

12.2.6 Community Bus Review Transition

Report Type	Decision
City Vision Goal/s	Thriving Community
Report Author	Community Services Leader, Community Development
Report Summary	This report provides future recommendations for the Community Bus Service following the Community Bus workshop
Attachments	1. May 2024 Elected Members Workshop Community Bus Review [12.2.6.1 - 9 pages] 2. Transition Plan 2024 [12.2.6.2 - 4 pages]

RECOMMENDATION

Council resolves that:

- 1. The report of the Director Community Development titled "Community Bus Review Transition" be received and noted.**
 - 2. Replace Circuits 1, 2 with a door-to-door, bookable service for eligible residents.**
 - 3. Combine the CHSP Transport and Community Bus Transport passengers together to create greater efficiencies and more transport destination options. This would involve transporting CHSP and Community residents on the same means of transport.**
 - 4. Commence engagement with individual passengers to implement the future transport options of transitioning to the door-to-door service and investigate their preferred transport options to commence the new service model by the end of 2024.**
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Background

The Community Bus services commenced in 1980 at the Enfield Council and in 1988 at the Port Adelaide Council and have been periodically reviewed since. The program services those unable to access other forms of private or public transport for a variety of reasons such as mobility, age and location in relation to services.

In 2022, the changes of the 2021 Community Bus Review were implemented across the Council area. The Community Bus Service moved to two Fixed Route Bus Services (broken into four simplified runs) and two Dial and Ride Services, which are booked door to door services focused on providing affordable and accessible transport services to those in our community who may otherwise find it difficult to participate in community life. The service is delivered by volunteer drivers, supported by a Community Programs Officer.

Report

A workshop was held on 21 May 2024 with Elected Members to brief Elected Members on the progress of implementation of findings from the 2021-22 Community Bus Service review, communicate adjustments made since that review, and to seek feedback on potential future service directions. A situational overview was provided around the patronage on the fixed route circuits which have been declining over the four years prior to COVID-19 (2016-20) - and has significantly declined since (2021-24).

A number of changes were implemented following the 2021 review of the Community Bus service:

- Circuits 1 and 2 were redesigned to provide better coverage, simplified routes and reduced passenger travel time. The fixed circuits were reduced from five days a week to two days per week for Circuit 1 and three days a week to one day a week for Circuit 2 due to driver availability to drive the buses.
- The Dial and Ride bookable services replaced Circuit 3 and 4 and have shown an increase in passengers and trips.

A number of challenges are present with the community bus service as it currently operates:

- The fixed nature of Circuit 1 and 2 creates difficulties for older people or people experiencing mobility issues to be able to walk to the designated pick-up locations on the routes from their homes.
- Volunteer numbers have been declining over the last ten years and the requirement of an LR License means recruitment is challenging. To mitigate this challenge, administration have ordered the replacement of a large bus with two medium sized vans only requiring a car license to drive. These vehicles have been on order since August 2022 but due to COVID-19 and vehicle manufacturing issues they have not yet arrived. Reducing the vehicle size will help navigate several suburbs where streets are narrower. The vans ensure easier alighting and departing of the vehicles for passengers as well as reduced running costs.
- Communication of cancellations of circuits is challenging due to the nature of the transport. Often social media is the only option for communication.

Co-Contribution requirements for CHSP (Commonwealth Home Support Program) transport compared to Community Bus transport, often residents will compare the two services with different costs (**refer Attachment 1**).

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Transport

The CHSP transport service runs as a door-to-door service for eligible residents. The funded service covers the whole council region and provides transportation to nine different shopping centres, social groups and council programs over multiple days.

The program requires a referral from My Aged Care to access the service and residents must have a number of conditions to become eligible, especially around mobility. The service is funded by the Commonwealth Government with funding covering staff coordination and vehicle running costs. All vehicles are purchased by the City of PAE for use in the program. A number of residents use the community bus and CHSP services. A client co-contribution is a requirement of the CHSP services. The client/passenger contribution is \$6 per round trip.

