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| **Paper title:** | **Addressing access and mobility issues in rural and regional Victoria** |
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**Abstract (200 words):**
Transport is consistently rated by rural and regional communities as one of their most important issues. In Victoria, many areas of transport provision are being addressed through the Government's public transport, roads and infrastructure initiatives. There is, however, an ongoing concern as to how to best serve transport needs of people in small settlements and rural areas who do not have access to private cars. A number of projects have been established by the Victorian State Government to explore ways of improving rural and regional access and mobility. The *Transport Connections Program* supports nine innovative and community-based flexible transport initiatives from across Victoria that experience significant transport disadvantage. By contrast, the *Indigo and Towong Shires Community Transport and Access Strategy* has used a study approach to focus on addressing the access and mobility needs within two north-east municipalities of Victoria. Concurrently, a *multi-agency policy team* approach has been piloted to tackle significant cross-government issues relating to access and mobility in rural and regional areas. The paper considers these three different approaches to improving rural and regional access and mobility, and describes the lessons that are emerging from these projects.

**Introduction**

Transport is consistently rated by rural and regional communities as one of their most important issues. It is also considered to be one of the most difficult to address. This is further complicated by the numerous groups involved in regional transport provision, such as various levels and departments of government, human service agencies, private transport operators, local councils and volunteers.

Transport can influence an individual's health and wellbeing. That is, access to transport impacts on one's ability to participate within the community through access to employment, education, healthcare, social networks, shopping, and other activities (Dept of Health and Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2002; Kenyon, Lyons and Rafferty 2002; La Trobe University, Bendigo 2004; Rajé, Brand, Preston and Grieco 2003; Social Exclusion Unit 2003). Access issues are greatly exacerbated for people who are transport disadvantaged (i.e. where transport options are either not available, unsuitable, not affordable, or targeted to other groups), and especially for people who are older, frail, or have a disability. The level of disadvantage is compounded in Victoria's regional areas where there is a stronger trend of ageing compared to Melbourne (Dept of Infrastructure 2002).

In rural and regional areas, car-based travel is the main mode of travel. In areas where there is limited mainstream public transport, people are dependent on their cars to get around. Access to a car and possession of a driver's licence play a significant part in determining what transport choices are available and one's ability to access services and activities. In an RACV study on rural mobility, over 50% of the survey respondents thought that not driving would have a severe effect on their ability to work, go shopping, visit family, have a holiday or undertake a hobby (Harris 2000).

Many areas of rural and regional transport provision are being addressed clearly and effectively in Victoria through the government's public transport, roads and infrastructure initiatives. There is, however, an ongoing concern as to how to best serve transport needs of people who live in small settlements and rural areas and do not have access to private cars.

Table 1 presents some examples of initiatives that can be undertaken to improve regional and rural access and mobility through better utilisation of existing resources. These initiatives can be targeted at various levels of transport system change and cover different timeframes. For instance, when transport services are available within an area, then a simple and quick solution to open up people's transport choices, without making any changes to the system, is to ensure that the community is aware of, and encouraged to use, any options that may meet their needs (e.g. by providing information or facilitating experience through an event). However, where transport options are limited or do not meet community needs, their choices can be improved either through better use of existing resources (e.g. better coordination of available community transport vehicles) or exploring new services that are feasible within the current system and regulatory context. Such initiatives may require some time to implement depending on the extent of the change required. In some cases, greater gains may be made by creating systemic change, such as amending regulations or introducing institutional change by defining new roles or organisational structures. System change often requires significant change and consequently, is undertaken over a longer period. (Refer to Harbutt and Walker 2004 for further discussion of non-infrastructure initiatives that are targeted at various levels of transport system change.)

**Table 1     Selected initiatives to improve access and mobility primarily through improved utilisation of existing resources**

| Sphere of influence | Working within the existing system | | Working to change the existing system |
|---|---|---|---|
| Extent of change | None | Minor-medium | Major |
| Examples of initiatives | • Information<br>• Events | • Coordination<br>• Capacity building<br>• Minor service changes<br>• New services | • Integration<br>• Policy revision<br>• Regulatory change<br>• Institutional change<br>• Changes to resource allocation/rules |
| Examples of projects | • Transport Connections Program<br>• Indigo and Towong Shires Community Transport and Access Strategy | | • Multi-agency policy team pilot |

This paper provides three examples of projects that have been established by the Victorian State Government to explore ways of improving rural and regional access and mobility. These are the *Transport Connections Program (TCP)*, the *Indigo and Towong Shires Community Transport and Access Strategy*, and a *multi-agency policy team (MAPT)* pilot study. These three projects employ contrasting methodologies and differ in scope in relation to their communities of interests and sphere of influence. All three approaches, however, are based on improving access and mobility in rural and regional communities, primarily through achieving greater utilisation of existing resources.

