BUS SERVICE PLANNING IN ADELAIDE

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ABSTRACT: *A review of the planning for new bus routes in Adelaide, with particular reference to the last two years since private bus services were transferred to the Municipal Tramways Trust.*

The paper will discuss the planning problems from both the specialist planner's and the operator's viewpoint. Mention will be made of the advantages of planning for a metropolitan-wide operator compared with the previously existing problems of avoidance of competition. Also discussed will be the continually occurring problems of serving dispersed land uses planned without any thought for service by public transport, in addition to the difficulties associated with providing new bus services in areas where people want them, so long as they are in the next street.

An important question will also be asked: Do we resist change to retain existing passengers, or risk political repercussions and make changes designed to attract new passengers?

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INTRODUCTION

General

Whatever arguments may be advanced in favour of or against the transfer of the majority of Adelaide suburban private bus operators' services to the Municipal Tramways Trust in 1974, the event has provided an excellent opportunity to re-examine Adelaide's bus system with a view to creating a unified route network freed from the constraints applying to the planning of public transport systems provided by different operators. It was in this context that the Minister of Transport set up a Bus Service Planning Group to plan the new bus route system.

Planners and Operators

The Bus Service Planning Group comprised representatives of the South Australian Railways, the Municipal Tramways Trust (now State Transport Authority Rail Division, and Bus and Tram Division respectively), the Highways Department and the Department of Transport. This Group therefore included planners and operators, providing for the kind of interaction that is the theme of this conference. I was the transport planner from the Department of Transport, but have recently transferred to being an "operator" with the State Transport Authority. I therefore have the somewhat difficult task of helping to put theory into practice.

The Bus Service Planning Group provided an opportunity to combine the theories of transport planning with the practicalities of implementing altered and new bus services and the continued operation of those services. Planners often do not realise the detailed problems involved in operating bus services, while operators are often accused of resisting change.

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The Bus Service Planning Group was set up to plan the integration of the former private bus route network with the system of the then Municipal Tramways Trust to form the State Transport Authority system, to plan improvements to that system, and to plan any integration with the rail system considered necessary. Most of the work involved detailed route planning for a four-year period, but was not short-term enough to involve detailed timetable planning. This paper therefore deals primarily with bus route planning as distinct from more detailed operational aspects such as timetables, rosters etc.

PROBLEMS OF PROVIDING A GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTE NETWORK IN AN AREA SERVED BY A VARIETY OF OPERATORS

General

This section outlines some of the route planning problems inherent in a mixed-operator service area, problems which can be overcome to a large extent by unification of ownership.

Individual Operators' Rights and Fears of Competition

In 1973 approximately 100 bus routes served the prescribed area, i.e. that part of Adelaide then under MTT control. Approximately two-thirds of those bus routes were provided by sixteen different private operators, although the larger proportion of patronage was carried on MTT services.

In several areas, the larger operators served fairly well defined geographical areas and service integration and rationalisation within those areas was achievable. In a number of districts, however, smaller operators with only one or two routes each served adjacent areas (often parallel corridors) or

overlapped each other with radial and cross-suburban routes. For example, in Adelaide's south-western suburbs a population of approximately 100,000 was served by eight different operators with a total of 80 buses operating on 15 routes: i.e. an average of 10 buses per operator, 5 buses per route, and a population of 12,500 served by each operator.

These private operators were licensed by the Municipal Tramways Trust, itself an operator. Standards similar to those applying to Trust routes were used in licensing of these operators. In addition, the following factors were considered:-

- public interest
- prevention or minimisation of competition between private operators
- prevention of competition with the MTT's services.

In some cases the operator who was first into an area retained the pick-up rights even when the addition of other services could have improved the service to the public. This was often opportune (as in the case of the longer-distance operators being prevented from serving passengers along MTT bus routes, thus providing a semi-express service), but in some cases could be ridiculous. In one case an operator had pioneered a round-about service of 16 kilometres length and 72 minute frequency from the city to an outlying suburb. A newer operator later provided a much shorter route (11 kilometres) through this suburb to the city. Even though the newer operator provided double the frequency of service he was not permitted to pick up passengers in the area served by both routes.

