Session 3a

GROWTH & DEMAND I

WEDNESDAY 28 AUGUST 3.30 - 6.00PM

COMING OUT AND GETTING AROUND:
REMOVING BARRIERS IN TRANSPORT FOR
VULNERABLE USERS
Ian Ker

THE EMERGING NEEDS OF THE MAJORITY -
WOMEN, YOUNG AND OLD
**Jenny Morris, Meegan McPherson
& Tony Richardson**

AUCKLAND AT THE CROSSROADS
Ross Rutherford

ROAD SAFETY AT REASONABLE COST
**Tony Bliss, Jagadish Guria, Wayne Jones & Nigel
Rockliffe**

ATRF 96

Session Chair: Tony Richardson

COMING OUT AND GETTING AROUND: REMOVING BARRIERS IN TRANSPORT FOR VULNERABLE USERS

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ABSTRACT

Even the most efficient of our transport systems presents substantial barriers to many users and, more important. potential users Some of these barriers are obvious; others are hidden. Some are physical; others reside in our perceptions and attitudes In recent years, these barriers have been highlighted by the passage of disability discrimination legislation, which has seen the development of (draft) disability standards and a series of Action Plans in Australia The issues are equally relevant, however, for other groups of disadvantaged transport users, such as cyclists and pedestrians.

The paper attempts to develop a synthesis of approaches to providing access for vulnerable transport users. to replace the apartheid mentality which still (too often) exists (i) between these groups and the generality of transport policy planning and systems development and (ii) between these groups themselves

It draws on the Perth (Western Australia) Metropolitan Transport Strategy and other integrated' transport strategies produced in recent years, both in Australia and overseas In many cases it is not clear whether the rhetoric will be matched by performance, or indeed, whether the rhetoric itself is all it claims to be

The paper will specifically look at the reality of and the potential for genuine integration of the planning in Perth for cyclists. pedestrians and people with disabilities It will also address the key issue of ensuring the planning produces real outcomes through integration in implementation

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Introduction

Legislation at National level and in all States and Territories, except Tasmania, has recognised the problems faced by people with disabilities in gaining access to the things most of us take for granted. In many cases, this arises not as a necessary consequence of disability but because facilities and services have not been designed with sufficient regard for the needs of consumers with disabilities.

Developments under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act, 1992, have occurred in two principal areas: *disability standards* and *action plans*. This paper assesses aspects of the development and implementation of both, with particular reference, in the case of action plans, to *Going Out and Getting There*, the action plan developed for public transport in Perth, Western Australia.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992

The needs and rights of people with disabilities as members of these communities, rather than as an isolated community, are now enshrined in legislation. The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), 1992, is the Act under which most major developments are taking place. The requirements of State/Territory Acts vary but, nevertheless, have important implications. [The WA Disability Services Act (DSA), 1993, for example, requires all public authorities (including local government) to prepare a Disability Services Plan, covering all contacts with the public, by 1 January 1996 This has a broad interpretation, not simply activities such as counter services.]

This paper refers primarily to the DDA. Where the DDA and State or Territory legislation are incompatible, the DDA prevails.

The objects of the DDA (Section 3) are:

❏ to eliminate as afar as possible discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability;
❏ to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights as the rest of the community; and
❏ to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

The DDA has three principle components.

❏ Provision for the proclamation of *disability standards* (Section 31) to apply to:

  • employment
  • education
  • accommodation
  • provision of public transportation services and facilities
  • administration of Commonwealth laws and programs in respect of persons with a disability.

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There are no exemptions from the application of disability standards (Sections 32/33), but at the time of writing none has been proclaimed. Draft disability standards for public transport have been submitted to Ministers for Transport for endorsement.