CHSP services use medium-sized vans to provide the transport service as these vehicles have fewer running costs than the bigger buses and have increased accessibility. The costs per passenger per trip is between \$6.10 to \$8.15 across 5 vehicles. These costs are based upon bus fleet costings divided by passenger trips. The CHSP vans have wheelchair access and lifters to enable people to use the lifters instead of climbing steps into vehicles where mobility is a concern and is a more personalised service than the Community Bus.

Recommendation

The Review of the Community Bus service has resulted in the below recommendations for Council's consideration. These recommendations combined with the community engagement received over the last two years will support the Community Bus service to provide an accessible and efficient service for our community.

1. Replace Circuits 1, 2 with a door-to-door, bookable service for eligible residents.
2. Combine the CHSP Transport and Community Bus Transport passengers together to create greater efficiencies and more transport destination options. This would involve transporting CHSP and Community residents on the same means of transport.
3. Commence engagement with individual passengers to implement the future transport options of transitioning to the door-to-door service and investigate their preferred transport options to commence the new service model by the end of 2024.

Door to Door Service

This transition plan outlines the steps necessary to move community members from the current fixed route bus service to a new door-to-door pick-up service. The goal is to ensure a seamless transition that enhances mobility and convenience for all users, particularly older people and those with disabilities or those that are transport disadvantaged.

Transition would commence with a needs assessment of current passengers and assess the geographic distribution of users to plan efficient door-to-door services. All stakeholders in the process would be engaged early and an information campaign planned to explain the changes and attract potential new passengers (**refer Attachment 2**).

The Administration will report back to Council in 2025 about the transition of the Community Bus Service.

City Vision Relationship

Thriving Community - A City where people have the opportunity to connect and flourish. The provision of the Community Bus Service supports community wellbeing by enabling residents to access supports and services they require, as well as participate in community life; supports placemaking by enabling residents to come together for community activities; and leadership – through the responsible use of community resources.

Legislative Context and Related Policies

The Community Bus Service operates in accordance with the Passenger Transport Acts (1994) Passenger Transport Regulations (2009) and Council's Community Transport Policy CD28.

Stakeholder Engagement

A number of stakeholders were consulted as part of the review process, they include:

- Volunteer drivers
- Current Passengers
- Community Members through the Participate PAE
- Elected Members

The Community Bus passengers and the wider community were engaged in September and October 2021 and June and July 2023 through Participate PAE.

Risk Management

Operation of a Community Bus Service carries several risks which are managed through a combination of policy, procedures, accreditation, assessment, and ongoing education.

Financial Management

The expenditure budget for the Community Bus Service in 2023-24 is \$342,400 and in 2024-25 is \$389,200. Budget expenses includes overheads, depreciation of vehicles, salaries, bus maintenance and reimbursements to volunteers as well as new van purchases into the program as part of the vehicle replacement program.

Professional Fees and Contractor Costs

No professional fees or Contractor costs are associated with this report.

Environmental and Social Impacts

Community transport has a positive social impact as it helps to address transport disadvantage for people who experience physical limitations, have limited financial resources, or have limited other public or private transport options. It is also an opportunity for community members to volunteer as bus drivers and give back to their community. Community bus door to door service has the potential reduce the environmental impact of private care/ taxi usage. The change to smaller vans over the larger buses has a positive environmental impact.



Community Bus Review

Elected Member Workshop
21 May 2024

Workshop Format

1. History of the Program
2. CHSP Transport
3. Summary of Previous Reviews
4. Challenges



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History of the Program

The Community Bus services those unable to access other forms of private or public transport for a variety of reasons.

- Overview of Community Transport
 - Community Bus services commenced in October 1980 at the Enfield Council and 1988 at the Port Adelaide Council
 - CHSP Home Support Van Service commenced over 30 years ago
- Periodic reviews are undertaken of the service.
- Social Connection
 - The Community Bus service is not just a transport service but a social connection service throughout the community.
- The Community Bus Service was last reviewed in 2021.