In another case, a private operator had provided a service from the city to an outlying suburb for many years.

In the 1960's a regional shopping centre was established at a point on the outer section of this route. Other private services from the city were diverted or extended to serve this regional shopping centre, each route traversing a longer distance between the city and the regional centre than did the original route. Under licensing conditions, the altered parallel bus routes were not permitted to show the regional shopping centre as their destination on departure from the city, so most carried it on a special board attached to the bus.

The licensing conditions were apparently designed to protect the "first come first served" principle. Such conditions, however, did not always provide the best service to the public and sometimes were wasteful. In a number of locations routes of different operators (including the MTT) ran on the same or similar routes. Their integration could have provided a better frequency of service or been used to reduce unnecessary total public transport vehicle kilometrage.

In one area, a suburb was left unserved by radial bus services or any coordinated rail feeder service because a private operator had provided a cross-suburban service through the area since the 1920's. The extension of a radial MTT service along the same roads would have meant the end of the private service.

Unification of ownership of services immediately eliminates the fears of competition described above, and provides the opportunity to avoid unnecessary duplication and improve the service to the public.

Need for Profitability

In recent years it has become increasingly difficult

to provide public transport at a profit. Private operators, however, unless subsidised or contracted, have to consider the need for profitability. Until quite recently they could protect themselves against inflation and reduction in total patronage by extending into newly-developing areas where the population is growing faster than the rate of patronage decrease.

While the need for profitability continued, it was not possible to ensure that residents of newly-developing areas would continue to be provided with public transport, or that socially necessary but uneconomic services were spread evenly throughout the metropolitan area and not just provided on MTT services.

Modal Integration

Voluntary integration of different modes (e.g. train and bus) is difficult to achieve where the modes belong to different operators. Not only are fares and timetables difficult to coordinate, but rationalisation of services to provide the best mode for a particular purpose is difficult to achieve. For example, some suburbs 15 or more kilometres from the city would be better served by rail feeder services than by direct radial bus services. Few private operators, however, could be convinced that they should give up their existing long-distance, high fare-paying passengers to the rail system.

At nights and on Sundays the MTT operated empty buses over routes which were also traversed by the longer-distance private limited-stop services, also with empty buses. Unification of ownership can provide for another form of modal integration where at times of such low patronage limited-stop buses become stopping buses.

Lack of Standardised Information Systems

One problem associated with a public transport system provided by a mixture of operators is a lack of standard information. In practice in Adelaide regular users of private bus services were happy with their service and knew when and where it operated. Non-regular users and visitors from other suburbs often have difficulty finding out about a particular service. Lack of adequate destination signs, poorly presented timetables, poor bus stop signing, lack of centralised information services, all contributed to a lack of confidence on the part of non-regulars. These problems could have been overcome with some difficulty, but the unification of ownership has made them easier to solve.

GENERAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

General

This section outlines the general planning principles used by the Bus Service Planning Group in its route planning. Some of these principles have been used elsewhere while some are specific to Adelaide.

Area Service Policy

In planning any new bus system pre-route planning consideration must be given to the operational concept of service to each part of the region to be served. Basic operational concepts in this regard are:-

1) Local or "stopping" radial bus services.
   These are services operating from the downtown area with an average speed of 20 kph and three stops per kilometre.

2) Limited-stop radial bus services.
In Adelaide these are services which operate locally in suburbs more than 10 kilometres from the city, but then provide a fast service through inner suburbs, stopping only to set down passengers on inward trips and pick them up on outward trips. Many of the former private bus services operated in this fashion.

3) Express bus services.
These take various forms, the best examples of which occur in Canberra and Perth where buses operate non-stop between the Central Business District and a suburban interchange, with connections to local services.