❑ Provision for service providers to develop *Action Plans* (Sections 59-65) to demonstrate their intention to remove discrimination and how they will do so. An *action plan* can be a substantial defence against complaints of discrimination, but cannot create an exemption from a *disability standard.*

❑ Provision for individuals to make *complaints* of discrimination on the grounds of disability with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Section 69).
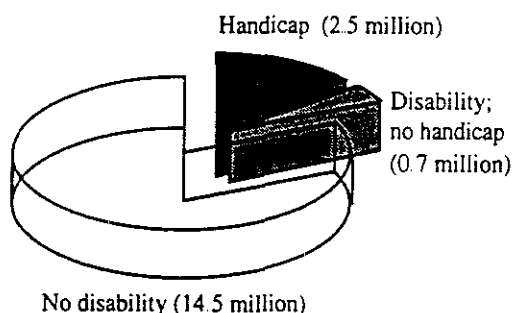
In respect of public transport, complaints have been made in all States and Territories, except the Northern Territory. [The Northern Territory announced, in September, 1994, that all replacement buses for Darwin City Transit and for services operated under contract to the NT Government would be wheelchair accessible.] The focus of these complaints has been on access for people in wheelchairs, as being the most difficult characteristic of physical disability to cater for. The outcomes, however, have recognised the full range of disabilities. They have also included a requirement to consult directly with people with disabilities in the development of action plans.

The outcomes have also recognised that retrofitting existing vehicles and infrastructure to enable access is often not the most effective way of enhancing access for people with disabilities, and that, as a consequence, full accessibility will take many years to achieve.

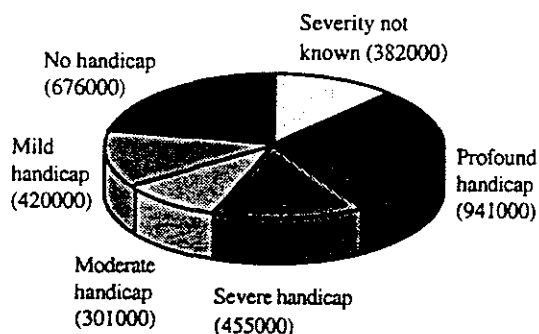## The Communities of People with Disabilities

Nearly one Australian in five has a disability. One Australian in seven has a handicap (Figure 1). The extent to which disability creates a handicap varies from 'not at all' to 'profoundly' (Figure 2). Fewer than 5 per cent of people with disabilities live in institutional care; the vast majority live and work in the wider community.

Fig. 1 How Many Australians with   Fig. 2 Severity of Handicap among
        Disabilities and Handicaps?   Australians with Disabilities

Handicap (2.5 million)

Disability; no handicap (0.7 million)

No disability (14.5 million)

Source: ABS (1993)

Severity not known (382000)

No handicap (676000)

Mild handicap (420000)

Profound handicap (941000)

Moderate handicap (301000)

Severe handicap (455000)

Source: ABS (1993)

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One in ten Australians has a mobility handicap that makes accessing conventional transport either difficult or impossible. There is not one single 'community' of people with disabilities, but many different, overlapping 'communities of interest'. The nature of handicapping conditions varies considerably (Figure 3).

Fig. 3 Handicapping Conditions Potentially Affecting Mobility

Physical: musculo-skeletal
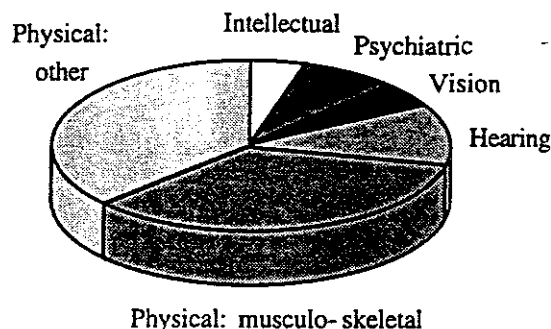
Source: Vintila (1994) (data for Western Australia, 1988)