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CHSP Transport

- CHSP Transport provides a door-to-door service for eligible residents aged 65 years and over through the My Aged care system
- Funding for the program is provided by the Commonwealth Government for transport expenses and the City of PAE for capital purchases of vehicles.
- The CHSP Funding Agreement determines that a client contribution to services is required and the national guide for transport is a co-contribution of between \$2-\$12 for a one way trip. PAE = \$6.
- 7,616 trips in 2022-23 year
- 7,847 trips in 2023-24 year (10 months)
- Changes to CHSP - Support @ Home Program from 1 July 2025
 - Individualised Support
 - No block funding



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Summary of Community Bus Reviews

2021 Review

- Changes to 2 Fixed Route Circuits and 2 Door to Door Services in 2022.

2023 Changes commenced

- Circuits 1 and 2 changed to Circuits 1a and 1b, 2a and 2b
- Circuits 3 and 4 changed to Dial and Ride 3 and 4 - door to door pick up services
- Bus 2 removed from the Fleet due to mechanical issues



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Challenges

- Fixed nature of Circuit 1 and 2 creates difficulties for passengers with mobility/health difficulties to access pick up areas.
- Volunteer Numbers
 - Ageing volunteer workforce
- License requirements
 - Volunteers
 - Staff
- Vehicles
 - Obtaining replacement vehicles which are more suitable for the service-supplier shortage
 - Change in street dynamics has created difficulties for the bus to navigate
- Communication with Circuit passengers should the Circuit need to be cancelled
- Co-contribution for CHSP clients and not for other commuters



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Passenger Trends for each Circuit

Circuit	Percentage Change	Trend
1	-63.73	Decreasing ↓
2	-87.20	Decreasing ↓
3	+17.39	Increasing ↑
4	+129.80	Increasing ↑



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Future Options for Discussion

There are several options for the future of the **Community Bus Service**

1) Do Elected members agree with the proposal to:

Replace Circuits 1, 2 with a door-to-door, bookable service for eligible residents.

2) What feedback do Elected Members have regarding:

Consideration to combine the CHSP Transport and Community Bus Transport passengers together to create greater efficiencies and more transport destination options.

This would involve transporting CHSP and Community residents on the same service.

3) Do Elected members support the introduction of a contribution for Community Bus programs that matches CHSP?

A contribution to the service would be recommended that matches the CHSP co-contribution to provide equity across the two transport services.



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Next Steps

Marketing campaign for new volunteer drivers when new vehicles arrive

Determine the feasibility of moving Circuits 1 and 2 to Door-to-Door services

Consider combining the CHSP Transport and Community Bus Transport passengers together

Improve customer feedback, demographic data and service data analysis of service changes



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TRANSITION PLAN

Fixed Route Bus Services to the new Door to Door Pick Up Service



INTRODUCTION

This transition plan outlines the steps necessary to move community members from the current fixed route bus service to a new door-to-door pick-up service. The goal is to ensure a seamless transition that enhances the mobility and convenience for all users, particularly older people, and those with disabilities or those that are transport disadvantaged.

1. ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

1.1 Needs Assessment

Conduct surveys with current bus users to understand their needs and preferences

- Travel on the routes to discuss upcoming changes
- Ascertain needs of current user group
- Review previous data collection to look for potential passenger uptake on new service
- Look at existing runs that may need to be altered due to capacity changes with the implementation of broader community transport model

Assess the geographic distribution of users to plan efficient door-to-door routes

- Create current run listing and separate into pick up zones
- Create GIS to develop online zoning map with available runs

1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Involve key stakeholders in the planning process

- DIT Licencing and Accreditation to advise of proposed changes in current Accreditation Plan
- Media & Marketing contact to discuss requirements
- IT contact to discuss requirements
- Contact Community Centres (Council & Non-Profit) and libraries in the area to ascertain needs
- Contact local Independent Living Units - Retirement Villages in the area ascertain needs

Establish a Transition Group to oversee the implementation and address any concerns

- Regular meetings to be scheduled during transition period
- Update Elected Members via bulletin
- Drivers & Staff group

2. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

2.1 Information Campaign

Develop clear and comprehensive communication materials explaining the new service, benefits, and how it works

- Media & Marketing engaged to develop advertising material
- IT to develop online forms & website updates
- Contact Community Centres (Council & Non-Profit) and libraries in the area to market
- Contact local Independent Living Retirement Villages in the area to market

Utilize various channels such as local newspapers, community bulletin boards, social media, and public meetings to disseminate information