4) Feeder bus services.
These operate to and from railway stations or bus interchanges, coordinating with services on the "line-haul" route.

Interwoven with the above are cross-suburban services which can often also serve as feeder services.

In Adelaide, the area within 10-12 kilometres from the CBD has traditionally been served by local radial bus services. Beyond that point limited-stop services operated by the former private companies, with average limited-stop speeds of 32 kph, could save about 10 minutes in travel time to the CBD. A small amount of feeder bus operation took place in Adelaide's outer northern suburbs some 20 to 30 kilometres from the CBD.

This description is by no means absolute, however, and much of the planning involved a rationalisation of the existing operational concept in different areas.

Fortunately, the boundaries of the different service systems were, in most cases, geographically logical and the travel times to and from the CBD by the different concepts appeared to the Group to offer the best solution without major change from the existing system. In a few places it was found that radial stopping services would be better replaced by limited-stop or rail feeder services and vice versa. In one area, for example, a particularly lengthy former MTT stopping radial bus route is to be cut back and replaced by a reorganisation of former private parallel limited-stop bus routes; in another, the outer ends of two lengthy radial routes are to be replaced by rail feeder services; in a third area radial and feeder bus routes are to be reorganised to meet at one rail/bus interchange to give passengers a choice between a lengthy bus journey or a fast rail journey.

These proposals take into account practical aspects; some areas which would theoretically be best served by rail feeder services have for years been partly served by lengthy radial bus routes which have built up a heavy along-line patronage. On some lengthy radial services up to 75% of passengers are, in effect, cross-suburban passengers. Conversion of outer ends of these services to rail feeder services without provision for these along-line passengers would undoubtedly result in a net decrease in public transport patronage.

The Group compared the Canberra and Perth express bus interchange system with the limited-stop system used in Adelaide. Travel time surveys carried out on various roads indicated that express buses could save only two or three minutes

in a ten-kilometre journey when operated on the same arterial roads as the existing limited-stop services. This saving of two or three minutes would then be lost at the transfer point to feeder services. It was concluded that the introduction of non-stop long-distance buses with feeder bus interchange facilities would be difficult to justify without a programme of bus priority such as bus lanes on a freeway or busway.

Route Planning

The following principles were used in the detailed planning of routes:-

- Routes should be planned so that more than 90% of the urban area is situated within 500 metres of a public transport service to the city or a railway station.

- Routes should be planned so that more than 90% of the passengers using the route do not have to travel more than 1.2 times the shortest road distance between their boarding and alighting points.

- Routes should be combined where they are less than 500 metres apart, provided no urban area is left more than 500 metres from a service.

- The number of right-angle turns in a route should be minimised.

- No passengers should have to change vehicles more than once to travel from any suburb to the city.

- It should not be necessary to change vehicles to travel from most parts of the catchment area of a regional centre to that centre.

- It should not be necessary to change vehicles more than once to travel between most parts of the districts surrounding the regional centres.

- Adjacent regional centres should, where possible, be connected by a direct bus route to facilitate cross-suburban movement.

The resultant proposed route network consists of central radial routes fanning outwards from the city and meeting again at the regional centres, with areas beyond the regional centres being served by continuations of the radial routes, rail feeder services or limited-stop services. Each regional centre is linked to the adjacent centre and to the city by direct bus routes.

The route pattern proposed is not of the rectangular grid type sometimes suggested for our cities. Introduction of grid system with few radials would considerably increase travel times in Adelaide because this city is well endowed with radial roads, because low service frequencies would not allow for convenient interchanges, and because regional shopping centres cannot be satisfactorily served in a rectangular grid system. The regional shopping centres and major railway stations will become nodes in the public transport system, providing for convenient cross-suburban travel.