Access to and through Transport

The transport needs of people with disabilities are similar to those of other people - and equally varied. Most of the solutions that address these needs are to be found in the mainstream transport sector, but greater attention needs to be paid to the total trip, from door to door - not just the vehicles and direct vehicular infrastructure.
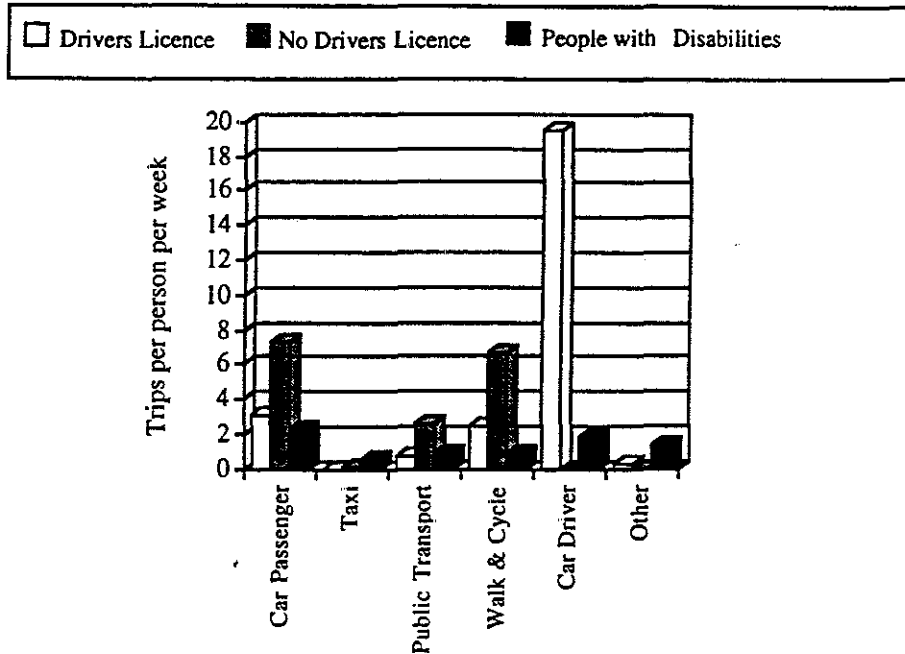
People with disabilities make many fewer trips than the general community (Figure 4). This means they have significantly less access to opportunities, such as employment, education social interaction and recreation, and to services and facilities, such as health services, shops and businesses.

People with disabilities make only a third of the number of trips (8 per week) as the rest of the community (24 per week). When they do travel, they make much greater use of public transport (25% of trips compared to 8%), but still make fewer public transport trips than the non-disabled.

The greatest mobility deficiency for people with disabilities arises from the more common inability to drive a car. This is an often unavoidable consequence of disability. The lesser use of walk and cycle modes clearly distinguishes those with disabilities from others who cannot drive a car.

People with disabilities are substantially less likely to travel as passengers in cars or public transport vehicles, a deficiency which is only redressed to a very limited extent by greater use of taxis and other modes (mainly community or disability-group transport). The low level of car passenger travel reflects the limited support networks many people with disabilities have, which in turn is partly a result of their being less able to get out and about to meet people

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Fig. 4 How Often and How People with Disabilities Travel

☐ Drivers Licence   ■ No Drivers Licence   ■ People with Disabilities

(Chart: Trips per person per week, y-axis 0–20; categories: Car Passenger, Taxi, Public Transport, Walk & Cycle, Car Driver, Other)

Sources: Socialdata (1987); Vintila (1994).

Accessible Public Transport

Most people make only a small proportion of their trips by public transport, largely because of the convenience of the private car. People with disabilities often do not have independent access to a private car, nor are they able to travel easily by other modes - only in the case of taxis do they make more trips than non-disabled people, a fact which reflects the door-to-door nature of the taxi service and the availability of user concessions for people with disabilities.

For those people with disabilities who are able to make their way to a bus stop or train station, accessible public transport would greatly broaden the range of activities they could independently access.

The concept of accessibility is as broad as the range of barriers which prevent independent access, which may be physical, vision, hearing, cognitive, intellectual or psychiatric. Until recently, however, the concept of accessible public transport has been bedevilled by its identification with a cumbersome technology (vehicle-mounted lifts) which only benefit, even in principle, a small number of people and, in practice, an even smaller number.

