

- In Tasmania, 85% of people use a private vehicle to get to work, with about 3% of people across Tasmania taking public transport to work (Transport Access Strategy, 2016).
  - For school related trips within Tasmania, 53% of students travel by bus and 30% by car.

- In terms of major centres specifically, 85% of people in Greater Hobart and 89% of people in Greater Launceston use a private vehicle to get to work. Nationally, the figure is 79% (ABS, 2016, Greater Launceston Transport Vision, 2020).
- Approximately 6% of people in Greater Hobart travel to work by public transport, which is lowest proportion of all Australian capitals - behind Canberra (8%) (ABS, 2016).
  - Approximately 2% of people in Greater Launceston take public transport to work (Greater Launceston Transport Vision, 2020).
  - Approximately 1% of people in both Burnie and Devonport take public transport to work (ABS, 2016).
- Greater Hobart's average commute is 13.8km, while the average commute in Greater Launceston is 9km. The national figure is approximately 16.5km (ABS, 2016).
- The RACT 2018 Greater Hobart Travel Behaviour Survey revealed:
  - 75% of respondents commute by private vehicle, with nearly 50% as the sole occupant
  - 8% of respondents are most likely to travel on public transport in Greater Hobart
  - 30% of people consider that inadequate public transport is the biggest contributor to congestion in Hobart.
- The RACT 2019 Greater Launceston Mobility Survey revealed:
  - 96% of respondents commute by private vehicle, with more than 60% as the sole occupant
  - Less than 1% of respondents travel on public transport in Greater Launceston
  - 21% of people consider inadequate public and active transport facilities to be the biggest concern to mobility in Launceston.
- Approximately 60% of the 1355 respondents to the Tasmanian Travel and Physical Activity Study (TTAPAS) live within five minutes walking distance of a bus stop (Menziess Institute of Medical Research, 2018).
  - However, 58% said they rarely/never used the bus during the week, with 82% rarely or never using buses on weekends.
- Approximately 90% of private dwellings have one or more registered vehicles in Greater Hobart, on par with the national figure. In Greater Launceston, 91% of dwellings have one or more registered vehicles, with Burnie recording 88% and Devonport 87% (ABS, 2016).
- In terms of dwellings, 85% in Greater Hobart, 91% in Greater Launceston, 90% in Burnie and 87% in Devonport are detached. This is typical of urban sprawl and a car-reliant population. Nationally, the figure is 73% (ABS, 2016).
- Approximately 40% of people in the TTAPAS study said that bus frequency, timetabling, complicated trips and delays were the main reasons to avoid using this mode of transport in Tasmania. About 20% said they chose to drive, ride a motorcycle, walk or cycle instead (Menziess Institute of Medical Research, 2018).
  - Other disincentives included: inaccessibility for people with mobility issues or prams, delayed buses, lack of comprehensive stops, excessive costs and walking distance to stops.
- According to the Australian Automobile Association's quarterly Transport Affordability Index, public transport has been found to consistently cost Hobart commuters \$28 per week.
  - While this is far lower than other major capital cities (Perth - \$62, Brisbane - \$56, Sydney - \$50 and Melbourne - \$45), Hobart only has a bus network.
  - These cities have other public transport options, including trams, ferries and trains and a higher public transport patronage, This means that Hobart commuters are paying a significant sum of money when the state's network is solely based on bus services.

## Position

### RACT

- Urges all levels of government to work towards achieving mode share targets and specific public transport actions outlined in RACT's Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston mobility visions.

- Urges the governments and public transport operators, including Metro Tasmania and other providers, to implement and fund high frequency and rapid journeys that are efficient, affordable and reliable across high population areas.
  - Governments and regional public transport operators must also work towards increasing regional service frequency across Tasmania.
- Urges all levels of government to implement priority bus lanes on key arterials, facilitated by the removal or significant reduction of parking, as well as low cost/free park and ride sites and transit hubs based on RACT's Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston mobility visions. These should also be considered in regional areas.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and public transport providers to increase fleet investment, including small, frequent shuttle buses that provide first and last mile connections to key public transport corridors.
  - The government should also consider first and last mile active transport links to public transport through cycleways and walkways, as well as bicycle carriage capabilities as well as storage lockers and showers and public transport terminals.
- Urges all levels of government and public transport providers to consider alternative public transport options, such as ferries, light rail, low/zero emission buses and trackless trams, based on RACT's Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston mobility visions. These should also be considered in regional areas.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government, Metro Tasmania and other public transport operators, including regional providers, to establish a real time travel information and integrated ticketing to allow commuters to make informed decisions. At the time of writing, Metro Tasmania was developing this platform.
  - RACT also encourages government to implement schemes that enable on demand, 'mobility as a service' approach to transport, where people can access multiple forms of public and private transport through an integrated account. This includes ride and car sharing services.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and public transport providers to subsidise fares, including free travel outside peak periods, and loyalty schemes.
- Urges local government and the Tasmanian Government to improve infrastructure at bus stops, alongside local government.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and transport operators to ensure that transport-disadvantaged people, who live away from key corridors, have mobility limitations or need to travel outside peak periods, can overcome transit barriers through:
  - Park and ride sites, efficient connections from urban fringe and regional areas onto high-frequency corridors as well as active transport links to public transport. These would connect regional and urban fringe locations with employment, services and education in CBD or urban areas.
- Urges all levels of government to improve urban planning strategies so residences are closer to public and active transport corridors, employment, education, services, and recreational activities in order to reduce car dependency and transport disadvantage.
- Encourages a coordinated approach between government, researchers and stakeholders to create a public transport culture. This approach would address community education and incentives, health and cost benefits, transport planning, infrastructure, land use planning and social welfare issues through:
  - An updated Public Transport Strategy that is tailored to population growth and increased walking and cycling as well as modern active travel infrastructure.
  - A behaviour change program that educates people on the travel time, health and financial benefits of public transport. This program should also include the provision of incentives, including financial incentives but also those that improve the experience of public transport, such as integrated ticketing systems, real time travel information, increased transit options as well as first and last mile connections to walking and cycling.

## Scope

### Policy Application and Ownership

This policy applies to:

- Tasmanian public transport patrons, pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
- Metro Tasmania and public transport manufacturers
- Bicycle Network Tasmania
- Pedestrian Council of Australia
- Local government
- Tasmanian Government policy makers and ministers
- Australian Government policy makers and ministers
- Local government
- Sustainability and traffic experts

The ownership and responsibility of this policy is with the RACT Board.

## Approvals

Date of approval: [insert date]

Date of review: [insert date]

Signature of CEO: [insert signature]