Some of the principles regarding route planning, such as the requirement for direct routes and the need to provide good

coverage, are difficult to achieve in practice. New residential subdivision planning is making the provision of efficient public transport services increasingly difficult. The town planning principle regarding elimination of through traffic continually conflicts with the need to provide a good public transport service. There is a lot of talk about "bus-only" roads (as distinct from bus lanes), but Adelaide has not yet been prepared to try them.

Service Frequency

Although the Bus Service Planning Group did not prepare detailed service timetables, it did prepare some suggested service standards which were used as a guide in planning the routes. Summarised, they are as follows:-

Peak periods: Sufficient services should be provided so that the average load on each bus at its maximum load point does not exceed 80% of its maximum capacity on shorter routes and 65% of its maximum capacity on limited-stop routes. The minimum service frequency should not be less than the minimum daytime off-peak frequency provided that all routes serving developed urban areas are served by at least two buses in the peak hour in the peak direction.

Weekday off-peak periods: During weekday off-peak periods services should be based on the carriage of seated loads, but in any case headways should not exceed the following -

Radial trunk routes close to the city:	15 minutes
Circular suburban service:	15 minutes

Radial services within eight kilometres of the city:	30 minutes
Radial services in built-up areas within 15 kilometres of the city:	40 minutes
Rail feeder services:	30 or 60 minutes
Outer cross-suburban services (generally):	30, 40, 45 or 60 minutes
Radial trunk services in closely settled Hills areas:	60 minutes
Outer Hills and other outer area services:	Intermittent or peak period only

Night and weekend services: The Group considered that some rationalisation of these services will be required. If former private services are to be provided with standards of service similar to former MTT services it will be necessary to improve services on a number of routes. Obviously such improvements could only be justified on social, not economic grounds. Patronage on services regularly operated during the late evenings is presently very poor.

Commencement of Service

Provision of a public transport service at an early stage of the development of new residential areas can encourage the habit of transit riding and possibly reduce the need for families to purchase two cars. On the other hand, provision of such services (particularly when a whole new bus route is

required) can be very costly with little financial return.

Some former Adelaide private bus operators adopted the "habit-forming" approach. One operator built up services to a large suburb by commencing operations early, even to the extent of operating buses across a paddock to reach outlying houses. The same operator was caught out in another suburb with different socio-economic conditions, a suburb which after ten years is still only served by two buses a day in each direction.

In order to minimise deficits, the MTT for some years used a formula based upon an average of 60 return rides per 100 households per day to calculate the viability of a new service. As a result, some suburbs were left without a service until almost fully developed.

Perhaps fortunately, stringent planning requirements now necessitate the rapid development of large new housing tracts. It should not be too difficult, therefore, to justify the provision of services into these new areas on a habit-forming basis.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BUS SERVICES PROPOSED BY THE BUS SERVICE PLANNING GROUP

General

The Bus Service Planning Group gave consideration to two types of improvements to bus services as follows:-

- Those necessary to provide services into newly-developing or poorly-served areas, or to improve connections between different traffic generators,

and which may have been possible regardless of the operator providing the service.

- Those which were made possible by unification of ownership of public transport services; having overcome the problems associated with mixed ownership, it is possible to make improvements which were not possible before for economic reasons or because there was concern about competition between bus operators.

The following sections summarise the categories of improvements proposed by the Group. Some were considered possible regardless of unification, while others were only made possible by unification.

Rationalisation of Service Types

This category of improvement relates to the "area service policies" described previously. Having unified service ownership it is possible to make rational decisions regarding the best mode of transport to serve particular areas. The proposed improvements include rationalisation of service types in the Elizabeth, Ingle Farm and Oaklands areas. Where rail feeder services are proposed, some improvements to rail services and the construction of bus/rail interchanges have been suggested.

Extensions of Services into Newly-Developing Areas

The Group made some 25 proposals for extensions or alterations to routes to serve newly-developing areas. Some of these areas were poorly served for economic reasons, while in others roads were unsuitable or residential density has not previously justified provision of a service.