TCP is based on a bottom-up and community driven approach that focuses on working within the existing system. Similarly the *Indigo and Towong Shires Strategy* proposes actions for implementation within the existing system, yet its methodology has employed an expert driven approach (with community input). The intention of the *multi-agency policy team* pilot approach is to identify opportunities to overcome systemic and/or state-wide barriers from the top-down. The paper outlines the issues encountered within these projects, some examples of potential solutions, and the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches.

**Transport Connections Program**

The *Transport Connections Program* (TCP) is a grant funding program of $2.1M over three years, established by the Victorian State Government to improve access and mobility outcomes for communities that experience significant transport disadvantage – ranging from remote areas to suburbs on Melbourne's fringe suburbs (see www.dhs.vic.gov.au/vrhss/flexibletransport/). Each project funded under TCP aims to identify and implement solutions within their existing resources and transport systems by bringing together local communities, business and transport providers.

Project background

The project is funded through the Department of Human Services, and has a sponsoring group including Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Infrastructure (DOI), and Department of Education and Training (DE&T). Each of the sponsoring Departments is either involved directly in the policy development, delivery or regulation of transport service provision (e.g. DOI), or has an interest in the access of key groups to services such as education (DE&T) and health (DHS). The sponsoring Departments' role is to oversee the development of the program, assess submissions for funding, provide support to the funded projects, evaluate the impact of the program, and facilitate the dissemination of best practice arising from the program.

TCP is based on a set of simple principles for developing successful solutions for improving access and mobility in local communities. These include:
- Solutions need to be developed at the local level to suit each area's unique circumstances, depending on target groups, available mobility services, education, employment and health services, and the range of groups involved in the delivery of these;
- The various groups involved in developing these solutions must be willing and able to work together collaboratively;
- Solutions must be strategic (rather than ad-hoc or bandaid), take full account of the various providers of mobility services, and working to support and strengthen core transport services rather than undermine their viability;
- In many areas there is potential to achieve improved access and mobility outcomes through a different arrangement and coordination of the *existing* resources (fleet, funding and people), as opposed to increasing the level of resources; and
- Mobility and access solutions for transport disadvantaged communities are more likely to be sustainable if they benefit and are used by the wider community.

With these principles in mind, submissions were called for which demonstrated:
- A sound understanding of the access and mobility issues that were to be addressed;
- Proposed solutions that were practicable and sustainable over time;
- A formalised partnership of the various groups involved in developing and implementing these solutions; and
- A lead agency with a track record of successful delivery.