Disability Standards

In October 1994, following complaints in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth about discrimination in respect of various aspects of public transport in those cities, the Australian Transport Council established a taskforce to advise on the development of such standards.

In April 1995, ATC endorsed a strategy of accessibility based on the following principles for the development of disability standards for accessible public transport:

❑ The urgent preparation of standards to be issued by the Federal Government under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992.

❑ Change over to accessibility as equipment is replaced at the expiry of normal service lives, subject to a target timeframe of 20 years with significant gains being made in 10-15 years.

ATC established a broadly-based (government, industry, consumers, local government) taskforce to develop draft standards and a separate, government-only, taskforce to investigate financial issues associated with implementation of standards.

The Standards Taskforce consulted with the community (DDA Taskforce, 1995) and individual members worked with their own constituencies to develop draft standards which represent the most cost-effective means of providing accessibility to public transport for people with disabilities within the terms of the DDA. Recognising, however, that standards would be unable to cover every situation, the Taskforce included provisions for:

❑ 'equivalent access' as a means of meeting the requirements; and

❑ operators to argue 'unjustifiable hardship' on a case by case basis

Intentionally, the Taskforce did not agree to include potential for 'blanket' exemptions.

The private bus industry, in particular, has been arguing that the financial implications of the Draft Standards are more than it could be expected to bear, and that funding should be available from government to cover additional costs. However, it is important that any funding arrangement does not give a competitive advantage to either the public or private sectors.

Going Out and Getting There

Going Out and Getting There aptly describes the motivation of the people with disabilities whose complaints to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission led to the *Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport for People with Disabilities in Perth* (Western Australia, 1996). It also describes the intended long term outcome.

In November 1994, an agreement was reached in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) between three complainants and the Department of Transport to develop, in consultation with people with disabilities, an Action Plan for an accessible transport system for metropolitan Perth, under the DDA.

This agreement committed the WA Minister for Transport and the WA Government to *creating a passenger transport system that facilitates the equal use of all service in Perth by people with disabilities.*

Key Issues

The Action Plan identified accessibility enhancements needed for people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, vision, hearing, cognitive and intellectual. It recognised, however, limits to the extent to which independent accessibility is feasible. These limits arise primarily because of the limitations of technology, the range of users with different needs and characteristics or because needs (eg for personal or medical care) associated with disability dominate the transport requirement.

Whilst physical access to transport vehicles and infrastructure is the most visible barrier, policy and planning, access to infrastructure, information, communication and attitudes are important for some people with disabilities. Access enhancement, in the broad sense, benefits a wide range of people who are not normally recognised as having a disability, including the frail aged, parents with young children and pushers, people carrying luggage, people who need glasses and others who have difficulty reading.

The key areas identified for reform are:

❑ Consumer involvement at all stages, including the development of policy for transport, the strategic and operational planning of transport systems, the contracting of transport service provision and the training of staff who provide service.

❑ The availability of information for journey planning, including interim information until a fully-accessible system has been achieved, recognising that some consumers (eg blind and vision-impaired) will always require alternative, specialised formats.

❑ Physical access to vehicles, through a continuous and convenient level or ramped access path which is continuous from the external environment, through the access infrastructure (station, bus station, bus stop, ferry terminal) into the vehicle.

❑ Physical access within the vehicle, including adequate manœuvring space, allocated space for mobility aids, seating configurations (eg for those who have difficulty with low seats or for accommodating a service animal) and storage for mobility aids (eg walking frames).

❑ Sensory access to and within vehicles, including identification of access paths, vehicles and routes, colour contrast and tactile information and predictability of the public transport environment.

❑ Cognitive access to transport, especially in the case of transport options, such as the taxi user subsidy scheme, for which there are special requirements.

❑ Attitudes and behaviour of the travelling public and of staff providing service to the customer.

❑ Areas such as community transport and the pedestrian environment, where Transport has little or no formal role and must rely on strategies to influence others.

Principles

In addition to the Objects of the DDA (above) and the Principles of the DSA (Table 1), three transport-specific concepts formed the basis for the Action Plan.