- Media & Marketing – produce updated flyer for community transport including marketing campaign (online & printed)
- Distribution of flyers to Community Centres, Libraries, Shopping Centres, ILU within community, elected members
- Retirement village community talks

2.2 Personal Outreach

- Advise volunteers of the changes to the door-to-door transport service in assisting community members with the transition
- Provide informational sessions at Community Services Team Meeting to discuss the changes to the program and bookings

3. SERVICE DESIGN

3.1 Route Optimisation

Use the data from the needs assessment to design efficient and flexible routes for the door-to-door service

- Look at existing runs and adjust times to allow for maximum capacity
- Re-allocate runs to different vehicles or days as required
- Engage GIS for updated mapping to include updated runs

Ensure coverage of all areas currently served by the fixed route bus service

- Allocate vans runs for each area of council to maximise efficiencies
- Reassign vans to Kilburn Depot to allow shorter travel times for northern volunteers if required

3.2 Scheduling

Develop a user-friendly scheduling system, allowing for easy booking and cancellation of rides

- Online booking form option for registration onto program
- GIS map with update of runs for area
- Ongoing assessment and development of run sheet to be more streamlined

Offer multiple booking options, including phone, online, and in-person requests

- Online booking form – direct notification of booking request to Community Programs Officer (CPO)
- Phone bookings for new requests direct to CPO – Cancellations marked direct on Teams Run Sheet. Drivers notified of changes
- Printed referral form available for residents not able to access online booking form

4. COMBINED COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROGRAM (PILOT/TRIAL)

4.1 Rollout

Transition current Community Bus passengers over to the new program September 2024

- Add passengers to new runs
- Update SMS with transport services
- Update of MS Teams to reflect new services

Implement program commencing October 2024 to whole of community evaluate the new service and gather feedback

- Monitor new referrals for service
- Send out new client survey

Monitor performance, user satisfaction, and identify any operational issues

- Combine current Community Bus and Home Support Van runs. Check monthly with Volunteer drivers on how new runs are working
- Feedback form sent to passengers using service following transition to new door to door pick up service

4.2 Adjustments

Communicate any changes to the community promptly

- Direct phone call to residents of any direct service changes
- Update website of any alterations to the program including any addition or removal of available runs

5. TRAINING AND SUPPORT

5.1 Staff Training

Train drivers and customer service representatives on the new system, including handling special needs of passengers

- Provide informational sessions at Community Services & Customer Relation Team Meeting to discuss the changes to the program and bookings
- Update Volunteer handbooks to include both services

Provide training on the use of new technologies and customer interaction protocols

- Provide volunteer and Community Services Support as required

5.2 User Support

Offer assistance to users in booking and using the new service, including technical support for those unfamiliar with digital platforms

- Library & Community Centre Information session with online bookings
- Training video to be investigated for inclusion on website
- PAE Today advertisement

Provide a hotline for queries and assistance

- Standard Community Services number provided for current customers use – transition to new community transport number for all new enquiries

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Full Rollout

Gradually expand the service area based on pilot results, ensuring no service disruption

- Targeted marketing campaign online, print and facilities
- Volunteer recruitment drive to expand existing service

Continue to communicate updates and provide support during the rollout

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Establish a feedback mechanism to continually gather user input and address issues

- Vehicle Communication box for each vehicle
- QR online feedback form
- Services data analysis of users quarterly and when required

Regularly review service performance and make improvements as needed

- Yearly client feedback form sent to current users of service

7. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

7.1 Regular Reviews

Schedule regular reviews of the service to ensure it meets community needs and maintains high standards

- Look at opportunities in the community to increase travel destinations
- Investigate other transport options from other transport providers

Use feedback to make iterative improvements

7.2 Community Engagement

Maintain ongoing dialogue with the community to understand evolving needs and preferences

- Potentially add a transport feedback online feature
- Feedback forms located on vehicles

Encourage community members to participate in future planning and decision-making processes

CONCLUSION

Transitioning from a fixed route bus service to a door-to-door pick-up service requires careful planning, clear communication, and ongoing support. By following this transition plan, we aim to provide a more convenient and responsive transportation service that meets the needs of our community members.