Thirty one submissions were received, of which nine were awarded funding for three years, commencing in July 2003. Funding was awarded to those projects that best met the evaluation criteria, whilst also achieving a geographical spread across regional Victoria, and including one in outer metropolitan Melbourne (see Figure 1 below).
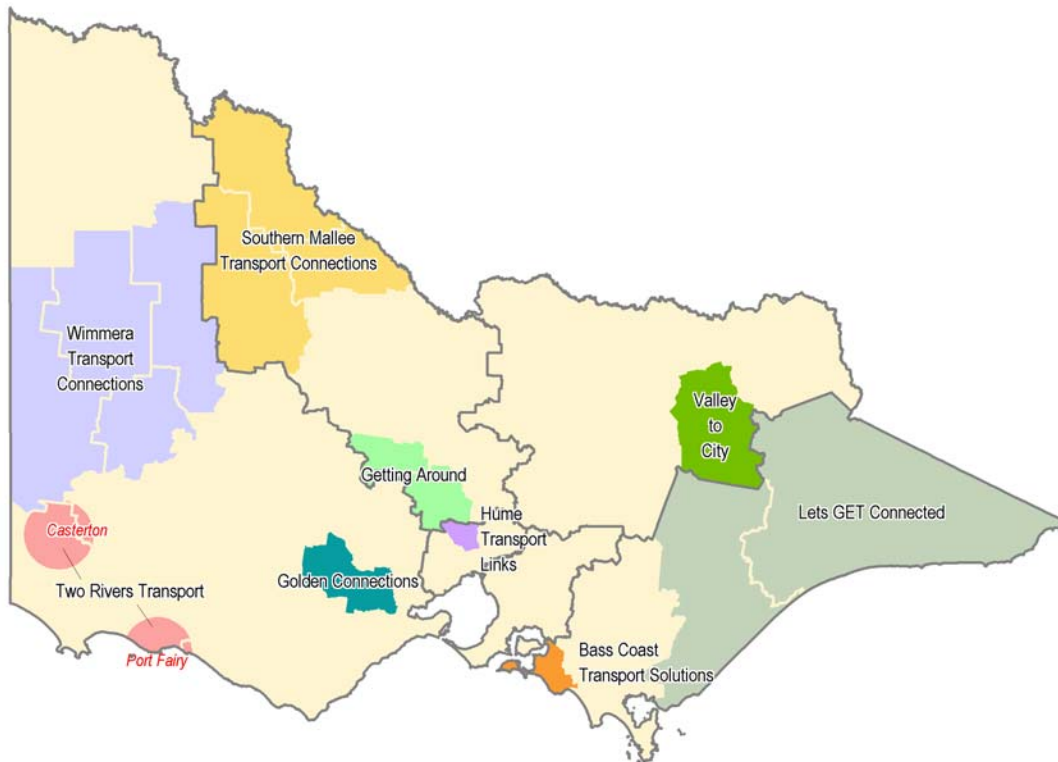
**Figure 1        Transport Connections Program projects funded in 2003-06**

Program development

To assist the projects in sharing the lessons, the sponsoring Departments (DHS, DOI, DE&T), established two networking initiatives, being:
- bi-monthly meeting of project coordinators; and
- an internet site for the posting of documents of relevance to TCP, to be accessed by TCP members only.

The first meeting of project coordinators was held in November 2003. At this and subsequent meetings, the project coordinators sought guidance and clarification from the sponsoring Departments on relevant State Government policy, regulations, contractual and processes such as:
- Is access to school buses allowed by others (i.e. non-students)?
- Do public transport operators have contractual obligations for the publishing and disseminating timetable information?
- What is the process by which proposed changes to existing public transport services are considered and funded?
- Is there flexibility in the Victorian taxi regulations for taxis to operate 'fixed route' type services?
- How is community transport managed in Victoria?
- What resources are available to assist with recruitment, training and management of volunteers?

Such questions need to be referred to many different Government departments and agencies, which have numerous roles that relate to the provision of transport in rural and regional areas. To assist in managing this complexity, and to better inform the projects, the project coordinators are exploring ways to come together on common issues across the projects. One method under trial is the creation of several working groups to focus on topics of interest, such as taxis, community transport, and school transport. These working groups are chaired and maintained by TCP project coordinators. Meetings to date have included teleconferences due to the significant geographic spread of the projects, as well as face-to-face meetings, and have involved at least one representative from the sponsoring Departments' steering group and an invited guest who can inform the working group on the specific topic. This arrangement has proved useful in 'surfacing' a wide array of questions from the projects and in making direct connections between the TCP projects, and the specific people and parts of Government that can assist.

It is, however, recognised that there are significant barriers in dealing with government in this area. Efforts to strengthen liaison and coordination between the various parts of government, as well as development of a single source of plain-English information on the various policies, regulations and procedures would be of significant value in reducing the barriers.

Emerging solutions

The emphasis of all of the projects is to facilitate improved access and mobility outcomes through the better arrangement, coordination and integration of the *existing* access and mobility resources. In developing local solutions, the projects have identified that information is a key barrier in many cases. A single source of information on the range of mobility services available is in most cases not available, and distribution of what information is available is limited, and often does not reach the target groups who are transport disadvantaged. Local research has identified that there is a lack of awareness of existing services and an absence of local timetables for public transport services. To address this basic barrier many of the projects are developing communication strategies, including the development and targeted distribution of a local transport directory, which provides integrated timetable and contact information about all transport services available including public transport, taxi, and community transport.