Table 1   Principles of the WA Disability Services Act, 1993

Principle 1:	People with disabilities are individuals who have the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity.
Principle 2:	People with disabilities, whatever the origin, nature, type or degree of disability, have the same basic human rights as other members of society and should be enabled to exercise those basic human rights.
Principle 3:	People with disabilities have the same rights as other members of society to realise their individual capacities for physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.
Principle 4:	People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to services which will support their attaining a reasonable quality of life in a way which recognises the role of the family unit.
Principle 5:	People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to participate in, direct and implement the decisions which affect their lives.
Principle 6:	People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to receive services in a manner which results in the least restriction of their rights and opportunities.
Principle 7:	People with disabilities have the same right of pursuit of any grievance in relation to services as have other members of society.

Principles 8 and 9 deal specifically with access to accommodation and residents of country areas, respectively, and are not relevant to metropolitan public transport.

Equal Access Opportunity

Within its areas of competence, which will evolve over time in response to the Action Plan and future Government policy initiatives, Transport agreed to support and manage passenger transport services in Metropolitan Perth in ways which facilitate equal access for all members of the community, including the delivery of services which:

❑ support the principles and objectives of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992, and the Disability Services Act, 1993;

❑ are suited to the varying needs and capacities of people with disabilities;

❑ promote integration of people with disabilities;

❑ have regard to the varying economic circumstances of people in the community, including people with disabilities whose incomes are generally relatively low;

❑ recognises the role of people, as well as systems, in delivering accessible services;

❑ seek to achieve efficiency without undermining the above objectives.

The Action Plan includes commitments to ensure accessibility, where Transport has the power to do so, or to exert influence upon responsible agencies where it does not have the power to implement directly.

Principal Actions

The Action Plan included a detailed list of actions, against each of which was recorded:

☐   who was responsible for implementation;

☐   when it would be completed by; and

☐   where possible, commitment of the resources required.

These actions related not only to physical, communications and attitudinal aspects of the public transport system in Perth, but also to:

☐   policy, planning and regulation;

☐   the pedestrian environment;

☐   internal awareness of accessibility issues in Transport;

☐   implementation - appointment of a DDA Co-ordinator and a Consumer Advisory Committee;

☐   external communication of the Action Plan, including to the travelling public, about improvements to the Transperth system for passengers with disabilities; and

☐   monitoring, review and continuing improvement, including review and upgrading of the Action Plan, within 6 months of *disability standards* being proclaimed, where it did not already meet or exceed those standards.

Handing over the Baton

A plan is all very well, but will it be put into practice?

The Plan was developed by project teams drawn from the responsible areas of Transport, Westrail and Metrobus, in conjunction with a Consultative Working Party of people with disabilities, to ensure that the actions were feasible and to maximise 'ownership' by those who would have the responsibility to implement.

To reinforce the implementation aspect, an actual baton handing over ceremony was held, at which batons made of sections of high-visibility 'handrail' were presented by the co-ordinators of the Action Plan process to each 'implementer'. Each baton contained an agreed list of actions for which that person was responsible.

The ceremony was prominently reported in the Department's staff newspaper, which served the added purpose of increasing awareness within Transport of the commitments.

Accessibility Through Mobility

Accessibility through mobility is an essential element for the full participation of people in society. Accessible transport services provide an indispensable element of the integration of people with disabilities into the wider community, whether they are seeking opportunities to participate in education, in the workforce, in civic affairs or in recreational or any other social activity.

The Department agreed to pursue the objects of the DDA and DSA by promoting the development of a coherent network of accessible services which included:

❑ accessible line haul services, including rail (which already has a high level of accessibility) and longer-distance route buses;

❑ accessible feeder services, especially those which can also provide flexible transport within local areas and to line haul systems for all people, including, but not only, those with disabilities;

❑ taxi services which better meet the needs of people with disabilities, through better vehicle design (more accessible 'conventional' taxis) and better availability of wheelchair-accessible taxis, at an affordable cost to the user and the community.

The above were acknowledged also to provide substantial benefits to others in the community, through greater ease of using services.