BUS SERVICE PLANNING IN ADELAIDE

Extensions of Services into Areas Presently Unserved

A number of developed parts of the Adelaide Metropolitan Area are currently not within a reasonable walking distance from public transport routes. These areas have been left unserved (some for many years) for a number of reasons, including -

a) Lack of adequate roads (pavement strength, geometry, or street layout).

b) Areas may have been insufficient in size to warrant provision of a service.

c) The bus operator may have been loathe to introduce a service for economic reasons.

d) Areas may have been slow developing.

The Group has made 16 proposals to serve such areas. A few small areas will continue to be unserved, generally for reasons (a) or (b) above.

Improvements in City Area Distribution

Since its inception the Municipal Tramways Trust practised through-running on public transport services through the city. This not only provided the best city distribution for passengers (particularly to Victoria Square and to the Rundle Street area on north/south services), but also meant that vehicles were used to their maximum on the journey through the city.

Most private bus services, however, have for many

years terminated at the edges of the Central Business District, partly because of a City Council ban on buses using King William Street imposed in 1926, and, since this ban was lifted, because operators considered they could not justify the extra buses needed for extensions through the city. The Tramways did not need extra vehicles for the through-city journey because the through-journey eliminated vehicle layover time.

The Bus Service Planning Group did not consider details of possible through-routing of services as it wished to obtain agreement to proposed suburban routes as a first step. However, the possibility of extensions of former private bus routes through the city, provided bus stop kerb space is available, provides the opportunity for improving city area distribution for a significant proportion of public transport travellers.

Improvements to Route Linking and Extensions to Major Suburban Centres

A Public Transport Attitude Survey undertaken in 1972 indicated considerable dissatisfaction amongst Adelaide residents regarding lack of cross-suburban public transport. Not only are there few cross-suburban services, except in outer suburbs, but there is little linking between radial bus routes. Parallel arterial roads and a desire to minimise distances travelled by public transport vehicles militated against radial routes "touching" each other.

Because the majority of public transport passengers are city-bound, there has been a tendency to ignore, in some cases, the non-city-bound traveller. In a few cases bus routes travel outwards from the city about 10 kilometres to within two or three kilometres of a regional centre. Because there have been other routes serving the regional centre, these particular services have not been extended to those centres,

even though they would cater for different passengers.

In line with the route planning policy described previously, and so as to provide better linking between radial services, the Group has proposed about 20 route alterations or extensions to major centres and another eight extensions to other route "touching" points. These proposals will improve access to regional centres and create interchange points at those centres to allow for convenient cross-suburban travel.

Improvements to Cross-Suburban Services

Linking of radial bus routes at regional centres will not solve the problems of cross-suburban travel in areas less than ten kilometres from the city.

Adelaide has generally had a poor record in the provision of cross-suburban services except in outer suburbs. A number of private bus operators tried a variety of services in the 1940's, but most of these had failed by the mid-fifties. Cross-suburban fixed-route bus routes served only narrow corridors. Their low frequency meant that transfer from other services was particularly inconvenient, while the lack of transfer tickets made two vehicle cross-suburban journeys expensive.

It is proposed to attempt to rectify this situation by running an experimental circular suburban service with a 15-minute frequency along arterial roads some six to ten kilometres from the city. The relatively high frequency and the availability of transfer tickets will reduce some of the disadvantages of former cross-suburban services, while the service will satisfy some social needs.

In additon to the above, the Group has proposed some rationalisation and improvements to cross-suburban services in outer areas, particularly as links between the bus interchange points at regional shopping centres.

Service Integration

The Bus Service Planning Group made a number of proposals to allow for the previously mentioned integration of longer limited-stop services with shorter-distance stopping services at nights and weekends. In some cases it will be necessary to reroute these services so that they follow common routes so as to avoid passenger confusion.

The other type of service integration (which has been discussed previously) relates to the integration of services which follow similar routes to enable savings to be made or a better frequency to be provided.