Many of the projects are also developing solutions which would see existing mobility services provided differently. In doing so they have come up against challenges, including:
- Unwillingness by service organisations who own and operate small buses for transporting clients to consider alternative arrangements such as pooling of transport fleets, or using taxis for transport;
- Lack of a discrete funding stream for service organisations to purchase transport services for clients, which hampers their ability to consider alternative solutions to the traditional approach of owning and operating small buses and cars;
- Provision of service organisation cars increasingly tied to salary packages, thus limiting the opportunities for these vehicles to be used for mobility services (even within the service organisation owning the vehicle);
- Regulations for the operation of taxis, limiting their flexibility in providing pseudo public transport services in situations of low demand; and

- Lack of motivation among some public transport and taxi operators to consider alternative service arrangements, which would be possible within existing contracts and regulations.


Challenging issues and systemic change

Some of these issues are systemic issues and require change in State policy, regulation or process and are unlikely to take place in the three year time frame of funding for the projects. These issues and others are under consideration as part of the *multi-agency policy team* pilot discussed later in this paper.

Other challenges are matters of perception, concern and motivation by individuals and organisations. These require that people running these projects engage in a dialogue with the various organisations to facilitate alternative arrangements that may be possible within the existing policy, funding and regulatory system.

There is a tension for the projects in advocating for systemic change that is perceived to yield improved access and mobility outcomes (but unlikely to happen within the time frame of the projects), and in taking up the challenge of engaging in dialogue and building strong partnerships with organisations (many of whom are sceptical, pessimistic or uninterested in participating).

Fortunately, across the projects there are many organisations which are willing to be involved, and are positive, proactive and interested in exploring these alternative solutions. Often these organisations are members of the local steering groups created to guide the projects. Equally, the project coordinators tend to be highly motivated and resilient and persistent in working towards better outcomes. As the projects move forward, the successful initiatives will be further motivation for each of the projects to continue their efforts, and will provide case studies for wider dissemination to others involved in this area. These first successful projects will also assist in demonstrating to government and other organisations what is possible, and the potential benefits to be gained for individual organisations, their specific client groups, and the wider community.


Progress to date

The TCP projects have completed the first year of their three year projects, and have reflected on their progress thus far. While in their early days, the projects have already made a difference in creating new transport solutions in their local areas, and are providing a valuable voice in raising policy barriers. To date, the TCP projects have:
- undertaken a mapping exercise of existing transport services and resources;
- conducted a needs analysis of their areas, including surveys of transport users;
- identified a number of potential transport solutions and developed a project plan to trial solutions;
- established networks and partnerships;
- distributed local timetables and information brochures; and
- established new services or changes to services, such as negotiating the relocation of a bus stop on a bus route, establishing walking school buses, and coordinating community bus services to reduce duplication.

**Indigo and Towong Shires Community Transport and Access Strategy**

In contrast to TCP, the *Indigo and Towong Shires Community Transport and Access Strategy* has used a study approach to focus on addressing the access and mobility needs within two predominantly rural municipalities in the north-east of Victoria. The project identified actions to improve existing public and community transport provision based on the community's needs, socio-economic profile, and policy/strategic context. This project was undertaken for the Department of Infrastructure by consultants (Arup, 2003), using an expert driven approach (with community input). This study was similar in approach to a recent but more extensive exercise undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure for the La Trobe Valley (Parsons Brinkerhoff, 2003).

The development of the rural Shires strategy was overseen by a steering group with representatives from both Shires and from the Departments of Infrastructure and Human Services. The main challenges and issues concerning the provision of transport and access for these communities were identified through an analysis of demographic and socio-economic characteristics and community consultation workshops. These issues showed remarkable consistency with those identified in the other two approaches discussed in this paper, including:
- Remoteness of communities in relation to medical facilities, shopping and other necessary services;
- An ageing population and its reliance on public transport;
- Perceived lack of integration of transport services;
- Limited accessible transport provision;
- Access for young people to town centres, particularly during evenings and weekends;
- Access to the region's principal service centres of Wangaratta and Albury-Wodonga; and
- Access and interconnectivity between the Shires' towns and their rural hinterland, both within and beyond a 40 kilometre distance from Albury- Wodonga (Arup, 2003).