For those persons or travel purposes which cannot be served effectively by the above, para transit services, including 'community transport' and specific disability transport services, can provide alternatives. Efficient organisation and co-ordination of such services is essential if their effectiveness in meeting the mobility needs of people with disabilities is to be maximised.

The Accessible Transport Chain

Underlying all the progress in the field of independent mobility is the concept of the transport chain. No one transport mode, however accessible, makes up a whole journey. A world in which truly independent mobility is possible will only be achieved when the pedestrian environment is barrier free - and increasingly there will be pressure on local authorities to ensure that this is achieved. Nor is it just a matter of vehicles and systems or of streets and pavements. Equally important links in the transport chain are information (before and during a journey) and training of all those involved in providing a service. (Department of Transport, UK (1995 p3))

An accessible transport system must also include access to the system *(footpaths and bus stops, ferry, bus and train stations)*, access for accessible vehicles (some traffic calming devices potentially impede or prevent access for low-floor vehicles or produce motion which can be dangerous for people with disabilities), information about the system (eg. for the sight- or hearing-impaired) and service providers who are aware of and respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

But Doesn't Accessibility Cost Heaps?

Well... Yes ...

The capital cost of making public transport accessible to people with disabilities could be up to $1.65 billion ($1.1 billion for fleet and infrastructure capital plus $550 million for modifications to kerbing and bus stops), based on information from State and Territory transport agencies and from the Australian Bus and Coach Association and the Australian City Transit Association.

The incremental operating cost of accessible buses has been estimated by ABCA/ACTA to be as high as $2.1 billion per year. However, these estimates include assumptions about two-person operation being required, non-usability of wheelchair-accessible spaces when not in use by a person in a wheelchair (no allowance for folding seats), and the extent of full-load operations. Since this estimate was made, the draft standards have been modified to include 'equivalent access' provisions, which may remove capacity losses in the case of coaches and school buses.

A more conservative approach, based on information from State and Territory transport agencies, suggests an upper limit of around $200 million nationally.

... but not as much as you might think ...

Whilst the capital cost of $1.65 billion sounds a lot:

❑ It represents less than $5 per Australian per year.

❑ It does not allow for the reducing cost of accessibility as the accessible vehicle becomes the industry standard.

The incremental cost of accessibility through low floor buses is rapidly reducing as the low floor bus becomes the industry standard. Whereas the current differential is around 10% ($25-30000 per bus), contracts have been reported in the United Kingdom (Local Transport Today, various issues) with 5% increments and the cost could go as low as 2%.

❑ It does not allow for the fact that a significant part of the work on particularly simple infrastructure and bus stops/kerbing will be done as part of normal maintenance and refurbishment (ie not as a special activity).

❑ In Western Australia, the electrification, refurbishment and extension of the suburban rail system has already incorporated most accessibility requirements simply as a matter of good practice in modern railway design. Other public transport systems (not only rail) could be expected to do the same, progressively, irrespective of whether disability standards are proclaimed or not.

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Whilst the potential additional operating costs seem high:

❑ Overseas experience (admittedly limited) tends to suggest that there can be improvements in passenger boarding times which offset the additional time for the relatively small number of wheelchair users to board (Transportation Research Board, 1994).

❑ There is also the question of fare revenue, albeit often at concession rates. Some simple, hypothetical arithmetic clearly demonstrates that, provided you don't have to buy more buses, the fare revenue from additional passenger journeys resulting from enhanced accessibility can go a substantial way towards recovering costs.

Using some not unreasonable assumptions, it can be demonstrated that fare revenue and savings in other transport programs for people with disabilities can achieve significant rates of cost recovery. Assuming:

- all additional trips can be accommodated on the existing number of buses;
- the incremental capital cost of accessible buses is 10% for 5 years, 7.5% for the next 5 years and 5% thereafter;
- additional maintenance costs of accessible buses are 10% annually of the incremental capital cost;
- 25 per cent of additional bus trips would otherwise be made by taxi under the Taxi User Subsidy Scheme;
- additional trips accrue more slowly than the introduction of accessible buses in the early years of the program (see Figure 5, which shows the anticipated schedule for introduction of accessible buses as a comparison).