Improvements to Route Directness

The Group made a number of proposals which, if implemented, will shorten the route length and therefore the travel time of passengers. Some services followed devious or circular routes so as to serve a large number of passengers with a minimum number of buses, but the population density would now allow the provision of more direct routes. In other places private bus routes followed devious routes to avoid competition.

Other Route Improvements

A number of other bus route improvements of a detached nature have been proposed, either to provide a more efficient service or to improve service to the public.

One such improvement is a proposal to eliminate large "loop" terminals. A few Adelaide suburbs are served by radial bus routes which terminate in one-way circular loops of up to a kilometre in diameter which are designed to serve a large area with a minimum number of buses. Unfortunately, these loops usually include a terminal bus layover point at the outer end. Passengers travelling around the loops must wait in the bus at the terminal point for a minimum of five minutes or up to 15 minutes before the bus moves on to the passenger's destination.

Proposals have been made to eliminate these large loops while at the same time continuing to provide satisfactory service coverage.

BUS ROUTE PLANNING PROBLEMS

General

Even with unification of ownership of bus services there are a number of other problems associated with bus route planning. Some of these are associated with the introduction of new bus routes into new areas, while others relate to the reorganisation of bus routes in previously served areas. In the following sections I have described some of the problems.

Serving Dispersed Land Uses

Probably the most significant problem in bus route planning in all Australian cities is the service of dispersed suburban areas and the provision of links between these and major traffic generators. Residents of residential areas expect bus services from their suburb to every major traffic generator; with our present densities it is difficult

to justify even one frequent bus service to serve each suburb.

This problem is made worse by the fact that developers of major traffic generators, private and government alike, spread their developments out so that it is not possible to satisfactorily serve each generator, i.e. regional shopping centres, major educational establishments, hospitals, and other employment centres. These generators are almost invariably located using such criteria as private vehicular access, cheap land, landscaping opportunities and so on. Public transport is sometimes considered but invariably has low priority. Developers are then most surprised to discover that the public transport system in their region cannot immediately be completely reorganised to serve their development. The fact that hundreds of existing passengers would be inconvenienced by a bus route deviation of a kilometre or more does not occur to them.

Because the majority of off-peak public transport trips are shopping trips, suburban bus routes generally focus on regional shopping centres. It has been common practice in Adelaide to locate a university or a hospital several kilometres from the regional centre (and public transport node point) and then expect public transport services to be provided from all nearby suburbs to that university or hospital. Generally, the public transport patronage to these establishments can justify only an infrequent link from the local regional shopping centre, the majority of public transport captives thereby having to use two vehicles to travel to the establishment concerned. The developers then wonder why their car parks are overloaded!

The next step in discouraging public transport use is to set the buildings back from the main road one-half kilo-

metre or more, using the intervening space for car parking, landscaping or playing fields. The bus route planner is then requested to divert buses from the main route into and out of the centre (carrying a majority of passengers not destined for the centre). The bus is also delayed when trying to re-enter the main road.

Regional shopping centres are best located, from a public transport point of view, close to a major railway station. In this way a series of feeder bus routes can serve the regional centre and the station at the same time. In Adelaide, although attempts in the right direction have been made, the regional centres are generally located sufficiently far from railway stations to make efficient service of both centre and railway station operationally difficult.

In this context I put forward a plea for planners and developers of major traffic generators to attempt to consider existing and planned public transport route networks in their locational and design decisions. Sites at public transport network nodes may sometimes be more expensive, but savings can be made in the provision of parking and in the elimination of social costs.

Use of Roads

One of the reasons given for replacement of trams by buses in the 1950's was that buses are more flexible than trams, because trams are confined to tracks. On the contrary, bus routes are, in fact, very inflexible. The bus also requires a track - the road, and the ordinary street pavement will not withstand regular bus traffic for very long.

Once a particular road has been specially constructed

to carry buses, then, even if the route is not a particularly sensible one, it is difficult to alter the bus route to use a street not specially constructed for the purpose.