As with the TCP projects, the strategy developed for these two rural Shires concentrated on recommendations that make more effective use of existing resources, although a number of new initiatives that play to the region's strengths were also put forward for consideration based on a review of good practice elsewhere. These strengths included the strong tourist attraction of the region and the capacity of the local community to develop and sustain initiatives based on 'self help'. However, the ability to realise this potential (as well as proposed improvements in the way that existing services are used and promoted) is heavily dependent upon the local municipalities obtaining resources to perform a transport co-ordination and brokerage role, through funding of a shared transport development worker. This role is similar to that funded under the first round of many of the TCP projects, but at this stage a decision is yet to be made about funding for a new round of such projects.

**Multi-agency policy team (MAPT) pilot**

Concurrently, Victorian State Government Departments have been involved in a trial of various working arrangements to tackle significant cross-government issues. One such approach was piloted in late 2003, through the formation of a *multi-agency policy team,* to undertake a scoping exercise on access and mobility issues in rural and regional areas. The process aimed to bring together staff from across government to work in a co-located team on a whole of government priority for a short intensive period (as opposed to participating in an interdepartmental committee process).

In this pilot, the team focused on identifying rural access and mobility issues that inhibit more flexible use of existing public and private resources. It concentrated primarily on rural and metropolitan fringe areas with limited transport choice, where conventional public transport is not generally considered to be viable.

Consultation played an important part in understanding the existing practices and barriers to more flexible resource use. The project did not have the time nor the resources to conduct a public consultation. Instead, it drew on past studies (e.g. Harris 2000; Hind and Hind 1998; TBA Planners Pty Ltd 1998; Woodland et al. 2000), and held interviews and a workshop with stakeholders to consolidate the issues and propose ways forward. Stakeholders ranged from transport providers and facilitators, local and State governments, to advocacy and user groups. They came from various sectors, including health, education, transport, disability services, community care, regional development, tourism and recreation.

The following four key themes emerged through the consultation as constituting systemic and/or state-wide barriers:
- Planning and coordination;
- Demand responsive and flexible transport services;
- Funding and resources; and
- Information provision and sharing.


Planning and coordination

Stakeholders in the MAPT consultation identified the lack of coordination and integration of transport services as a key barrier to rural accessibility. This issue has been evidenced through:
- Insufficient and disjointed strategic planning and limited system design that considers all transport options for meeting changing community needs;
- Duplication, inefficient and underutilisation of available resources and transport services being delivered in relative isolation to each other;
- Poor timetabling and connections between services; and
- Complicated fare and charging structures.

In rural and regional Victoria, there are numerous organisations and groups which are involved in the provision and facilitation of transport. They include various government departments, private operators, non-government and government funding agencies, local councils, and volunteers. Transport is not necessarily the sole nor core business for those involved in the provision of community transport, and they have different objectives, interests and client groups. Consequently, stakeholder relationships are complex and complicated by

unclear definitions, gaps and overlaps of roles and responsibilities with respect to transport provision (for example, community-based transport does not come under the direct responsibility of any State Government Department, nor any Victorian legislation). The level of interaction between stakeholders also varies across the State and often depends on the individuals involved.

Stakeholders outlined the need for taking a system-wide and user perspective that facilitates cross sector innovation rather than focusing on specific mode or sector solutions. They also advocated both "bottom up" and "top down" approaches in planning and the need for integrating local issues and strategies into a wider state-wide planning framework. This suggestion strongly corresponded to another suggested strategy to establish partnership agreements between State and Local Government around transport provision.

Demand responsive and flexible transport services

MAPT stakeholder consultation emphasised the need to find and tap into opportunities for more flexible transport provision that is responsive to changing community need. Low density settlements in rural, regional and fringe areas do not have the critical mass to support conventional public transport solutions that are viable and sustainable. Where fixed-route public transport is available, people with limited mobility have difficulty in accessing public transport stops.

Taxis provide an existing on demand door-to-door service throughout the day. However, using taxis can become cost prohibitive due to the long journey lengths characteristically encountered. Other feedback from stakeholders indicates that the rigidity of charging structures, regulations and service arrangements prevent taxis from being used to their full potential. For instance, fares cannot be negotiated for trips within 80 km of their pickup point (approximately $95) and taxis cannot be contracted to provide transport services where an agency may want to organise transport for its clients. Ride-share or multi-hire arrangements are currently unattractive to users due to their complexity and inflexibility. There is also concern about the commercial viability of taxis in rural and regional areas and the limited availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles. More creative solutions are needed.