Fig. 5 Assumed Benefit Profile*

Fig. 6 Cost-Recovery* from Accessible Buses
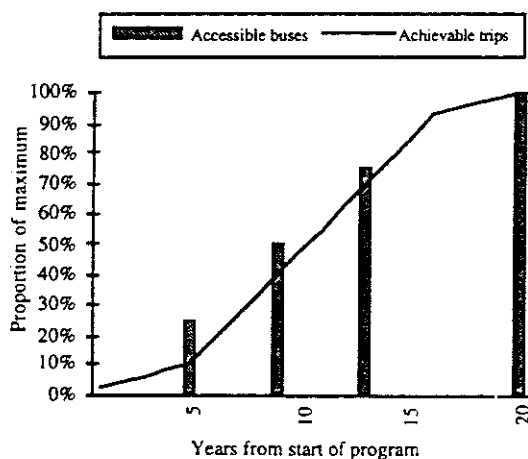
*   As proportion of benefits (trips) achieved with a totally accessible bus system
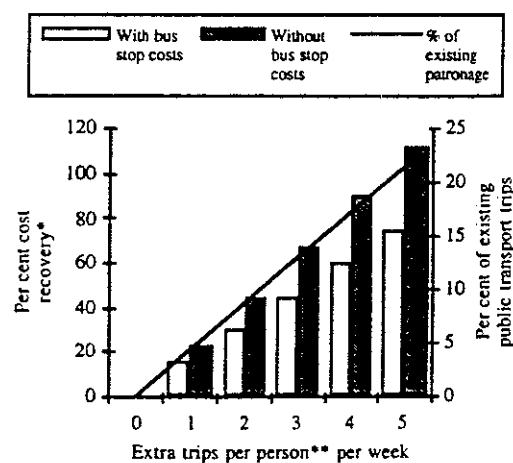
*   Cost recovery through concession fares and savings in Taxi User Subsidy Scheme in present value terms (inflation 3% pa; interest rate 10% pa)

**   Extra trips per person with severe or moderate mobility handicap, when system fully accessible.

Additional benefits will accrue as people without specific mobility handicaps also appreciate the enhanced accessibility of low-floor buses.

Second time round (ie replacement of first-generation accessible buses), the cost recovery potential is greater, as the full benefits accrue right from the start - the whole system is already accessible - and the costs are lower, as the accessible bus has become the industry standard.

Whilst the situation is clearly less favourable to cost recovery in the case where additional buses would need to be purchased (ie where a significant number of the additional trips are in the peak periods), this would have the effect of increasing service frequency and the attractiveness of public transport to all users. The elasticity of demand for public transport with respect to service quality (including frequency) is greater than that with respect to fare levels (Travers Morgan 1991).

It has also been demonstrated that there are substantial benefits to other sectors of government activity, particularly health and related services, which are no less real for being difficult to quantify and even more difficult to 'extract' in ways which could be used to fund the transport accessibility

... especially if you do it right first time.

The experience with accessible buses under the Americans with Disabilities Act was that retrofitting buses with lifts was expensive and that very few people in wheelchairs actually used the buses.

Lifts, however, do not provide benefits to anyone other than the severely disabled. When they are used, lifts are slow (taking several minutes to load/unload passengers), disrupting service schedules and clearly marking out people with disabilities as being 'different'.

For the same sort of cost, even now, a low-floor accessible bus provides benefits to a wide range of users and potential users, including the elderly, the very young, parents with children, the temporarily incapacitated and people with luggage without adding to loading or unloading time. Ramp deployment, where needed, takes only a few seconds and even on those occasions when a person in wheelchair accesses the bus, loading time is quite short - the person accesses the bus and the wheelchair space within it independently.

What Else for Accessibility?