Similarly, extensions of bus services into new residential areas often cannot be made because roads are not suitable to carry buses or are even left unmade. In Adelaide it is possible to require a subdivider to provide heavy duty roads within his subdivision, but very difficult to have the access roads to the subdivision constructed, as these are usually a local government responsibility. Local governments are loathe to construct these roads until they obtain rates from the subdivisions in question. As a result, the access road is not built until the subdivision has been occupied for some time. By that time the residents have purchased two cars and have no real need for a bus service.

Roads can also be geometrically unsuitable for bus traffic, or, as touched upon previously, residential layout may preclude the operation of a bus service. Attempts are now being made to ensure that provision is made in new subdivisions for roads suitable for bus services. However, this usually becomes a compromise with others whose desire is to restrict through traffic.

A not insignificant problem associated with the operation of buses along streets which previously had no bus service is associated with the feelings of residents of that street. Everybody wants a bus service as long as it is in the next street. When told about a possible new bus service along their street, residents immediately allow their emotions to exaggerate the likely effect of buses on the residential environment. They imagine a continuous line of buses all travelling at 60 kilometres per hour with the one exception that each bus

will stop at the bus stop, which will be placed immediately in front of their house. The buses will kill children in their path, will wake residents with their continuous noise at night, and will pollute the neighbourhood.

Buses have their problems, but the above comments are a gross overstatement. Residents living on bus routes in new residential areas would be lucky to get two buses per hour, and very fortunate indeed to have any buses at night. There will probably be no more buses than other service vehicles, i.e. baker, milkman, oil tanker, etc.

Local councils are sometimes concerned about the effect new bus routes will have on retailers in their area. Several councillors recently objected to a new bus route which connected an established shopping conplex with a new regional shopping centre in Adelaide. They claimed that the bus route would take customers away from the old centre, but could not understand that the same buses could also bring new customers to the old centre.

Some years ago a council prevented a radial bus route being extended to a regional shopping centre, using the argument that a road which was proposed to be used was not suitable. The real reason was apparently that the bus route served several minor shopping centres (of about four shops each) and the shopkeepers were afraid of a loss of trade to the regional centre.

Bus operators are not in business to promote particular shopping centres, but rather to provide a service to the general public.

T.J. Wilson

Resistance to Change

Probably the most significant problem to be faced in making alterations to bus routes so as to provide an improved service is the general resistance to change among many of those concerned with the bus services in question, and with some reason.

Firstly, existing bus services are carrying existing passengers. Any variation to a bus route, which to the planner would appear to provide a better service to the public at large, may not necessarily provide a better service to all the people using the existing service. The existing passengers may be captives to that service, while the new patronage which the planner is hoping to attract to the altered service is a somewhat unknown quantity. This new patronage is not presently captive and does not shout as loudly as the people who are upset by a change. This reaction therefore affects the politicians, local councillors, and bus operators alike.

Any change to bus services introduced to provide an improved service for a greater number of potential passengers must be well publicised, with the reasons given for the change. These reasons and the publicity must be given to all potential passengers; it is of little use to inform only those passengers using the existing service. As they may not always be the ones to benefit from the change such limited publicity is a sure recipe for failure.

Should we therefore retain bus routes as they are, with their particular idiosyncrasies, avoiding public objection, or should we be brave and make alterations designed to improve the service to the public at large in the hope of attracting new patronage?

BUS SERVICE PLANNING IN ADELAIDE

I recommend that the "brave" approach be adopted. In planning new or altered bus routes we are catering for the travel habits of people possibly for the next fifty years. If bus routes are not improved now (at the risk of upsetting a few) then we can expect future patronage to fall off at an even faster rate. In these times people do not often complain about the fact that they have no bus route to cater for their needs, they merely purchase a car.

The "brave" approach must be accompanied by a good community relations programme. Unfortunately, public transport operators are usually short of funds or personnel to carry out this work. Let us hope that this situation can be rectified.