Stakeholders called for a review of taxi regulations and licensing options to enable multi-hiring and more viable taxi service provision within rural and low density areas. The *Transport (Taxi-Cabs) Regulations 1994* are planned to sunset mid-2005, which provides an opportunity to provide input into the review process.

More flexible outcomes can also be made in how the current public transport system is delivered. For example, being able to book a seat on a bus that normally drives through the small town or changing a route or stop to link in with previously inaccessible yet popular destinations. Local communities are in the best position to identify such opportunities to maximise the use of current resources and gain better mobility and access outcomes without requiring any additional government expenditure or levers.

Funding and resources

Poor coordination and inflexible and inefficient use of funding was identified through consultation as another significant barrier to improving regional and rural access and mobility. Better use of existing funding and resources will continue to be important given the future increasing demand and cost pressures on the provision of transport services (largely due to an ageing population).

There is a myriad of funding sources and groups with transport resources across the state, due to the numerous groups involved in the provision and facilitation of transport. Building a comprehensive picture of funding across the state is difficult because in some cases transport is indirectly funded (e.g. supporting a client to travel to a health service) and subsequently an embedded cost.

Each funding source has particular target groups, objectives and outcomes that it seeks. Stakeholders have observed that transport funding is often mode or program specific, which limits potential solutions. Eligibility criteria and funding requirements can also exclude or prioritise access to targeted sections of the community and/or impose certain transport solutions. For example, if funding is only available for capital investment then it can force the purchase of a vehicle rather than getting the same mobility outcome by outsourcing the client's transportation to another mobility service provider, such as a taxi operator. Also, funding pressures and ownership issues are seen as inadvertently inhibiting resource sharing and creating possessive and defensive attitudes towards sharing.

Stakeholders have proposed that transport funding be integrated at the local level. This would require an examination of resources available within the community to identify opportunities for more efficient and/or appropriate allocation patterns and mixes of public/private/community contributions to better suit local needs and circumstances, e.g. pooling funds.


Information provision and sharing

Stakeholder consultation pointed to difficulties that individuals experience in trying to find out information about their local transport options and connections to regional and long distance services. There were also concerns that people did not seek information because they believed that they did not have any transport alternatives and that the information did not exist. Marketing was seen as a way of overcoming this latter barrier.

Stakeholders describe the expense of establishing and maintaining a website, printing brochures or advertising as a barrier to providing information about services. The capacity to advertise a transport service is dependent on budgetary constraints, and may be restricted due to concerns about being unable to meet the resulting demand.

From a user perspective there is no one location where one can access integrated information about all local transport options (e.g. public transport, taxi and community-based transport). Normally the information is modal or organisation specific (e.g. only information about regional public transport is available on the VicTrip website). There are also issues with respect to the accessibility of the information (that is, whether it is available in a user-friendly form for people of differing age, gender, race, cultural or linguistic background). Stakeholders

advocated the development of an integrated information system that is accessible and provides locally relevant travel options.

Similarly, there is no statewide facility for sharing developments and learning about transport provision and operational processes at local, regional or state levels. Communities that are developing transport solutions, apart from the TCP projects, are mostly undertaken in isolation from each other. This process runs the risk of solutions being developed that are not integrated across jurisdictional boundaries, and may overlook some potential solutions altogether. The potential for synergies between neighbouring communities may also be lost. A major barrier to community-led solutions is that there is often confusion about issues such as insurance and regulation. There is a strong need for capacity development, guidance from government and greater participation of the community in developing responses to their access issues.

**Final comments**

This paper has outlined a number of projects have been established by the Victorian State Government to explore ways of improving rural and regional access and mobility. In doing so this has highlighted the complexity and challenges faced by rural and regional communities.

There is no magic silver bullet or process that will resolve these issues in isolation. This paper provides three examples of the various approaches and levels of action that are being explored. These three projects tackle access and mobility issues for rural and regional communities in different ways. They employ contrasting methodologies and differ in scope, particularly in terms of their communities of interests and sphere of influence.