It is all very well having accessible public transport, but this is not of much use if you either can't get to the bus stop or train station or can't access the activities most of us take for granted when you get to the business end of your journey

The Pedestrian Environment

Transport departments do not generally have a formal or statutory role in relation to the pedestrian environment, outside transport infrastructure (bus and train stations). They may have a limited role in respect of bus stops, which are mainly on property controlled by local governments (Walters and Ker, 1995).

Transport departments do, however, have a role in:

❑ influencing land use planning and urban design to enhance accessibility to and through transport for all people (eg in WA, through the Director General's membership of the WA Planning Commission)

❑ enhancing the interface between public transport and various forms of access to it, including park and ride facilities and the immediate access to transport infrastructure

❑ working with local government, developers, planners and others to integrate the provision of transport with urban development.

Some specific examples of barriers and potential solutions which lie within the ambit of Transport departments are listed in Table 2.

Table 2   Barriers and Solutions in the Pedestrian Environment

Barriers	Solutions
The major transport-related barriers are in terms of the lack of clear, continuous and convenient access paths between public transport access points (bus stops, bus and train stations, ferry terminals, taxi ranks) and the places people wish to access. These are issues of both *planning* (connecting appropriate places) and *design* (connecting in a way which is accessible to people with disabilities) Information (eg pedestrian crossing visual or auditory signalling) is also an issue.	Transport agencies can: • promote appropriate land use planning and development control policies and their adoption by the WA Planning Commission (or equivalent in other States/Territories) • develop comprehensive access plans for centres of activity, including central business district(s). • seek agreement with local authorities on the progressive upgrading of bus stops to parallel the introduction of accessible buses on specific routes • draw the attention of local authorities to the Austroads guidelines (Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice: Part 13 - Pedestrians) which address the needs of people with disabilities • clearly identify responsibilities for parking control at individual bus and train stations and seek more effective signing and enforcement of regulations.

Synergies and Symbiosis

It is all too easy to fall into the trap of seeing no people with disabilities in a particular situation and then assuming that there is no demand from people with disabilities for that facility or service. The reality, more often than not, is that the demand is there, but the way things currently are precludes access.

Involving people with disabilities in the planning and design processes will often identify problems and suggest cost-effective solutions which would not otherwise be obvious to a person without a disability.

Thought about at the right time, the needs of people with disabilities are often not difficult or costly to accommodate. Doing so in appropriate ways will often provide benefits to the non-disabled as well, but only if the needs of people with disabilities are considered in the same context as those of the general community.

For example, the initial emphasis of complaints under the DDA on access to public transport for people in wheelchairs ran the very real risk of diverting attention from the broader range of disabilities and the potential for a more generally accessible form of public transport at a similar cost. Given that there is vocal concern being expressed by the private sector bus industry about the cost of the form of accessibility now being proposed, how much more substantial would this concern have been if the cost were seen to benefit 'only' those people in wheelchairs.

In contrast, rectifying errors and omissions will often be expensive, disruptive and of benefit only to a limited number of people.

For this reason, the author is wary of *access committees* which are restricted to people with disabilities. A more effective means of making progress is likely to be through more broadly-based access committees which ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard but create the opportunity for development of programs to benefit all residents.

Conclusions

Nearly one Australian in five has a disability. Fewer than 5 per cent of people with disabilities live in institutional care; the vast majority live and work in the wider community. One in ten Australians has a mobility handicap that makes accessing conventional transport either difficult or impossible. The transport needs of people with disabilities are similar to those of other people - and equally varied. Most of the solutions that address these needs are to be found in the mainstream transport sector, but greater attention needs to be paid to the total trip, from door to door - not just the vehicles and direct vehicular infrastructure.

Local government plays a key role in the provision of facilities to support accessible public transport services, not only through the provision of roads for vehicles, but also through the design and provision of footpaths, kerb ramps, street furniture, public

transport access, signs and the means of ensuring that transport and related facilities do not become barriers to access for people with disabilities.

Programs to enhance accessibility must be developed and implemented in conjunction with people with disabilities, but not simply as an isolated group separate from the mainstream. Continuing to treat people with disabilities as 'affirmative action' candidates will mean that many opportunities are missed and the cost of accessibility will be much higher than it needs to be.

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