Application of initiatives

As illustrated in Table 1, these initiatives vary in the degree to which they can improve rural and regional access and mobility through changes within the existing system, as well as through other changes to the system itself, which do not necessarily involved large changes in infrastructure provision. The *Transport Connections Program* is based on a bottom-up and community driven approach that focuses on making better use of the existing system. Similarly the *Indigo and Towong Shires Strategy* proposes actions for implementation within the existing system yet its methodology has employed an expert driven approach (with community input). The intention of the *multi-agency policy team* pilot approach is to identify opportunities to overcome systemic barriers from the top-down, by concentrating on changes at the level of government policy.

Initiatives can be undertaken sequentially in relation to the extent of system change. For example, initiatives that require no system change such as information provision could be undertaken first, followed by minor service changes, and lastly major system changes. This ordering is not essential and there may be some benefit in parallel work. As discovered by the *Transport Connections Program* projects, initiatives that require little change, such as collecting and disseminating travel information, can be undertaken early in the process, while simultaneously working with stakeholders to make minor service changes. Likewise, making changes within the existing system encounters barriers that require resolution at a higher policy level. There are opportunities for working on such initiatives to identify where the

existing transport system operation or structures are hindering the efficient and flexible use of transport resources. Their insight could provide background understanding and trigger more systemic change.

As identified in consultation, there is a need for both "bottom up" and "top down" approaches to improve accessibility (as illustrated in the diversity of the example projects). One benefit of such a two pronged approach is that there is better communication and partnership development between the various stakeholders and levels of government. It also ensures that solutions are tailored to the specific circumstances and needs at the local level, with better integration between local issues and strategies and high level policy contexts and instruments.

Strengths and weaknesses

Each of the three project examples has its own merits and shortcomings. A study approach, such as the *Indigo and Towong Shires Strategy*, can be conducted over a short period. It relies on input from experts and has access to ideas and experience that lie outside of the community's existing skill or knowledge base. However, such approaches are reliant on a good participatory process to ensure that the community's experience, needs and ideas are not overlooked by even the most well-meaning study manager. While the relatively short timeframe of a study approach can be advantageous, it can also be its weakness. It does not allow sufficient time to develop sustainable partnerships and 'buy-in', both from the local community and from funding agencies. As such, a hiatus may arise once the study is completed and before the funds are found to implement its recommendations.

The major strength of the *Transport Connections Program* approach is its formation of partnerships between local stakeholders and transport providers. These partnerships provide a more stable foundation for creating 'buy-in'. Another strength is its focus on community participation and capacity building, which in conjunction with the building of stakeholder partnerships, can lead to more sustainable relationships and organisations for making longer term change within the project's location beyond the life of the project.

Partnership and relationship building takes time, so is only applicable to be undertaken over a number of years. Another major challenge for such projects is to find solutions within the existing system without turning solely to advocacy when facing systemic barriers. While there is benefit in identifying the need for systemic change, there is a need to commence on making changes to the existing system and gaining better efficiencies where possible without losing momentum in the face of higher level barriers.

Joined-up approaches to policy development are important in that they enable a more holistic approach to resolving access and mobility issues (especially as there are many parties involved in the provision of transport). They often engage agencies and departments that may not have worked together before, and provide a basis for ongoing dialogue and partnership work between agencies.

Successful collaboration occurs when a range of people work on an issue. Diverse views and backgrounds enable a broad comprehensive analysis of the problem, improve the understanding of different organisational/departmental perspectives, encourage the development of common goals, provide the potential for creative solution development, and increase the quality and robustness of these solutions. Multi-agency approaches also enable a

greater degree of 'buy-in' from the participating departments than if the work was undertaken by one department in isolation.

The major drawback of such processes is that the complexity and nature of the issues being resolved and their changes (e.g. regulatory amendments) necessitate a longer timeframe for resolution. The length of time required is influenced by the respective agency cultures and processes, the ability to reach agreement on respective positions, and the required sign-off procedures. Therefore, such processes should be reserved for high level policy integration.

## Conclusion

Given the relative newness of the TCP and MAPT methodologies, most of the learning about resolving access and mobility issues within rural and regional areas has revolved around gaining a deeper understanding of the issues and testing ways of resolving them, rather than the ability to measure the outcomes of such processes. It is anticipated that the lessons and key successes will enable government to create a strategic development path in creating more sustainable approaches to improve access and mobility in rural and regional areas.

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